

THE TRAGIC VISION
IN
THE NOVELS
OF
THOMAS HARDY & D. H. LAWRENCE

BY

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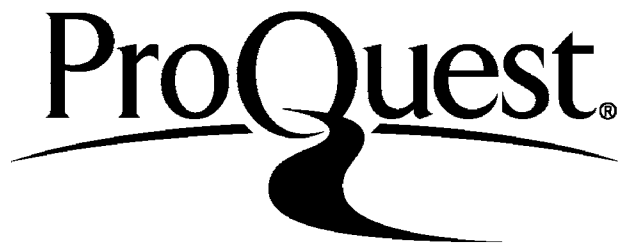
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for

MY MOTHER

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ABBREVIATIONS

HARDY

<u>Coll. Poems</u>	<u>Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy</u> , Macmillan, 1930.
<u>DR</u>	<u>Desperate Remedies</u>
<u>FMC</u>	<u>Far from the Madding Crowd</u>
<u>JO</u>	<u>Jude the Obscure</u>
<u>MC</u>	<u>The Mayor of Casterbridge</u>
<u>PBE</u>	<u>A Pair of Blue Eyes</u>
<u>RN</u>	<u>The Return of the Native</u>
<u>TD</u>	<u>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</u>
<u>TM</u>	<u>The Trumpet - Major</u>
<u>TT</u>	<u>Two on a Tower</u>
<u>UGT</u>	<u>Under the Greenwood Tree</u>
<u>W</u>	<u>The Woodlanders</u>

<u>Life</u>	F.E.Hardy, <u>The Life of Thomas Hardy</u> , Macmillan, 1970.
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LAWRENCE

<u>CL</u>	<u>The Collected Letters of D.H.Lawrence</u> , ed.H.T.Moore, 1962.
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<u>CP</u>	<u>The Complete Poems of D.H.Lawrence,</u> ed.V.de Sola Pinto & Warren Roberts, 2 vols.,1964.
<u>Comp.Plays</u>	<u>The Complete Plays of D.H.Lawrence, 1965</u>
<u>FU</u>	<u>Fantasia of the Unconscious</u>
<u>LCL</u>	<u>Lady Chatterley's Lover</u>
<u>Ph.</u>	<u>Phoenix</u>
<u>Ph.II</u>	<u>Phoenix II</u>
<u>R</u>	<u>The Rainbow</u>
<u>SL</u>	<u>Sons and Lovers</u>
<u>Tresp.</u>	<u>The Trespasser</u>
<u>WL</u>	<u>Women in Love</u>
<u>WP</u>	<u>The White Peacock</u>

Numbers within brackets which are not otherwise specified refer to the text of the main novel under consideration in any chapter.

CH. I INTRODUCTION

THOMAS Hardy found life full of misery, mishap and misadventure. He could find no solution for the innumerable problems of life, and, in his novels, he frankly portrayed the helpless condition of people in the world. D.H. Lawrence also saw the sad aspects of life, was moved to indignation by the unhappy plight in which man has to live, and he portrayed it with power in his works. But at the same time he was hunting for ways in which things could be made different. He was convinced of the misery of man in the modern world, but he was not convinced that nothing could be done to change human conditions. He passionately desired a change and earnestly believed in his efforts and in his ability to teach people ways of making themselves better and happier. At this point he is very different from Hardy who was greatly pained at the state of things, devoted his art to the search for the cause of miseries but could not find any satisfactory panacea for people's unhappiness. In the world of his fiction the sky is full of dark, gloomy clouds and even the momentary gleam of sunshine is not unaffected by them. Lawrence, on the other

hand, believes in the sun of his own creation. He feels that he knows how to eradicate the gloom of the world. So, in his fiction, we find that, side by side with the portrayal of world's misery, there are hopeful hints about its eradication. Unfortunately, a careful study of his fiction shows that his passionate desire for a solution made him think he had found a solution, though in his heart of hearts he knew that he had not. So, even when he gives sudden turns to his fiction to suit his wishful thinking, the reader remains unconvinced and can also detect a note of doubt in the very assertions of the author. The overall impression that we get about life from the novels of D.H. Lawrence is not much brighter than that of Thomas Hardy. The vision is fundamentally tragic in both, even though there are some marked differences in the point from which they view life and the way in which they portray it.

A few things must be made clear at this point. The use of the word "tragic" in literature generally brings before the critic all the associations of Greek tragedy. But, for a true evaluation of the literature of our age, we cannot go back to the values laid down many centuries ago. Culturally and historically

people have been changing so much through the ages that there seems no sense in applying the standards of ages gone by to the literature of our age. In fact, an imaginative artist has never thought of being bound down by the ways of even those immediate predecessors whom he greatly admires. In the writing of tragedy, even the great Greek writers differ immensely from each other. For example, the chorus does not play as great a part in the plays of Sophocles and Euripides as it does in those of Aeschylus. Before Aeschylus introduced the duologue, there used to be only an alternation between the speech of a single actor and the chorus. Sophocles and Euripides go one step further and introduce speeches between three actors at the same time. And we have come such a great way from the time of Euripides that, as Clifford Leech points out, some of the tragedies of Euripides seem to the modern critic to belong more to the category of comedy than that of tragedy.¹ The evolution and the changing use of the word "tragedy" itself shows that literary creation and judgment cannot be bound by fixed rules. The word "tragedy" is derived from the Greek word "trag^haidia" which does not mean something

¹C.Leech: Tragedy p.13

sad or great or wise but simply means a "goat". Perhaps the original tragedy was called thus because a goat was the prize for the best song; but some critics believe that it was called so because the song was sung at the death of the goat which represented the annual cycle of Dionysus's death.

In theory as well as in practice man's ideas about tragedy have constantly been changing with the passage of time. In Greek tragedy the hero is a man possessing some qualities of the gods as well as those of men. In mediaeval times he is "him that strode in high degree".¹ During the Renaissance famous men could be tragic heroes. In modern times the tragic hero is just a common man -- a character of ordinary morality. Today the tragedy of an ordinary citizen is regarded as being as real as the tragedy of a prince.

According to Aristotle, tragedy should show the change of the hero's state from happiness to misery. In Chaucer it becomes change from prosperity to adversity and during the Renaissance it was said to show the fall of famous men.

Since the Renaissance, the tragic hero has been increasingly seen in his whole human substance and

¹Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales, "The Monk's Tale" p.156

the fall of kings and great men is related more and more to common experience. In Sidney's criticism we find a great deal of attention being paid to the method of writing tragedy and to its effects on the spectators:

But how much it can moove, Plutarch yeeldeth a notable testimonie of the abominable Tyrant Alexander Pheraeus, from whose eyes a Tragedy, wel made & represented, drewe aboundance of teares.¹

The neo-classicals were more interested in decorum and dignity in their consideration of tragedy. In the early romantic period, Hegel considers both the action of the characters and the audience's response and gives more consideration to the causes of suffering than suffering itself. He feels that in great tragedies it is not the tragic hero but the tragic collision which is of supreme importance. Bradley too speaks of collision and conflict as essential to tragedy and he goes on to define the different types of conflicts. In his exposition of self-division and the welfare of good with good, we find more of a psychological theory of tragedy. In Schopenhauer and Nietzsche the theory of tragedy becomes a system of ideas probing into ways of life. Schopenhauer says that in tragedy we find "the wail of humanity, the reign of chance and

¹P.Sidney: The Apologie for Poetrie p.31

error, the fall of the just, the triumph of the wicked."¹ He also feels that the true sense of tragedy is the deeper insight that a man atones not for his own individual sins but for original sin -- for the crime of existence itself. Contemporary views on tragedy and life seem to be very similar to those of Schopenhauer. According to Nietzsche, tragedy shows us man's inevitable suffering in order to transcend it. But he also says that

...the Dionysian man may be said to resemble Hamlet; both have for once seen into the true nature of things, -- they have perceived, but they are loath to act; for their action cannot change the eternal nature of things...²

Most contemporary tragedies show the opposition between humanity and society -- opposition between life itself and the universe, and the hero's resignation is the surrender of life -- of the will to live. The very will to live becomes dead. Raymond Williams rightly observes that even in ordinary death and suffering, if we too feel the suffering, "we are clearly within the possible dimensions of tragedy."³ It is said that accidents do not come under the category of tragedy

¹ A. Schopenhauer: The World as Will and Idea, Vol. III p. 212

² The Birth of Tragedy p. 61

³ Modern Tragedy p. 47

because we cannot connect them with any general meaning, but not all the critics are agreed on this point and some would say that our incapacity to connect the events of life with general and universal meanings shows our own deficiency -- not that of the event.

Most of us would agree on one point -- the experience that is presented, and the ideas and beliefs which are seen in action and questioned in a tragedy, should be reasonably common, just as the person who undergoes the experience, should be no different from the common people. Ibsen, Tchekhov, Strindberg, etc., do not have princes and kings for their heroes and they do not offer a "living faith"¹ in their writings. They all present a very bleak picture of man and the universe. But they bring before us many problems which are of vital importance to us. In the fragmented world of our age, man is unable to define himself and to understand how he stands in relation to the cosmos. So, instead of Hamlet's "to be or not to be" we find the modern tragic figures wondering how to be:

That is the question...How to be! How to be
...We want in so many different ways to be...

¹J.W.Krutch: The Modern Temper, "The Tragic Fallacy" p.142:
"Once the Tragic Spirit was a living faith and out of it tragedies were written. Today these great expressions of a great faith have declined,..."

This magnificent butterfly finds a little heap of dirt and sits still on it; but man he will never on his heap of mud keep still... A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns...I tell youthe way is to destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up...

For an idea of what is generally called a tragedy today, we might consider the views of some writers of modern tragedy. Arthur Miller in his essay "Tragedy and the Common Man" says that "the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were" and that Oedipus and Orestes complexes "apply to everyone in similar emotional situations".² According to him the tragic hero struggles to secure his rightful position in society. So he should not be a passive figure. If he feels that his sense of dignity has been violated, he should protest. And while he protests and struggles, like the Salesman in Death of a Salesman he gains that tragic stature which the earlier critics mistakenly thought came from high and noble birth. But Strindberg prefers to present his characters as all patched up, for he believes that is what we all are, since we are passing through a period of transition.

¹J.Conrad: Lord Jim pp.213-214

²R.Levin: Tragedy p.171

His tragic heroine, Miss Julia, is a man-hating half-woman --which, of course is a type, and a tragic type. She reminds us of Lawrence's Gudrun and Hermione though their fates are so different.

The tragic hero is different from other people in the sense that he is more aware of the gulf between desire and fulfilment, but he is one with the others for he represents the whole of humanity in the coils of cosmic chaos. The element of guilt is said to be important in a tragedy but it is not always present in modern tragic characters.

Conflict is important in a tragedy. In modern tragedies it is mainly concerned with the individual, society and the cosmos, as in Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles or Tolstoy's Anna Karenina. Either the individual wants self-definition -- wants to know how and where he stands in relation to society and the world; or he feels that his sense of dignity has been violated. He wants to secure his rightful place in the world. In many modern tragedies, the hero not only fails to define himself, he also persists in a mistaken idea about his own self in relation to the cosmos. And this mistake becomes his tragic flaw. He follows what seems to be the right path but which is also sure to bring destruction. Hardy

also believes that "a tragedy exhibits a state of things in the life of an individual which unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in catastrophe when carried out".¹

Strindberg is in favour of taking social problems as themes because he thinks it is a sad and tragic sight to see the fall of those who are nobly placed -- or highly placed in society. Hardy also once observes that the best tragedy is the tragedy of the "worthy" person, but he implies the worthiness of heart.

Miller is of the view that tragedy is optimistic because it demonstrates the indestructible will of man. The strength of will gives a man power to endure misery and to struggle and resist destruction because he has the will to live. So it glories in the zest for existence. But Strindberg acknowledges in his preface to Miss Julia that he offers no optimism. Many modern thinkers believe that not optimism, but pessimism, is essential for a tragedy. Karl Jaspers says that the "tragic mood assumes the many shapes of so-called pessimism and its various pictures of this world..."² W.L. Courtney claims that tragedy

¹F.E.Hardy: The Life of Thomas Hardy p.176

²Tragedy is not Enough p.46

is "born of popular pessimism and melancholy".¹

Pessimism comes from the awareness that all the vanity and the so-called grandeur of life is a lie. There is nothing worthwhile, it is useless to hunt for dignity, virtue and purpose in life. These ideas lead to the wish for suicide, and kill the zest for life. Or else, they make one passively submit to the punishment which one has to receive for the crime of existence. According to Schopenhauer, this "resignation" is the result of what he calls the "tragic" spirit.²

Miller feels that in a tragic struggle the possibility of victory is essential, otherwise it would just become pathetic struggle. In The Crucible he presents the possibility of victory for Proctor. Some modern tragedies also arouse fear in us -- fear lest we too be torn from our image of what we are and how we stand in the world. Such a fear is aroused when we see Gerald's position in Women in Love.

Tragedy is becoming more and more psychological and emphasis has shifted from the universe to the soul. As the literature of the era has proved, our times

¹Idea of Tragedy in Ancient & Modern Drama p.12

²The World as Will Bk.III p.39

are most suited to tragic literature. There does not seem much sense in the argument that tragedy is not possible today because we do not have any great faith which could lead to the great expression of tragic literature. It is true that, owing to scientific discoveries and some other causes, man, in the present age, has developed a negative opinion of himself. He does not believe that man is just slightly less than an angel, he rather believes man to be just a little better than a monkey. He does not believe in the glory of God or the glory of man, but even this fact is tragic, as Schopenhauer implies. Our situation is tragic because we live under the possible threat of the total extinction of humanity. Moreover, there have been two world wars, and the American Civil War also was witnessed by many of the writers, like Henry James or Walt Whitman, whom we consider as precursors of the modern age. Even today a great number of us are engaged in wars. The events that Shakespeare or Sophocles used were to them remoter than the Civil War is to a writer like Eugene O'Neill in his trilogy, Mourning Becomes Electra. And the horrors of war as presented in Hemingway's works, are imaginative expressions of real experience and observation.

In the modern world we are constantly searching

for values. We are always testing things, for we cannot take anything at its face value. Above all, we are not sure even of ourselves. The whole situation is tragic, and since tragedy "is not a single and permanent kind of fact, but a series of experiences and conventions and institutions...", so one should interpret the varieties of tragic experience "by reference to the changing conventions and institutions." (1)

Instead of trying to evolve any new theory of tragedy in relation to the two novelists under consideration, I will confine myself to the discussion of their presentation of that vision of life which would ordinarily be called tragic in our age. The above remarks on the changing nature of tragedy were deemed relevant to the present thesis because the two authors, especially Hardy, often compare their protagonists and their works to the tragic characters and works of the past, and through their observations as well as through their style of presentation they invite comparison with them. But even while comparing the tragic elements in their works with examples from the past, we will have to remember that the tragic hero is no longer required to show himself as a grand personality different from us. He does not wear cothurnoi on his feet and an onkos on his head in order

¹ R. Williams, *Modern Tragedy* pp. 45-6

to look much taller and so greater than people in general. Nor do people think of being purged of emotions when they go to the theatre. On the contrary, writers like Synge tell us that we "should not go to the theatre as we go to a chemist's or a dram-shop," for the "drama is made serious - ...not by the degree in which it is taken up with problems that are serious in themselves, but by the degree in which it gives the nourishment, not very easy to define, on which our imaginations live."¹

Whether we go to the works of Hardy and Lawrence for this nourishment of the imagination or whether some power in their works goads us to read more and more of them, we are particularly taken by their vision of life. And even though their works do not fulfil all the requirements laid down by the theories of tragedy, most of them present certain things which appear undoubtedly tragic.

Before going on to examine some of the novels of the two authors I will briefly comment on the quality of their writing and discuss their views on tragedy and related matters. The present thesis also aims to show the influence of Hardy on Lawrence's

¹Synge: Plays and Poems p.108

works. So, I will be discussing those novels which, besides presenting a tragic vision, show certain similarities between the two writers. From time to time, certain critics have pointed out some affinities between their works, but as will be seen in the present discussion of their novels, Hardy has influenced Lawrence considerably.

Hardy's writings contain such diverse qualities that it is difficult to say what age and what group they represent, but at the same time, their brilliance compels the critic to comment on them and to try to place him in a particular age. A.J.Guerard speaks of Hardy, Conrad and Gide "as roughly representative of the progress of the novel between 1875 and 1925".¹ Donald Davidson, on the other hand, says that the

appearance of Thomas Hardy among the temporal phenomena of the England of 1870 to 1928 -- that is the amazing, the confusing thing. I believe we ought to begin consideration by admitting that though Hardy was in that time, and was affected by its thought and art, he was not really of that time whenever he was his essential self.²

Davidson believes that even though Hardy tried to write like a man of the late nineteenth century, "he

¹Thomas Hardy p.viii

²Twentieth Century Views: Hardy Ed. by A.J.Guerard p.11

thought, or artistically conceived, like a man of another century....he does approach his tale-telling and poem-making as if three centuries of Renaissance effort had worked only upon the outward form of tale and poem without changing its essential character."¹

Of course there is some truth in the above criticism, but I think the author is taking an extreme view. In fact the diversity and the uneven quality of Hardy's writings make it difficult to pass judgment on his work as a whole, but the unbiased critic has to admit that if Hardy combined some qualities of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Homer, Shakespeare, the ballad-makers, the Gothic novelists, and the sensational serial-novelists; he also stands as the pioneer of many modern movements. No novel before The Return of the Native exhibits that dramatic structure which is so prominent in the novels of today.² And A.J.Guerard rightly observes that Hardy's "symbolic use of mischance and coincidence carry us no small distance toward the symbolic use of the absurd in our own time."³ F.B.Pinion rightly feels that through his discussion

¹Ibid. p.12

²See J.W.Beach: The Technique of Thomas Hardy pp.80-90

³Thomas Hardy p.ix

of the "psychical" novel, Hardy "anticipates the modern "stream of consciousness".¹ On January 14, 1888 Hardy makes a note:

A "sensational-novel" is possible in which the sensationalism is not casualty, but evolution; not physical but psychical....in the psychical the casualty or adventure is held to be of no intrinsic interest, but the effect upon the faculties is the important matter to be depicted.²

On July 8 of the same year he records his reflections on a service at St. Mary Abbots and the trend of his thought and interest makes us think that the words are coming from the pen of some writer of the stream of consciousness:

...the congregation rises...They pray in the litany as if under enchantment. Their real life is spinning on beneath this apparent one of calm, like the District Railway-trains underground just by -- throbbing, rushing, hot, concerned with next week, last week.... Could these true scenes in which this congregation is living be brought into church bodily with the personages, there would be a churchful of jostling phantasmagorias crowded like a heap of soap bubbles, infinitely intersecting, but each seeing only his own. That bald-headed man is surrounded by the interior of the Stock Exchange; that girl by the Jeweller's shop in which she purchased yesterday. Through this bizarre world of thought circulates the recitative of the parson...³

¹A Hardy Companion p.146

²Life p.204

³Life pp.210-11

Hardy believed that each "new style of novel must be the old with added ideas, not an ignoring and avoidance of the old".¹ So we find him adding his own ideas and experiments to the novel as he knew it. A novel like Desperate Remedies shows the author's attempt at being a good hand at the serial novel. It is very much in line with the sensational mystery novels of Wilkie Collins and H.Ainsworth. Far from the Madding Crowd combines many qualities of the ballad. Fanny Robin resembles the deserted maidens of many ballads, and her lover Troy is the typical sailor or soldier-lover of ballads. Henchard's selling his wife to a sailor and then the sailor's coming back to claim his daughter after so many years, are also reminiscent of ballads. Hardy's use of the accidental and miraculous also shows his attachment to the traditional novel. Like the traditional story-writers he believed that a story must have something different from the ordinary to be worth the telling. He believed that the story writers are all "Ancient Mariners" who have got no right to detain the wedding guests unless they have something strange and uncommon to tell. That is why his novels are full of strange

¹Life p.218

details like Tess's hearing the sound of the d'Urberville phantom coach, or Susan Nunsuch's burning of a waxen image of Eustacia before she is drowned.

"Gothic" influence is also traceable in some passages and descriptions of Hardy's novels. On the night before Cytherea's marriage to Manston, the trees rattled in the wind "like a man playing castanets or shaking dice"; she dreamt "she was being whipped by dry bones suspended on strings, which rattled at every blow like those of a malefactor on a gibbet.... She could not see the face of the executioner for his mask, but his form was like Manston's".¹ In A Pair of Blue Eyes, Stephen sees the illuminated figures of Elfride and Knight through the wooden bars of the Belvedere, "which crossed their forms like the ribs of a skeleton".² In The Woodlanders Mrs Charmond hears a tapping on the window late at night: "What she saw outside might have struck terror into a heart stouter than a helpless woman's at midnight. In the centre of the lowest pane of the window, close to the glass, was a human face, which she barely recognised as the face of Fitzpiers. It was surrounded with

¹ Desperate Remedies p.280

² A Pair of Blue Eyes p.274

the darkness of the night without, corpse-like in its pallor, and covered with blood. As disclosed in the square area of the pane, it met her frightened eyes like a replica of the Sudarium of St. Veronica."¹ In Tess of the d'Urbervilles when Angel and Tess drive with the milk to Wellbridge, they can see the tips of the fir trees on the summit of Egdon Heath "like battlemented towers crowning black-fronted castles of enchantment."²

In some passages, Hardy's novels take us back to Milton, Shakespeare and even Sophocles. In Tess references to Adam, Eve and the serpent recur. At Marlott Alec puts on a smock-frock and thus disguised works on the same plot as Tess. The fire-beams from the burning rubbish are reflected from the steel prongs of his fork. As they approach the fire, it flares up and reveals the face of d'Urberville. He says that one might say he was "the Old One", come to tempt her "in the disguise of an inferior animal".³ He also quotes Milton on the fall of Eve. Here the conjunction of the Devil, his pitchfork, and the everlasting bonfire give a new perspective to Tess's story. In The Mayor

¹W p.273

²TD p.212

³TD p.391-2

of Casterbridge, the "haggard, wrinkled" furmity-woman with the "three-legged crock", who "occasionally croaked in a broken voice",¹ reminds us of the witches of Macbeth. The scene inside the vault in A Pair of Blue Eyes is strongly reminiscent of the grave digger's scene in Hamlet. We also find Hardy, like Shakespeare, indicating mood, emotion and theme through a texture of repeated images. J. Paterson's essay "The poetics of The Return of the Native"² presents a remarkable analysis of the Promethean motif and fire imagery in this novel. Bird imagery occurs in many of his novels and with various significance. Hardy once wrote of all people as being caged birds; the only difference lying in the size of the cage.³ And mostly bird symbolism in his novels has human happiness and suffering as its theme. When Cytherea Graye feels that she must agree to marry Manston against her wish, she is compared to a poor little bird "...terrified, driven into a corner, panting and fluttering about for some loophole of escape".⁴ When Clym is on his way to Alderworth, to make preparations for his new

¹ MC p.26

² Modern Fiction Studies Aut.1960

³ Life p.171

⁴ DR p. 263

establishment, he is full of the sense of the breach between himself and his mother because of his attraction to Eustacia. At "every onset of the gale" he hears "convulsive sounds" "from the branches, as if pain were felt. In a neighbouring brake a finch was trying to sing; but the wind blew under his feathers till they stood on end, twisted round his little tail, and made him give up his song."¹ In Tess, the heroine is so tender-hearted that "the sight of a bird in a cage" often makes her cry,(437) but she is "caught during her days of immaturity like a bird in a springe"(224-4), she is drawn to Angel "like a fascinated bird"(145) and later she is "like a bird caught in a clap-net", (328) and towards the end, looks at Alec with the hopeless defiance of the sparrow's gaze before its captor twists its neck.(373) Similarly, images drawn from different aspects of nature and from animal life help to explain the author's point of view as artistically and effectively as they do in the works of Shakespeare.

Hardy consciously tried to bring in qualities of the tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus in his works. In The Woodlanders he tells us that even in a small place in Wessex, dramas of unity and grandeur that are

¹RN p.217

truly Sophoclean are enacted.¹ While writing Tess, he jots down points of contrast between the situation of his heroine and Clytemnestra.² E.P.Dawson, in his essay "Thomas Hardy -- the Modern Greek" points out the similarity between Homer and Hardy, as both are patriots of an antique land. And he says that in

his love of the beautiful, Hardy is like Homer -- he sees in the common tasks beauty and nobility. Just as Homer delights to tell of the skilful carpenter planing "the well-turned threshold" of Odysseus' house, so Hardy describes Giles Winterborne planting the larch groves, attended by the silent Marty South, in a way that gives to this simple toil an epic dignigy...³

Similarly, some critics have seen The Mayor of Casterbridge as a traditional tragedy in line with Oedipus, Lear and Hamlet, but at the same time I agree with A.J.Guerard, that it is "a very modern dramatization of an impulse to self-destruction, of what Hardy called Henchard's self-alienation".⁴ And nobody can deny that Jude the Obscure presents characters and problems which are typical of modern times. The wavering between faith and disbelief, sexual maladjustment, alienation from

¹W p.10

²Life p.221

³Yale Literary Magazine April 1910, No.670 pp.356,358

⁴Twentieth Century Views:Hardy p.4

society, total despair -- all these are typical of our own age. So we find the writings of Hardy both traditional and modern at the same time. His method may seem very simple when set against that of Joyce or Conrad but he does show complex psychological insight in the creation of characters like Eustacia, Sue and Jude. And his account of the rise and fall of Henchard is significant in any time and any place.

Hardy once wrote: "My opinion is that a poet should express the emotion of all the ages and the thought of his own".¹ We find that Hardy practises what he preaches here. His themes are universal and his thoughts and ideas are those of a sensitive man of his age. The scientific ideas expressed in his age filled him with thoughts of the insignificance of human beings and the cruel state of the universe where the struggle for existence was evinced not only in men and animals but even in plants.² In his novels as well as his notes and personal writings, we can see how unhappy he was at the state of affairs in the world. Like Clym he could have said, "I get up every morning and see the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain...";

¹Life p.386

²W pp. 56,317,etc.

he too saw "half the world going to ruin for want of somebody to buckle to and teach them how to breast the misery they are born to".¹ But, unlike Clym, he understood the impossibility of the task. One can only look for remedies -- if one does not find them, it is not one's fault. Hardy was often labelled a pessimist, but he knew what he was doing:

As to pessimism. My motto is, first correctly diagnose the complaint -- in this case human ills -- and ascertain the cause: then set about finding a remedy if one exists. The motto or practice of the optimist is: Blind the eyes to the real malady, and use empirical panaceas to suppress the symptoms.²

And since he did not like to close his eyes to the ills of the world, he reasoned about them:

This hum of the wheel -- the roar of London! What is it composed of? Hurry, speech, laughter, moans, cries of little children. The people in this tragedy laugh, sing, smoke, toss off wines, etc., make love to girls in drawing-rooms and areas; and yet are playing their parts in the tragedy just the same. Some wear jewels and feathers, some wear rags. All are caged birds; the only difference lies in the size of the cage. This too is part of the tragedy.³

Hardy knew that all these tragic facts of life would not matter if people did not have the capacity to feel and experience them. But he found in all nature

¹RN p.182

²Life p.383

³Life p.171

a "determination to enjoy"¹. Even in the leaf of a tree, there is the same wish to enjoy that we find in the most distinguished men and women. So when Hardy perceived the difficulties that lie in the way of enjoyment, he was truly grieved. The world is full of misery, unhappiness and ugliness, so he, as an artist, tried to do his best: "To find beauty in ugliness is the province of the poet."² But he also believed that he must be truthful, and he must not blind himself to any aspect of the reality:

The business of the poet and novelist is to show the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things.³

For him, it was natural to write tragedies, and he thought it the most cursed thing that the artist should be compelled to

believe his literary conscience, do despite to his best imaginative instincts by arranging a denouement which he knows to be indescribably unreal and meretricious, but dear to the Grundyist and subscriber.⁴

Together with Ruskin, Hardy believed that "Comedy is Tragedy if you only look deep enough".⁵ He felt that

¹Life p.213

²Ibid. p.213

³Ibid. p.171

⁴Personal Writings ed. by H.Orel p.130

⁵Ibid. p.154

a true artist should "discover the tragedy that always underlies Comedy if you only scratch it deeply enough."¹

But even when we have accepted the fact that tragedy has to be present in true literature, some critics may argue that it is not possible to write true tragedies in modern times, because now man has lost the touch of grandeur that is associated with traditional tragedies. But to them Hardy's answer would be that modern times are even more appropriate for tragic literature than the times of Aeschylus and Sophocles, because, what

the Greeks only suspected we know well; what their Aeschylus imagined our nursery children feel.²

And even if we cannot boast of mighty kings and vast domains, we are still able to see tragedies in no way inferior to Sophocles's, for he believes that it is an "ample theme: the intense interests, passions, and strategy that throb through the commonest lives".³ Throughout his novels Hardy challenges us to compare his heroes and heroines with those of the traditional tragedians and in The Woodlanders he tells us that even Little Hintock is suitable for a grand Sophoclean

¹Life p.439

²RN p.174

³Life p.153

tragedy. With the traditional tragedians Hardy too believed that tragedy should not have worthless people as its protagonists:

The best tragedy -- highest tragedy in short -- is that of the WORTHY encompassed by the INEVITABLE. The tragedies of immoral and worthless people are not of the best.¹

But we must not mistake "worthy" for "noble". Even though Tess is presented as the descendant of a noble family, and Clym belongs to a slightly higher class than the rest of the people in The Return, what Hardy means by "worthy" is nobleness of heart. We feel sorry for Macbeth even after ambition, cruelty and power have corrupted him because there are remains of some nobleness of heart in him. And we cannot but love Henchard because essentially he is good, noble and worthy even though he errs when he lets himself be a slave to passion. And therein lies true tragedy:

...Tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions.²

Here we see that Hardy sees the characters as themselves

¹Life p.251

²Ibid. p.120

mainly responsible for their tragedies. In his fiction we find many causes of tragedies, but the characters are never blameless -- they are always at least partly responsible for their situation. Hardy believed that things could be made better if man tried. But unfortunately man can not really try -- there are warring elements within himself - and, as we see in Jude and Sue, people are destroyed partly because they have an impulse to self-destruction.

Hardy is not quite clear and decided as to what is the prime cause of tragedy in life. Sometimes it seems that Nature causes life to be full of struggle, defeat and destruction. The bird eats the snail, and she in turn is trapped by man. Man has to practise deceit in order to get his food. He must trap the rabbits and he must kill the pig that he has fed with his own hands. But at other times Nature becomes a sympathiser with the sorry state of people and if is some unknown power other than Nature that inflicts sufferings on them. Hardy calls this power by different names -- God, Fate, Chance, Prime Cause, and so on:

What bond-servants of Chance
We are all.¹

¹"Ditty" Collected Poems p.14

And it does not matter whether one deserves his doom:

These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.¹

At this point we find that the explanation that Hardy offers for the state of things is more distressing than the explanation offered by Aeschylus, etc.. The Greeks often give us the impression that suffering is caused by some past error. This Hardy disapproves of. In Tess he observes that "though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be a morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature..."² But what Hardy offers, makes us feel more uncomfortable. We are "as flies" in the hands of wanton boys, but we are killed without a purpose, not even for sport, for Immanent Will is an abstract power which works blindly, mechanically and unconsciously - no body can foretell who will be the next victim of this blind power. So Hardy says:

...He, she, had blundered: but not as the Prime Cause had blundered. He, she, had sinned; but not as the Prime Cause had sinned. He, she, was ashamed and sorry; but not as the Prime Cause would be ashamed and sorry if it knew.³

¹"Hap", Coll. Poems. p.7

²Tess p.xi

³Life p.215

Perhaps by his overemphasis on chance and coincidence Hardy only wishes us to be aware that things happen without any explicable cause. One of the worst enemies of his characters is society. Circumstance or situation also often becomes an obstacle in the way of happiness. While writing Tess, Hardy makes a note:

When a married woman who has a lover kills her husband, she does not really wish to kill the husband; she wishes to kill the situation...¹

But society is the most objectionable and most powerful enemy of man. Hardy too, like Lawrence, believes that society is just a man-made institution and its rules are not in keeping with Nature:

That which, socially, is a great tragedy, may be in Nature no alarming circumstance.²

In Tess he tells us that the heroine has not acted against Nature, still she feels shame because society has termed such acts shameful. We find Hardy more realistic than Lawrence because, even though he feels that society causes unhappiness to people, he cannot blind himself to the power of society. In Tess as well as in Jude we find that society can and does inflict unhappiness on people if they go against its rules.

¹Life p.221

²Ibid. p.218

Similarly, in A Pair of Blue Eyes and Two on a Tower the pressures of convention, social snobbery and class-difference become the agents of fate and prove too strong for the protagonists.

The decline of agriculture and the growth of industry and mechanisation also appear as causes of tragedy in the novels of Hardy. John Holloway is right when he says that the cause of Hardy's "deepening and harshening pessimism" lies in the fact that "he lost confidence in the strength of this [agricultural and rural] order to resist and survive."¹ He points out that even though The Return ends in tragedy, all through the novel, we feel the revitalising power of rural life and it appears more vital and powerful than modernity. But in the next novel, Henchard, who represents the old order, is defeated in every walk of life by Farfrae who has learnt modern ways. In The Woodlanders the representatives of the old order have lost even the vitality of Michael Henchard. Giles and Marty do not display even defeated strength, they show weakness and debility in the face of the hardships of life. They do not even roar like Henchard, they submit uncomplainingly and passively. In "The

¹ Twentieth Century Views: Hardy pp.52,62.

Dorsetshire Labourer", Hardy had written with conviction that "it is among such communities as these [the simple rustics] that happiness will find her last refuge..."¹ But when he wrote Jude he seems to have lost his faith in the power of the rustics. For the first time in the history of his novel-writing, he makes his protagonist reject his simple and peaceful village-life and go to the city, in search of happiness. The city, with all its snobbery and modern ways, has nothing to offer but disappointment. Hardy regretted the uprooting of the villages and the loss of tradition:

The labourers have become more and more migratory -- ...For one thing, village tradition - a vast mass of unwritten folk-lore, local chronicle, local topography, and nomenclature - is absolutely sinking, has nearly sunk, into eternal oblivion.²

Hardy found modernism greatly responsible for all this and so he was always suspicious of modern things. It is recorded that even when a telephone had been installed in his house, he did not use it for a long time. He felt that the network of railways was facilitating the invasion of the countryside by the modern and urban modes of life. He was aware of the presence of the outsider -- the modern urban man in his beloved countryside and he always found them

¹Personal Writings p.169

²Life pp.312-313

upto some mischief: whether it be Mr Maybold (Under the Greenwood Tree), or Dr. Fitzpiers (The Woodlanders), or Troy(Far from the Madding Crowd). At this point we find a great contrast with the works of Lawrence. Mostly the world of Lawrence's fiction is lifeless in itself and an outsider brings vitality to it; Hardy's rustic world is peaceful in itself and an outsider brings disruption and disharmony to it which very often proves tragic for the protagonists. Many of his women -- Fancy, Eustacia, Grace, etc. -- are attracted towards the new, modern and glamorous and they have to suffer for it. But his women are also seen to be agents of Fate. Because of their beauty and charm they attract even those who are stronger than they and play an important role in setting their courses. Geoffrey Day says: "Doom is nothing beside a elderly woman - quite a chiel in her hands!"¹ Cricket too believes that "Fate's nothing beside a woman's schemen!"² Jocelyn St. Cleeve warns his nephew that "...the woman sits down before each as his destiny, and too frequently enervates his purpose, till he abandons the most promising course ever conceived!"³ For characters like Giles, Boldwood,

¹UGT p.105

²DR p.149

³TT p.138

Clym, Jude, etc., woman does prove to be a cruel destiny.

Some other causes of tragedy in Hardy are - the fickleness of men and women (Fitzpiers, Fancy, etc.), passivity and the inability to take decisions (Stephen, Springrove, Giles, etc.), unwise love (Oak, Boldwood, Bathsheba, Fanny, Giles, Marty, Fancy, Fitzpiers, Mrs Charmond, etc.) and the antics of time and chance (Viviette, Shadrach, etc.).

It is sometimes said that Hardy's works comprise only the first part of the traditional tragic-trilogy. But H.J. Muller feels that even though Hardy explicitly states a gospel of despair, what

is eloquently represented, however, is not only a deep compassion but a deep faith: a natural reverence for man, an illogical ideal belief that he is superior to the forces that destroy him, above all a conviction that at stricken moments (in the words of Robinson Jeffers) he "can shine terribly against the dark magnificence of things".¹

A few facts may be quoted in support of the above statement, specially the fact that in The Dynasts, the last word is given to the Spirit of the Pities, and not to the Spirit Sinister. The Spirit of the Pities represents human sympathy and hope, and Hardy may be said to be showing his ultimate faith in these qualities. Still, it is not easy to agree with Muller

¹"The Novels of Thomas Hardy Today", Southern Review, 1940-41, p.222

when we find Jude cursing the day when he was born, or when Hardy seems to be showing the insignificance of man by comparing him to a fly and a parasite; but, again in his preface to Two on a Tower he tells us that even though human life may appear small and insignificant as compared to the stellar universe, to us it is still more important because the stellar vastness does not affect or involve our feelings and emotions as do the ups and downs of the life of Viviette and Swithin.

And he writes elsewhere:

All really true literature directly or indirectly sounds as its refrain the words in the Agamemnon: 'Chant Aelinon, Aelinon! but may the good prevail.'¹

We cannot doubt that even though Hardy's novels seem a succession of dirges on human destiny, he earnestly wishes that the good may prevail. And when he delineates the conflict within man and between man and the laws of the universe, he is at once a most modern and a traditional tragedian. He once wrote:

...in perceiving that taste is arriving at the point of high tragedy, writers are conscious that its revived presentation demands enrichment by further truths - in other words, original treatment: treatment which seeks to show Nature's unconsciousness not of essential laws, but of those laws framed merely as social expedients by humanity, without a basis in the heart of things; treatment which

¹Personal Writings p.131

expresses the triumph of the crowd over the hero, of the commonplace majority over the exceptional few.¹

These lines show that Hardy not only admired and consciously wrote tragedies, he also gave his creative thoughts to the nature and problems of tragedy.

T.S.Eliot found Hardy's novels unedifying and his characters full of blind animal emotionalism:

...those who abandon themselves without resistance to excitements which tend to deprive them of reason become merely instruments of feeling and lose their humanity; and unless there is moral resistance and conflict, there is no meaning.²

Eliot's charges are true to some extent, but Katherine Anne Porter's reply to them is very interesting.

To read a novel by Hardy, is to undergo a deep experience: "...the mind can be disturbed and the heart made extremely uneasy, but the complacency of edification is absent, as it is apt to be from any true tragedy".³

She also argues out that Hardy's characters are superior to those of Eliot, because they "suffer the tragedy of being, Mr Eliot's of not-being".⁴ We have to agree that Eliot's Sweeneys and Gerontians are inferior to the characters of Thomas Hardy, especially in their

¹Ibid. p.127

²After Strange Gods p.55

³Southern Rev. p.154 (1940-41).

⁴Ibid. p.158

"aliveness", if we may borrow the phrase from Lawrence. In one aspect of their writing, I have found similarity between Hardy and Eliot. Like Eliot's, Hardy's works too are full of references to the works of authors of all ages and all languages; and for this reason, sometimes the reader may find difficulty in grasping all that the author wants to convey. But otherwise Hardy and Eliot are two very different authors and Hardy's works have survived Eliot's unfavourable criticism. Today Hardy remains the most important writer in the field of modern tragic literature.

T.S.Eliot did not have much regard even for Lawrence as an artist though he did admire his genius. He says that Lawrence "had to write often badly in order to write sometimes well",¹ for which remark, I think the only justification is the fact that Lawrence, like all other writers, did not always write his best. Eliot also found in Lawrence "an incapacity for what we ordinarily call thinking".² But Lawrence's deep vision of life and his preoccupation with ways of improving things are adequate to refute this observation.

¹Quoted by W.Tiverton in his Foreword to D.H.Lawrence and Human Existence.

²After Strange Gods p.58

Through his writings Lawrence expresses his criticism of modern civilisation and his vision of the happy life. He is a romantic poet and even his novels are written like dramatic poems and they have to be read as such. Virginia Woolf writes that for "the moderns ...the point of interest, lies very likely in the dark places of psychology....at once a different outline of form becomes necessary..."¹ This is true of Lawrence. He wrote to his editor, Edward Garnett:

...I don't care so much what the woman feels
 ...I only care for what the woman is...what
 she is as a phenomenon (or as representing
 some greater, inhuman will),...You mustn't
 look in my novel for the old stable ego -
 of the character...The ordinary novel would
 trace the history of the diamond - but I
 say, 'Diamond, what! This is carbon'. And
 my diamond might be coal or soot, and my
 theme is carbon.²

Lawrence's concern is with that part of personality which is deep within a man and so, is never seen. He is describing character at the unconscious level. This accounts for what has been called the blemish of his style. He seems to be fumbling for words, but then we must remember that he is looking for words that can describe the indescribable.

In Lawrence's style symbols play a very important

¹Virginia Woolf: The Common Reader p.151

²Collected Letters p.282

role, because he is dealing with the unconscious which is unknowable or knowable only through the symbol. And since he uses romantic symbolism, we should not try to paraphrase it. If we press for specific and exclusive meaning, we approach the symbol incorrectly. The correct approach is to ascertain the area of experience within which the symbol operates, or the fundamental relationship it delineates. Lawrence uses diverse symbols -- Mrs Morel with the pollen of the lilies on her face, (Sons and Lovers) Ursula seeing a vision of horses, (The Rainbow) Birkin trying to destroy the image of the moon (Women in Love) -- all these are not to be paraphrased but to be experienced.

The structure of Lawrence's novels is different from the traditional novel. Some of his novels may give the impression of looseness, but in fact, in a novel like Women in Love there is a very highly organised structural presentation of the theme. The novel is made up of episodes which are turned into scenes and the novel has what Lawrence called "the form of some other rhythmic form".¹ It has a closer relationship to the art of the dance and the drama than to the traditional novel. As in a drama, the theme unfolds

¹CL p.282

itself in terms of action and dialogue, and the novel continues to develop till the end in this dramatic structure. Even the smallest incidents in the novel are interconnected and they highlight each other and help in the development of the theme.

Lawrence's aim in the writing of fiction was to lead our sympathies to new places and to make our sympathetic consciousness recoil from things gone dead. It is difficult to separate Lawrence the poet from Lawrence the preacher. He is an artist, but also a prophet and a preacher, and his style is very appropriate to his purpose. He seems really to be making a direct appeal to our "sympathetic consciousness".¹ His prose achieves an incantatory effect through the use of repetition. The literary technique and the style in Lawrence, are an outcome of his material. His repetitions, his presentation of a story as a parable, his belief in "art for my sake"² -- these are all the outcome of the fact that he was a preacher with strong and clear cut dogmas. In fact, sometimes his didacticism becomes a blemish upon his art; but Lawrence owes much of his power to it. The use of

¹LCL p.104

²CL p.171

colour, images, and rapid alternations of scene and setting also makes his style very powerful. Forster was not exaggerating when he said that Lawrence is the only modern novelist "in whom song predominates".¹ Henry James spoke of the analogy between the novelist and the painter being complete.² This we find best illustrated in Lawrence who could not only paint with colours, but also with words. Lawrence is not always at his best. He may have, as Virginia Woolf said, "moments of greatness, but hours of something else",³ but when he is at his best, he gives the impression of living through the words that he writes, and in this he is inimitable.

Lawrence believed that when a novel comes finally into being, it "has a definite organic form, just as a man has when he is grown."⁴ Like Hardy, he too strongly objected to changing or taking out bits of his novel in order to please the public. His novel was to him a living being like a man, and "we don't

¹Aspects of the Novel p.146

²Selected Literary Criticism p.80

³The Common Reader p.234

⁴CL p.334

ask a man to cut his nose off because the public don't like it: because he must have a nose, and his own nose, too."¹ At another time, he spoke of novel-writing as having a higher position than life itself:

...writing a novel: one can live so intensely with one's characters and the experience one creates or records, it is a life in itself, far better than the vulgar thing people call life.²

But at the same time, he believed that art should not be divorced from life, or indifferent to it: "These modern artists, who make art out of antipathy to life, always leave me feeling a little sick. It is as if they used all their skill and their effort to dress up a skeleton."³ In his essay on "Why the Novel Matters", he repeatedly says, the "novel is the one bright book of life....The novel is the book of life".⁴ He also believes that the "novel reveals true and vivid relationships".⁵ "The novel is a perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationships. The novel can help us to live, as nothing else can..."⁶ In most of Lawrence's fiction,

¹CL p.334

²Ibid. p.851

³Ibid. p.959

⁴Ph. p.535

⁵Ibid. p.530

⁶Ibid. p.532

the main themes are these living relationships, and through them, he is trying to find out how one can really live. Lawrence strongly believed in the importance of instinct as opposed to the intellect. He believed in the body and he was unhappy at the fact that with the growth of civilisation, man's intellect was repressing and controlling instinct. He preferred to identify himself with the primitive communities which were yet mostly untoughed by industrialism which led to the growth of too much mental consciousness and which he hated. He called himself a religious man whose religion was "a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect."¹ His attitude towards sex is full of reverence because, for the time being, it destroys mental consciousness. Marriage too, for the same reason, is something worth our respect, though marriage as a social bond is something that Lawrence cannot accept. He believes in marriage as a key to the true relationship between a man and a woman. In a letter he wrote on 7 July, 1914:

Your most vital necessity in this life is that you shall love your wife completely and implicitly in entire nakedness of body and spirit. Then you will have peace and inner security, no matter how many things go wrong.²

¹CL p.180

²Ibid. p.285

Many of Lawrence's characters turn to love for peace and inner security; but in the relationship of Siegmund-Helena, Paul-Miriam-Clara, the protagonist of Look We Have Come Through and his beloved, Gerald-Gudrun and so many others, Lawrence shows us how many difficulties there are in the way of a perfect relationship between a man and a woman. Speaking of the unhappy aspects of life in England, he writes in a letter:

And I am so sure that only through a readjustment between men and women, and a making free and healthy of this sex, will she /England/ get out of their present atrophy. Oh, Lord, and if I don't subdue my art to a metaphysic',...I do write because I want folk - English folk - to alter, and have sense.¹

We may call it a tragedy of Lawrence's efforts that people have not changed as he wished them to change, but while he was writing, he considered the difficulty of relationship between lovers as the greatest tragedy:

In fact I don't think the real tragedy is in dying, or in the perversity of affairs, like the woman one loves being the wife of another man - like the last act of Tristan. I think the real tragedy is in the inner war which is waged between people who love each other, a war out of which comes knowledge...²

¹Ibid. p.204

²Ibid. p.132

Hardy and Lawrence both present ill matched marriages as something tragic, but in Lawrence the difficulty of the man-woman relationship becomes a greater and more complex evil. Hardy's women become the agent of tragedy mostly through their feminine weakness - fickleness, indecision or love of pomp and splendour; but Lawrence's heroines are mostly like Sue Bridehead and bring unhappiness because they lack some of the feminine characteristics and possess, instead, a strong will and intellect. Too much mental consciousness - whether in man or in woman - is seen as a cause of disaster in Lawrence.

Lawrence also believed that the "business of art is to reveal the relation between man and his circumbient universe, at a living moment."¹ And so, he was very much aware of the crushing effect of our mechanical civilisation on natural human life, and from The White Peacock onwards in many of his writings he has written about the gradual estrangement of man from nature and its effect on his mind, his heart and his life. Industrialism appears as one of the chief causes of the tragic conditions of life. Industrialism introduces mechanisation of life and society and takes us

¹Ph p.527

away from the healthy, instinctual ways of nature. Hardy's sense of the tragic at the destruction of agriculture and replacement of the old order of life by the mechanised and modern ways finds a strong echo in Lawrence. Hardy had made a note on March 28, 1888:

In the City. The fiendish precision or mechanism of town-life is what makes it so intolerable...Like an acrobat performing on a succession of swinging trapezes, as long as you are at particular points at precise instants, everything glides as if afloat;but if you are not up to time - ¹

Lawrence writes with greater vehemence against mechanical and mechanised life:

The real tragedy of England, as I see it, is the tragedy of ugliness. The country is so lovely: the man-made England is vile....And the promoter of industry, a hundred years ago, dared to perpetrate the ugliness of my native village. And still more monstrous, promoters of industry today are scrabbling over the face of England with miles and square miles of red-brick "homes", like horrible scabs. And the men inside these little red rat-traps get more and more dissatisfied, like trapped rats.²

The vision of people as trapped rats is truly tragic. Lawrence had once written that tragedy "ought really to be a great kick at misery".³ And this has made

¹Life p.207

²Ph pp. 137 and 140

³CL p.150

some critics think that Lawrence did not believe in tragedy and that he did not present the tragic element in his writings. With such examples of tragic literature as Sons and Lovers and Women in Love before us, if we say that Lawrence did not present something tragic, we will have to say that Hardy also did not write a tragedy.

Some of Lawrence's observations make us think that he was not enthusiastic about tragedy:

Tragedy seems to me a loud noise
louder than is seemly.
Tragedy looks to me like man
in love with his own defeat
which is only a sloppy way of
being in love with yourself.¹

But on other occasions he makes it clear that, like Hardy, he too was an admirer of tragedies. In a letter in 1911 he lavishes praises on Riders to the Sea, the Trojan Women, Oedipus and Bacchae.²

In another letter of the same date he recommends some books to his sister Ada to read, and adds: "They are all tragedies, but all great works are. Tragedy is beautiful also."³ A writer with a sensitive mind like Lawrence's could not but be intensely aware of the tragic aspects of life; although,

¹CP p.508

²CL p.76

³CL p.77

with his usual optimism, he tries to see beauty even in them:

There is nothing to do with life but to let it run, and it's a very bitter thing, but it's also wonderful. Life is full of wonder and surprise and mostly pain. But never mind, the tragic is the most holding, the most vital thing in life and as I say,...how relentlessly tragic life is. It is well for the balance of the world that it be mostly blind to the tragic issue.¹

But Lawrence was not one of those who could be blind to such things:

And when I think of the great tragedy of our material mechanical civilization crushing out the natural human life then sometimes I feel defeated; and then again I know my shabby little defeat would do neither me any good nor anybody else.²

Besides mechanisation, mental consciousness and the difficulties of the man-woman relationship, another important problem of the time was the struggle between labour and capitalism. In his preface to Touch and Go, Lawrence observes:

In Shakespeare's time it was the people versus king storm that was brewing. Majesty was about to have its head off. Come what might, Hamlet and Macbeth and Goneril

¹CL p.77

²CP p.508

and Regan had to see the business through.
Now a new wind is getting up. We call
it Labour versus Capitalism.¹

And Lawrence warns us not to think that it is

a mere material struggle, a money-grabbing
affair.... In so far as men are men, the
situation is tragic.²

It is not a question of two dogs fighting for a bone
- the bone is just a pretext and the fight is due
to what Lawrence would call "some immediate passionate
problem within the soul of man",³ and so there
can be no solution. There can only be a choice
between a mess and a tragedy. He says that if

we really could know what we were fighting
for, if we could deeply believe in what
we were fighting for, then the struggle
might have dignity, beauty, satisfaction
for us. If it were a profound struggle
that we were convinced would bring us to
a new freedom, a new life, then it would
be a creative activity, a creative activity
in which death is a climax in the progression
towards new being. And this is tragedy.⁴

Lawrence has not used this problem as the main
theme in any of his novels, but we find a reference
to it in Women in Love.

Other tragic aspects of life that disturbed
his mind were the war and the sense of spiritual

¹ Ph II p.291

² Ibid. p.292

³ Ibid. p.291

⁴ Ibid. p.293

disaster, the lack of faith and understanding between men, the impossibility of true friendship and the whole atmosphere of England, the West and then the whole world. Lawrence wrote in a letter to Edward Garnett in October 1914:

...the war puts a damper on one's own personal movement. It makes one feel very abstract, as if I and what I am did not matter very much.¹

The whole thing only depressed him tremendously because he thought that war was created by some selfish fools for their mere pleasure. This filled him with hatred for mankind, but at the same time he saw the sense of tragedy for the innocent sensitive people:

I don't even mind if they're killed. But I do mind those who, being sensitive, will receive such a blow from the ghastliness and mechanical, obsolete, hideous stupidity of war, that they will be crippled beings further burdening our sick society. Those that die, let them die. But those that live afterwards - the thought of them makes me sick.²

In Lawrence's sympathy and concern for the suffering people, we can also detect a strong dislike for the general public. Often in his fiction, essays and letters, he shows a strong dislike of people, even

¹CL p.292

²Ibid. p.290-1

when we can find no sensible reason for it: "I hate the 'public', the 'people', 'society', so much that a madness possesses me when I think of them."¹ It was perhaps this hatred of his which made people suspicious of his friendship. Hardy also mentions the lack of reciprocal feelings in some of his friends,² but Lawrence's sense of isolation reaches the tragic state. Alienation is an important theme of much of modern literature, including Lawrence's writings; and it has been actually and thoroughly experienced by Lawrence himself. In a letter to Murry he says:

Can you understand how cruelly I feel the want of friends who will believe in me a bit? ...there isn't a soul cares a damn for me...³

Much later, in an autobiographical sketch also he tells us:

But something is wrong, either with me or with the world, or with both of us....I have wanted to feel truly friendly with some, at least, of my fellow-men. Yet I have never quite succeeded.... I certainly don't get on very well with the world.... I feel, somehow, not much of a human success... Why is there so little contact between myself and the people whom I know? Why has the contact no vital meaning?...I feel that it is a question that troubles many men.⁴

¹Ibid. p.446

²Life p.204

³CL p.275

⁴Ph.II pp.594-595

Lawrence was right in feeling that this question was universally applicable. Besides many of Lawrence's characters, the Captain in Strindberg's The Father, Darl in Faulkner's As I Lay Dying and many other characters in modern literature are portrayed as feeling the same meaninglessness in their relationships.

Like Hardy, Lawrence seems to believe that man is in the hands of his creator: "man ...can but submit to the creator, to the primal unknown out of which issues the all."¹ But in Lawrence's reaction to nature's ways, we find a marked difference from Hardy. What makes Hardy genuinely sad and touched in the depth of his heart, draws from Lawrence a very detached and practical observation:

In nature, one creature devours another, and this is an essential part of all existence and of all being. It is not something to lament over, nor something to try to reform.²

But Lawrence's attitude enfolds itself as a not very praiseworthy Nietzschean cynicism:

...every man, in the struggle of conquest towards his own consummation, must master the inferior cycles of life, and never relinquish his mastery. Also, if there be men beyond him, moving on to a newer consummation than his own, he must yield

¹Ph. p.695

²Ph. II p.473

to their greater demand, and serve their greater mystery....¹

He also says that the best way to get vitality is to absorb it from living creatures lower than ourselves. He thinks that in this way the vitality from the lower creatures is transformed into a new and higher creation. The different ways of absorption are food, love, and "relationships". But while explaining the "relationship", he recommends absorption by both the beings, and forgets what he seemed to recommend earlier -- the subjection of one to the other:

the best way is a pure relationship, which includes the being on each side, and which allows the transfer to take place in a living flow, enhancing the life in both beings.²

He finds that this is something impossible, because, in a woman, Lawrence sees the ever present impulse to fight: "The need to fight with a man is upon her, inexorable...When is the fight over? Ah when! Modern life seems to give no answer."³

So, modern life with all its complexity and insoluble problems disgusted Lawrence: "the vulgar thing people call life, jazzing and motoring and so on. No, everyday I live I feel more disgust at the

¹Ph. II p. 473

²Ibid. p. 469

³Ph. p. 199

thing these Americans call life."¹ He finds this sort of life worthless because there is no spontaneity. In his essay "On Human Destiny" he says that man cannot live and act naturally; but since he neglects "God" and "Life", they are sure to rend him - it is human destiny. But Lawrence does not give the last word to despair. In spite of his dark vision of human destiny, he draws solace in the thought that "always, since men began, the light of the pure, God-knowing human consciousness has kept alight; ...the light never goes out."²

Lawrence thinks that the atmosphere of materialism is one of the chief enemies of life. He wants to get rid of it, and like his own Birkin, he decides to look for happiness in some place other than his native England: "There is not any England. One must look for another world. This is only a tomb."³ But not only England, no other part of the world could give Lawrence what he wanted; he wrote to Catherine Carswell:

I feel it is really a question of to be or not to be. If we are to be, then we must

¹CL p.851

²Ph. II p.627

³CL p.501

move at once out of this into another world. Otherwise it is not to be.¹

But the tragedy of it all is that not even his Birkin is able to find "another world".

Lawrence saw society and the individual self as two conflicting elements. He was all for the individual and the subjection of the individual to the curious powers of society always filled him with bewilderment and rage:

I have found that one has such a living social self. I am sure every man feels first, that he is a servant - be it martyr or what -- of society. And if he feels that he has trespassed against society, and it is adverse to him, he suffers. Then the individual self, comes up and says, 'You fool'.²

In his study of Thomas Hardy, he tells us that the protagonist being destroyed by Fate or the Unknown as in the Greek or the Shakespearean tragedies, is understandable; but he does not believe in the protagonist being defeated or destroyed by society. Referring to the tragic heroines of Leo Tolstoy and Hardy, Lawrence wrote:

...what was there in their position that was necessarily tragic? Necessarily painful it was, but they were not at war with God, only with Society....

Which is the weakness of modern tragedy, where transgression against the social code

¹Ibid. p. 498

²Ibid. p.234

is made to bring destruction, as though the social code worked our irrevocable fate.¹

Lawrence does not appreciate the fact that people are afraid of society, and that the fear of society can bring unhappiness and tragedy into the lives of characters such as Anna and Vronsky in Anna Karenina. He would have preferred a character to be unmindful of people turning their backs on him: "As if people's backs weren't preferable to their faces anyhow."² And so Lawrence's Connie in Lady Chatterley's Lover does not care for society.

Lawrence wrote to Edward Garnett that he could not forgive Conrad for being so sad and for giving in.³ He told McLeod that he hated "Bennett's resignation". Instead of being a kick at misery, he found all the modern stuff since Flaubert to be an acceptance of it.⁴

It is clear that he tried to write differently from them and in spite of the resemblances that his Women in Love has to Anna Karenina, it is very different in very many ways. Still, what he

¹Ph. p.420

²Ph. II p.417

³CL p.152

⁴Ibid. p. 150

has been able to present is a tragic picture of man, society and human relations, and even Ursula and Birkin are far from achieving complete happiness. When Ursula asks Birkin whether they, too, like Gerald and Gudrun, were flowers of destruction, his reply gives us an idea of their own imperfections: "I don't feel as if we were, altogether."¹

Lawrence did not ever try to formulate a theory of tragedy but he did express his ideas about what a tragedy should have and what a weak tragedy lacks. He believed that for the presentation of the tragic, the author should have kings and princes as heroes and not common people. Ordinary people are not good enough to be tragic heroes: "individuals like Emma and Charles Bovary are too insignificant to carry the full weight of Gustave Flaubert's profound sense of tragedy..."² But as we have seen, even the depiction of the sufferings of the common people fills us with the sense of the tragic.

According to Lawrence, a tragic hero should not be a weak person: "Had Oedipus, Hamlet, Macbeth been weaker, less full of real, potent life, they would have made no tragedy."³ The tragic hero should

¹WL p.193

²Ph. II p.281

³Ph. p.420

not give in, should not accept misery, he should scorn it and fight it. He should face fate -- should struggle against it. The hero should clearly understand his position, He should know what he is fighting for, he should be convinced of the worthiness of the cause, and should have faith in it. Lawrence also believed that a tragedy should be concerned with the working out of some immediate passional problem within the soul of man. And he preferred tragedies where the heroes were killed by the judgment of their own souls or the judgment of an eternal God instead of the judgment of men and society.

We do not find in Lawrence's novels the qualities he would have sought in a tragedy, for he did not think that he was presenting anything tragic. But since he admired tragic literature, sometimes his pen inclined unconsciously towards the tragic; and since life today is tragic, even in his optimistic assertions, the tragic often reveals itself. Hardy, on the other hand, was too convinced of the tragic aspects of life to deny it treatment in his fiction, and he even resented it if, in order to please his readers, he had to insert optimism or to change the true tragic ending for a happy ending. And in spite of these forced alterations, his fiction

produces an overall picture of a life full of tragic situations, as will be seen in our study of some of his novels.

CH. II UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

EVEN though at first glance this novel appears to be nothing more than a blithe story of country-life, the author has, in a very subtle and indirect way, been pointing out throughout, that life has sad and tragic moments too, and there is no escaping from them. Happy and sad moments alternate in life, and even though for a short while life may seem perfect, it is no use forgetting that the clouds of sorrow are lurking close by.

This undercurrent of a sad view of things, together with some other characteristics, brings this novel in line with the later Wessex novels -- those in which Hardy found a "deeper, more essential, more transcendent handling" of realities.(vii) In fact critics like John F. Danby¹ and V.S.Pritchett² feel that although this novel is shorter and less pretentious than Jude, it says as much as Hardy was ever able to say. It does not have many philosophical observations, but Hardy's philosophy of life is conveyed to us all the same -- it is implied in the story. Pritchett says that the differences between Under the Greenwood

¹"Under the Greenwood Tree", Critical Quarterly I 1959 p.5

²In My Good Books

Tree and Jude are on the surface only.

One is the sapling, pretty in its April leafage, the other is the groaning winter oak, stark with argument; but the same bitter juice rises in both their stems. Sue Bridehead is one of the consequences of being Fancy Day, Jude is a Dick Dewy become conscious of his obscurity; the tantalised youth has become the frustrated man...¹

In this novel we do not find an emphasis on ominous incidents and symbols as we do in Tess, Jude or The Woodlanders, but one or two such incidents and symbols occur and are recognisable as the product of Hardy's pen. Just before asking Mr Day for Fancy's hand, Dick notices "the pale mist creeping up from the gloom of the valley", (158) and, the disturbance caused by an owl skilling some small bird is the prelude to Geoffrey Day's refusal to accept Dick as his daughter's suitor. Fancy's consequent unhappiness and distress is reflected in the rain and mist of the next chapter. A scene faintly reminiscent of the storm scene in King Lear is presented:

The trees of the fields and plantations writhed like miserable men as the air wound its way swiftly among them: the lowest portions of their trunks, that had hardly ever been known to move, were visibly rocked by the fiercer gusts, distressing

¹In My Good Books pp.100-1

the mind by its painful unwontedness, as when a strong man is seen to shed tears. (160)

But Fancy's unhappiness is neither very touching nor long-lasting. What strikes us more as sad and tragic is the relationship between the sexes. Dick feels that for real happiness between a man and a woman there should be love and full confidence. But he observes that when people are married, they become blind to romance and "undemonstrative of the Passion". (67) He thinks that he and Fancy will not be like his parents but at the same time he is bewildered, the "most extraordinary thing was that all the fathers and mothers he knew were just as undemonstrative as his own." (67) And the author has made it clear that nothing new is going to happen in the lives of the hero and the heroine. Whatever feelings and emotions they are experiencing were experienced in the past by their parents and earlier by their grandparents. That is why Dick's father at once understands the state of Dick's mind: "I've walked the path once in my life and know the country, neighbours; and Dick's a lost man!" (78)

Moreover, Dick is not an extraordinary man that there could be any chances of his having a different fate from that of the common people.

The author tells us that he is an ordinary person with "an ordinary-shaped nose, an ordinary chin, an ordinary neck, and ordinary shoulders".(12-13)

And human nature is such that the type of perfect relationship that Dick desires, is impossible. He tells Fancy:

why we are so happy is because there is such full confidence between us....We'll have no secrets from each other, darling, will we ever? - no secret at all.(203)

But we know that Dick is deceived in Fancy just as other men are deceived in their young wives. The novel ends with the observation that Fancy "thought of a secret she would never tell."(204)

Fancy is beautiful like a "wax-model", but she has got many weaknesses. Desmond Hawkins rightly perceives in her character "hints of the last of Hardy's heroines - Sue in Jude the Obscure."¹ She too tantalises the hero and wants to be loved and admired. Like Bathsheba Everdene she is vain and like Anne Garland of The Trumpet Major she is fickle-minded. She is easily attracted by show and glamour. She is very impulsive and so the reader wonders how long she and Dick can be happy. Before marriage,

¹Thomas Hardy p.43.

she was tempted by glamour, and marriage is not likely to change her nature. Even when she is going to be married, grandfather James observes:

"I wonder which she thinks most about, Dick or her wedding raiment!"
 "Well, 'tis their nature", said grandfather William.(196)

Even Fancy speaks of her desire to look attractive and beautiful in the eyes of others as something natural to womenfolk:

It is my nature - perhaps all women's -
 ...to be ever fascinated with the idea of
 surroundings more than those which have
 been customary...and praise is life to me...(184)

And Reuben Dewy sums up the nature of all womenfolk:

this is how a maid is. She'll swear she's
 dying for thee, and she is dying for thee,
 and she will die for thee; but she'll
 fling a look over t'other shoulder at
 another young feller, though never leaving
 off dying for thee just the same.(117)

If all women folk are so fickle-minded and shallow and vain, then a happy married life will be very difficult indeed and even though the difficulties of such a marriage are not so devastating as those in the works of Lawrence and Strindberg, the difficulties still exist. It is true that in this novel Hardy treats of these difficulties as life's little ironies and not as really tragic facts, but in his later novels they develop into causes of tragedies.

Even in this novel, we feel sure that the hero will have to suffer from uneasiness and unhappiness very often. When he is first attracted by Fancy and the people of the choir miss him, his grandfather says: "I hope no fatal tragedy has overtook the lad!" and his father asks: "Neighbours, have ye noticed any sign of a scornful woman in his head, or such like?"(39)

Dick is a simple and guileless man. Like Giles Winterborne of The Woodlanders, he is a true dweller of the woods, for he too is aware of the voice as well as the features of all the species of trees. He can understand the sob and moan and the whisper of each tree. At one point, his fate with regard to his beloved, is very similar to that of Giles's. Fancy has been to school and she is refined like the heroine of The Woodlanders. Her father too expects her to marry really well and asks Dick: "Now do ye think...that you be good enough for her?"(160)

Like Giles, Dick also does not argue about his suitability as the heroine's husband. He is rather backward and delays meeting his beloved lest she find his sentiments ludicrous and so his dignity be lessened in her eyes.(67) At this point we are reminded of Lawrence's hero George in The White Peacock who is always very careful of his own poor feelings

and because of his backwardness and his concern for his feelings, loses the chance of winning his beloved. So it is only a matter of good chance that in spite of similarities with Giles and George, Dick's fate is different. At least for the time-being he gets what he has been wanting.

But the story of Dick and Fancy is only half of what the novelist intends to tell. The other half -- and the more important half, is the story of the defeat of the choir. Even this defeat is not presented in a tragic light, but the very fact of its defeat is tragic, for it means tradition giving way to novelty -- it stands for the outside influences coming in to disrupt the age-old traditions and to disturb the life of the simple Wessex-people. Hardy truly found such changes sad, for he writes in his preface:

One is inclined to regret the displacement of these ecclesiastical bandsmen by an isolated organist...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...an important union of interests has disappeared.(v)

Hardy's main concern was the story of these instrumentalists and the love-story of Dick and Fancy has been so artistically presented within the story of Mellstock

Quire that we do not feel that the author is telling us more than one tale. The lives of Dick and Fancy are very much linked with the lives of the other families, and all the families combine to form such a perfect community that we are aware of a link not only amongst all the members of the community, but also with past and future generations.

The conflict between the old and the new is seen not only in the lives of the members of the choir but also in small matters as the question of choosing between the old and the new fashion of the bridal walk. The new vicar Mr Maybold is the urban invader in Mellstock and he is responsible for the defeat of the choir as well as the momentary fall of Fancy. The unfortunate thing is that the old must give way to the new: "Times have changed from the times they used to be...More's the pity....Time was - long and merry ago now!...(31)

The way the representations of the choir to the vicar fail, the way the people have to give way to the wishes of the new vicar and the novelty-loving farmer Mr Shiner, is sad but at the same time symbolical of the defeat of all old things before the new, they must "make room for the next generation".(93)

The members of the Mellstock choir are the forerunners of the comic, rustic chorus that we find so well presented in The Return of the Native and Far from the Madding Crowd. The description of nature is here the bud that flowers in The Woodlanders. The scene in which Dick and Fancy wash their hands in the same basin is very similar to a scene in Tess, but in the later novel it becomes touching because shortly afterwards the protagonists are very tragically separated from each other.

Even though this novel is one of the very early works of Hardy, we get an idea of his craftsmanship in the way he makes the story of the Mellstock choir and the story of Dick and Fancy appear as one and the same. Mr Maybold, the intruder, is linked with the life of the heroine as well as the defeat of the choir and Fancy is not only the new organist but also the future bride of Dick. In the opening of this novel we can see the germs of the powerful opening chapter of The Return of the Native. Here the author presents to us the picture of his hero against the background of a wood in a winter night, when "all was dark as the grave"(12) Against the background of vast nature we hear his footsteps and his voice, and only later on do we see his

profile. In The Return of the Native we get a description of the majestic and gloomy scene, then we see from a distance a "figure" that is "so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure."¹ And only later on do we see this figure distinctly.

In the Greenwood Tree we also get an idea of Hardy's philosophy -- his sad view of life, love and marriage. Apparently the story is quite gay, but it gives us glimpses of the little quarrels of the old Dewy couple and the unhappiness and the oddity in the lives of the Day couple. And by commenting on the heroine's character, the author makes us think that married life has always had difficulties and unhappiness in the past and will have them for ever.

¹RN p.20

HARDY believed that there is a virtue in preserving the "unities". Referring to his play The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall, he wrote in a letter to Harold Child: "the only other case I remember attempting it in was The Return of the Native."¹ By attempting to bring the qualities of a play to the novel, Hardy became one of the pioneers of a new trend in fiction. Since the publication of The Return of the Native, the dramatic structure has become more and more prominent in novels. Mention may be made of Lawrence's Women in Love which appears more like a play or a dramatic poem because of the abundance of dialogue and dramatic scene. And Lawrence may have been influenced by Hardy.

But Hardy, in this novel, seems to have been trying to bring in something which is quite old in literature. He was trying to imitate the structure of the classic tragedies and so, even though he initiates a new trend in fiction, he also evokes a very ancient world in this novel - the world of the imagination of Aeschylus, Sophocles, etc.. Hardy has perfectly maintained the unities - the main action occupies only a year and a day, the space of the action is limited to Egdon Heath and no superfluous incidents are narrated. Hardy has also been able to present an equivalent of the Greek chorus in the humble people like Fairway, Grandfer

¹ Life. p.422

Cantle, Humphrey, Olly, etc. From time to time, these people talk about the main characters - their past and present, and their possible future. They also speak out their mind regarding the behaviour and actions of these characters.

The main novel was originally divided into five books which undoubtedly were meant to correspond with the five acts of the classical tragedy. Hardy also tried to make the main characters belong to a higher class than the rest, but they are not royal or aristocratic enough to equal the ancient heroes, they are more in keeping with the heroes of modern literature. Even though of nobler birth, Clym is not very different from Humphrey in whose profession he finds contentment and happiness.

In another thing also this novel is typically modern. Unlike the classical tragedies, which show man's greatness, it only shows the triviality of man and his helplessness in the face of nature and circumstances. Man finds his life full of unhappy events. Times are not fair: "Men have oftener suffered from the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings oversadly tinged." (12) For this reason perhaps, Hardy chooses Egdon Heath as the stage for the enactment of the tragedy of Eustacia, Clym and Mrs. Yeobright. In the very opening chapter of the novel, we are given a description of the gloomy stage:

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 and dreadThe spot was, indeed, a near relation of night.... The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it the storm was its lover, and the wind its friend... It was ... like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. As with some persons who have long lived apart, solitude seemed to look out of its countenance. It had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities.

(11-13)

To this sombre and gloomy place our heroine was confined. She was full of Promethean rebelliousness against circumstances and fate, but all her efforts, all her contrivances, and all her rebellion proved to be of no avail and in the end she fulfilled her own prophecy regarding her doom in relation to the heath - "'Tis my cross, my shame, and will be my death!"(93)

Clym, on the other hand, did not hate the heath. Instead of rebelling against it, he was attracted towards it. He was fed up with the Life of Paris and came back to spend the rest of his life here. The Heath received him as it received Eustacia. Just as Eustacia on the barrow "was so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure"(20), so also Clym "was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, and with its odours.

He might be said to be its product"(180). The heath did not differentiate between human beings, it treated them all alike. Clym's attitude towards the heath is opposite that of Eustacia: "Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath, and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym"(180-1).

But the only return that the heath could give to either of them was to submerge his individuality into its own. When Mrs Yeobright looks at Clym from a distance, she is unable to recognise him. Clym "appeared of a russet hue, not more distinguishable from the scene around him than the green caterpillar from the leaf it feeds onHe appeared as a mere parasite of the heath"(283). But according to their different attitudes towards the heath, towards nature and circumstances, Clym and Eustacia meet different fates. Eustacia "used to think of the heath alone as an uncongenial spot to be in; she felt it now of the whole world"(355). And so, unable to escape from the heath in her life, she escaped from the whole world by committing suicide. Clym, on the other hand, loved his surroundings, and tried to accept whatever fate gave him. As a result, Clym could find a partial fulfilment of his meagre ambition. But the impression that we get, on the whole, is that life is full of difficulties, more sad than happy, and that nothing but tragedy lies in store for characters like Eustacia, Mrs Yeobright and

even Clym. Hardy had to add the sixth book, the "Aftercourses", only to please the readers of the magazine in which his novel appeared serially. So we may consider the end of the fifth book as the real ending. And according to that, none of the main characters is left with any prospects of happiness. Mrs Yeobright, Eustacia and Wildeve have all died unhappily, Clym is half blind and Thomasin has lost her husband. One may ask who is to blame for such tragic events. If one were to ask Eustacia, she would reply:

How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me!.... I do not deserve my lot! 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! (361)

We cannot agree fully with Eustacia; she may have done Heaven no harm, but she did do Thomasin^e harm when she tried to attract Wildeve back from her for a very selfish and trivial motive - to show her "power"(72) and to get rid of her boredom. She says she tried to be a splendid woman, but Hardy proves that she was a splendid woman in many ways:

Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity. On Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman. (73)

We are struck by the precision and artistry of Hardy when he tells us in a single sentence how her speciality - her greatness - was the cause of her doom and her fall. In the chapter "Queen of Night", Hardy has produced a dazzling picture of Eustacia with the help of allusions to Olympus, the Sphinx, lotus-eaters, the Delphian oracles, Cleopatra, Artemis, Athena, Hera and a host of other extraordinary, divine and legendary figures. Even though she is a modern girl, she reminds one of things and people of the grand past:

One had fancied that such lip-curves were mostly lurking underground in the South as fragments of forgotten marbles....her general figure might have stood for that of either of the higher female deities. The new moon behind her head, an old helmet upon it, a diadem of accidental dewdrops round her brow, would have been adjuncts sufficient to strike the note of Artemis, Athena, or Hera respectively.....A true Tartarean dignity sat upon her brow, and not factitiously or with marks of constraint, for it had grown in her with years.(74-5)

But in spite of all these things, circumstances had placed her as an ordinary girl and so she used to pray thus: "O deliver my heart from this fearful gloom and loneliness: send me great love from somewhere, else I shall die"(78). She was gloomy and lonely

because she was conscious of her beauty and her extraordinariness. Moreover, she wanted to be different from the ordinary. She could not mix with the common lot and behave and feel as they did. Because of her hankering for uniqueness, she could not be satisfied with the common things that life offered. So she tried to achieve things for herself with the help of her "power", but she could only influence Wildeve and Clym a little; she could not change her fate. She wanted "what is called life - ... and all the beating and pulsing" (289) that one can find in a busy part of the world. But Clym could not give her these things. She might have got them somehow if she had not been a proud woman. In the end, Wildeve had the means and the desire to offer them to her, but to

ask Wildeve for pecuniary aid without allowing him to accompany her was impossible to a woman with a shadow of pride left in her: to fly as his mistress....was of the nature of humiliation. ...He's not great enough for me to give myself to - he does not suffice for my desire!...If he had been a Saul or a Buonaparte - ah! But to break my marriage vow for him - it is too poor a luxury! (360)

So, instead of humiliating herself, she prefers to die. At this point we are struck by the resemblance between Eustacia and Ibsen's heroine Hedda Gabler. Hedda too, when she learns that she must be at the mercy of Judge Brack - a slave to him - shoots herself. Both Hedda and Eustacia prefer death to a life of

humiliation. They both have dignity and pride and they both want a life of glamour. For Hedda it means having a footman in the house, a saddle horse, and other things of luxury; for Estacia it just means an escape from the dull, gloomy and "haggard Egdon" (12) to a brilliant and busy city - Budmouth or, better still, Paris. Both of them want to have "power". Hedda tells Mrs Elvsted - "I want for once in my life to have power to mould a human destiny"¹. Eustacia, on the other hand, lights a fire to see if she has power to attract a man from the distance of one and a half miles. Eustacia tells Clym that she is bored with life and Hedda says to Brack - "...there is only one thing in the world I have any turn for. Boring myself to death."²

And the reason of their boredom can be found in their hatred of people in general. They are both self-centred creatures - living just for themselves. Eustacia tells Clym that she does not love her fellow-creatures - "Sometimes I quite hate them"(193). In the same way, Hedda finds it surprising that Miss Tesman should wish to take some poor invalid in the room of her dead sister and should wish to nurse her. Miss Tesman finds it a necessity to have someone to live for; but no other person can receive any consideration in the lives of Eustacia and Hedda.

¹ Coll. Works of Ibsen. Vol.X.p.114

² Ibid.pp. 81-2

In the end both find life not worth living, for they cannot have their own way in life. Even the means of their suicide would have been the same if Charley had not hidden Captain Vye's pistols.

We are struck by the similarity of situation and character in both the tragedies, even though neither of the authors can be proved to have been influenced by the other. Hedda Gabler was first published in 1890 - two years after the publication of The Return of the Native.

Eustacia's lack of concern for others, her "instincts towards social non-conformity" and her rejection of society remind us of D.H. Lawrence's Women in Love also. Ursula too rejects family and society but she gets happiness in return - she is able to attain "singleness of being"; but in Hardy's novel we feel that, living in a society or even in a family, one is expected to consider the feelings and the good of others. Eustacia is lonely and bored because she has detached herself from others. So other people prove to be of immense importance in the life of a person. But Lawrence (unconvincingly) shows them to be insignificant in his novel.¹

Eustacia also reminds us of Flaubert's heroine Emma Bovary. Both of them are romantic by temperament, but cabined and cribbed by environment and circumstances. We are told about Emma Bovary

¹ See Ch. on WL

that "true to her favourite theories, she longed for love".¹

About Eustacia we learn that to "be loved to madness - such was her great desire" (77). Both of them are leading a dull and lonely life, while their temperament goads them to seek excitement and adventure indiscreetly. Eustacia's "loneliness deepened her desire"(77). Both of them recklessly take any person who offers to be taken, even though they feel that they do so only for want of a better person. They both want to escape their dull environment and live in a busy city. Curiously enough, both of them want to escape to the same city, "the French capital - the centre and vortex of the fashionable world"(117), "that rookery of pomp and vanity, Paris"(112). For Eustacia, the man coming from Paris is "like a man coming from heaven"(116). And Madame Bovary contemplates: "What sort of place was this Paris of the sounding names? She spoke it half aloud from mere pleasure in the word. It echoed in her ears like a cathedral chime, it flamed before her eyes....Paris, vaster than Ocean, shimmered for her in a rosy vapour".² Forced to live a dull and mirthless life, Madame Bovary indulges in ^{the} fancy of a life with a "dream-lover": it would have been no different from that of the people who were her ideal:

¹ Madame Bovary p.52

² Madame Bovary pp.68-69

Living a city life.....surrounded by the bustle of streets, the chatter of theatres, the bright lights of ballrooms; familiars of an existence in which the heart dilates, the senses open and expand."¹

And when Eustacia's dreams are shattered, she says -

...do I desire unreasonably much in wanting what is called life - music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world? That was the shape of my youthful dream; but I did not get it.(289)

Both Eustacia and Emma have some longings that are not clearly defined. Eustacia "seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover"(77). Madame Bovary, "deep in her heart she was waiting for something to happen.... each morning when she woke she was agog for what the day might bring forth."² "She would have liked to travel, or to have gone back to her Convent. She longed to die, and yet, she longed to live in Paris".³ And one of the main causes of their romantic and reckless cravings is their idleness. Dr. Bovary's mother tells him that what is wrong with his wife is her idleness. Clym's mother also warns him: "She is lazy and dissatisfied"(200). "Miss Vye is to my mind too idle to be charming. I have never heard that she is of any use to herself or to other people"(186).

¹ Ibid. p.53

² Ibid. pp.74-75

³ Ibid. p. 72

But in spite of all these similarities there is a great difference in Hardy's depiction of Eustacia from Flaubert's of Emma. Emma's character is exposed to us with relentless realism, whereas Eustacia is romanticised and glorified as "the raw material for divinity", and a being fit for Olympus(73).

Eustacia sometimes reminds us of Macbeth. Even though her ambition is petty compared to his, she too is as desperate for its attainment. She does not kill anybody, but she does not hesitate to mar the happiness of Tamsin. Even though unintentionally, she is partly the cause of Mrs Yeobright's broken heart and death. She arouses our sympathy less than Macbeth for she has no Lady Macbeth to spur her ^{to}brutal actions. Her own ambition, her self-love and her indifference to others' feelings and emotions are the causes of her actions. But we do feel some respect for her because she has dignity, pride and self-respect. She does not make herself cheap even to Wildeve and even to attain her ambition. Her strong determination is also admirable. We are told that once she had set her mind on leaving home, even Yeobright's letter would not have stopped her. And even the worst horrors of the weather do not prevent her from leaving home. Hardy writes that anyone who had seen her on her last journey, would have pitied her because "the wings of her soul were broken by the cruel obstructiveness of all about her"(360).

Eustacia is given enough share of suffering to make us pity her:

to know that I am the sinner if any human being is at all, drives me into cold despair. I don't know what to do. Should I tell him or should I not tell him? I always am asking myself that. O, I want to tell him; and yet I am afraid. If he finds it out he must surely kill me.....(319)

And as a result of her Hamletian indecision, Clym comes to know of it from other sources and he guesses the worst and the untrue, but, like Henchard before Elizabeth, Eustacia too withholds her excuses. Had she spoken out everything, Clym would have forgiven her sooner. But she says: "Who of any dignity would take the trouble to clear cobwebs from a wild man's mind after such language as this?"(332) We cannot say that this dignity did her much good, but it remained with her to the end. After her death, the "expression of her finely carved mouth was pleasant, as if a sense of dignity had just compelled her to leave off speaking."(383)

In death she looks as stately as she did in life and Clym not only forgives her, but even blames himself for her death. Clym seems to be made to suffer, and for no great fault of his. Getting disillusioned by the pomp and show of city life and a life of success, he returns to his native place. Like an idealist, he believes that he can do good to people and bring reform to society by educating them. One cannot doubt his intention but even

Fairway can see the impracticability of his plans:

'He'll never carry it out in the world', said Fairway

'Tis good-hearted of the young man', said another. 'But, for my part, I think he had better mind his business.' (178)

But Clym believes that a person deserving the name "man" cannot but try to do something "when he sees half the world going to ruin for want of somebody to buckle to and teach them how to breast the misery they are born to" (182). Clym's views of life are similar to those of Schopenhauer who sees so much of "the wail of humanity, the reign of chance and error, the fall of the just, the triumph of the wicked".¹ Clym says: "I get up every morning and see the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain" (182). But there is a difference in Clym. He believes that things can change and he believes that people like him can alleviate the suffering of others. But the tragedy of the whole thing lies in the fact that even with his health and vigour, Clym has not been able to do much. He can not get the help or support of people, not even of his beloved Eustacia. Even fate and nature seem to be against a man who presumes to make things better and so his eyes become very weak. With the help of his undying enthusiasm and faith, he succeeds in becoming an "itinerant open-air preacher and lecturer" (412). But he is not

¹ A. Schopenhauer. The World as Will and Idea. Vol. III p.212

able to alter things and people just remark that it was all right for him to take to preaching since his eyes were not strong enough for him to be able to do anything else. Even though Clym appears to be contented with the state of things, we can not call him happy for he seems to have lost interest in life. He cannot marry because he feels he is now incapable of real love, and earlier, like most tragic figures, he suffered from a guilt complex. He thought himself responsible for the death of both his mother and his wife.

Before meeting Eustacia, Clym was unhappy because of the unhappiness of the whole world and because of his eager desire to give happiness to others. After he fell in love with Eustacia, he could not be happy because his mother disapproved of her. The relationships of Mrs Yeobright, Clym and Eustacia are faintly similar to the relationships depicted in Lawrence's Sons and Lovers. Mrs Yeobright too expects Clym to succeed in life. After the death of her husband, she did not marry again and have another family - she devoted her life to Clym. Naturally she expects her son to give her affection and obedience but when she finds that he is ready to sacrifice her wishes for the sake of Eustacia, we discern in her a jealousy similar to that of Mrs Morel in Sons and Lovers. Mrs Yeobright's speech, "You answer me you think only of her. You stick to her in all things"(211),

is similar to the speech of Mrs Morel , "...you only want me to wait on you - the rest is for Miriam."¹

Clym also loves his mother very much. His following speech is similar to Paul's speeches towards the end of Sons and Lovers -

O, my mother, my mother! would to God that I
could live my life again, and endure for you
what you endured for me. (411)

These lines are surprisingly similar to the lines of the poem "The End" that Lawrence wrote after the death of his mother:

And Oh, my love, as I rock for you tonight
And have not any longer any hope
To heal the suffering, or to make requite
For all your life of asking and despair,²
I own that some of me is dead tonight.

But this does not prove that Lawrence must necessarily have been influenced by Hardy's The Return of the Native in his writing of the above lines or of Sons and Lovers, for there are great differences between the situations of the two novels. Mrs Yeobright is not possessive. The Oedipus complex does not play any part in the lives of Mrs Yeobright and Clym. Mrs Yeobright is not opposed to Clym getting married but she is opposed to his marrying Eustacia because she feels that she is not a good woman. She would have been very happy if he had married Thomasin. She

¹ SL p.261

² CP p.100

is not selfish, she does not want Clym in place of her husband and she thinks only of his good. That is why when Clym learns of Eustacia's cruelty, he cries out - "May all the murderesses get the torment they deserve!"(328) These words remind us of King Lear, who, grieved at Goneril's ingratitude, wishes that

All the stored vengeance of heaven fall
On her ingrateful top.¹

Hardy had been reminded of King Lear at the time of the composition of this novel. In his preface he writes: "It is pleasant to dream that some spot in the extensive tract whose south-western quarter is here described, may be the heath of that traditionary King of Wessex - Lear"(p.V). At many points in the novel we find resemblances with King Lear.^{2a} As the King sees his daughters' doors closed against him, so Mrs Yeobright finds her son's door shut against her and as Lear thinks of his fiendish daughters, Mrs Yeobright thinks of her daughter-in-law:

Can there be beautiful bodies without hearts
inside? I think so. (293)

Lear's thoughts are similar:

Then let them anatomize Regan; see what
breeds about her heart. Is there any cause
in nature that make these hard hearts?²

¹ King Lear. II. iv. 157-8

² W. Shakespeare. King Lear. III sc. vi. 75-77

^{2a} See also p. 95

Mrs Yeobright has to return from the closed door of her son's house on a "fiery day", and when Lear meets with filial ingratitude, he has also to encounter "sheets of fire", "sulphr'us and thought-executing fires", and nature spitting fire and spouting rain.¹ Mrs Yeobright says that she would not have shut out even a neighbour's cat on such a day, and Clym says that she died on the heath "like an animal kicked out"(316); Similarly, Gloucester and Cordelia say that Lear was driven out when even an enemy's dog or even a wolf would not have been denied shelter.² Like Lear, Clym feels that he could have forgiven his wife if she had wronged him, but to wrong his mother "that's too much for nature!"(334) Lear also calls his daughters "unnatural hags"³ and Kent speaks of the king's "unnatural and bemadding sorrow".⁴ Speaking of the "mad" Edgar, King Lear says:

...Nothing could have subdu'd nature
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.⁵

¹ Ibid. III.ii.lines 46,4 and 14.

² Ibid. III.vii.62, IV.vii.36

³ King Lear, II, iv, 277

⁴ Ibid. III, i, 38

⁵ Ibid. III, iv, 69-70

And when the boy Johnny Nunsuch remarks at Mrs Yeobright's mad manner of talking, she says: "Most people who grow up and have children talk as I do. When you grow up your mother will talk as I do too"(293).

The Return of the Native evokes scenes from many tragedies. Clym is "indisposed to take part in the feasting and dancing" at Thomasin's marriage: " 'I wish I could be there without dashing your spirits', he said. 'But I might be too much like the skull at the banquet!' "(407). The scene between Eustacia and Clym, after he learns the details of his mother's death, recalls scenes from Othello which are similarly full of agony, anger and misunderstanding. Othello feels that he cannot bear Desdemona's faithlessness, though he could have borne many things:

Had it pleas'd heaven
To try me with affliction; had they rain'd
All kind of sores and shames on my bare head,...
I should have found¹ in some place of my sole
A drop of patience;

Similarly, Clym tells Eustacia, "had you half-killed me, had it been that you wilfully took the sight away from these feeble eyes of mine, I could have forgiven you" (334). Both Othello and Clym think they must part from their beloved and have to

¹Othello IV. sc.ii. 48-54

resist the temptation to softness. But as Marcia Lee Anderson points out and illustrates, the scene in Eustacia's bedroom "was inspired directly by Webster."¹ Much of the dialogue shows direct imitation of dialogues in The White Devil, as, for example, when Clym says to Eustacia: "Can you read, madam? Look at this envelope"(333). Brachiano says to Vittoria: "Can you read mistress? look upon that letter".² Eustacia says to Clym: "do you think you dare do anything to me that I dare not bear?"(331) Vittoria says to Brachiano: "...what dar'st thou do, that I not dare to suffer"³. Eustacia pleads to Clym, "Best natures commit bad faults sometimes, don't they?"(336) Flaminio says - "Best natures do commit the grossest faults"⁴.

As Frederick L. Gwynn⁵ has shown, the same scene of The Return of the Native has some dialogues and phrases which show Hardy's debt to Shakespeare's Hamlet. Clym's first words to Eustacia in her bedroom are - "You know what is the matter"(330).

¹ Mod. Lang. Notes. Nov. 1939. pp. 497-501 (vol. 54)

² Webster., The White Devil IV, ii.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Hamlet and Hardy", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. IV, 1953, pp. 207-8

And the opening speech of Hamlet to Queen Gertrude in her closet is this - "Now, mother, what's the matter?"¹ Eustacia asks Clym, "What are you going to do?" (331) The Queen asks Hamlet, "What wilt thou do?"² One may wonder why a gifted artist like Hardy should have thus imitated passages from these tragedies, but one point has become clear - that Hardy was trying to present a parallel to the greatest tragedies in English literature. If there had not been such passages of obvious imitation, perhaps some readers would have admired the work more. Such direct imitation smells a little of the lamp. Yet it may help to give the story a certain grandeur and reverberation.

With the help of his allusions, certain scenes and dialogues, Hardy has been able to evoke a large and heroic world of the past and so the action of the novel comes within a very large frame of reference. The novel is full of allusions to places, stories, legend and literature of classical antiquity as well as of more recent epic and tragic literature - the works of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton etc.. So, as John Paterson puts it, "throughout the novel character and scene and incident are constantly evaluated, or ... transvaluated, according to a scale provided by classical history

¹ Hamlet III. iv. 8

² Ibid. line 21.

and literature".¹ Captain Vye is a "Greek Ulysses"(220), Egdon Heath is Eustacia's "Hades"(75) and she, belonging to "Alcinous' line, (her father hailing from Phaeacia's isle)"(76), calls up Wildeve "as the Witch of Endor called up Samuel"(72). and when the bonfire is lighted on Egdon Heath, it

was as if these men and boys had suddenly dived into past ages, and fetched therefrom an hour and deed which had before been familiar with this spot.(23)

Hardy goes on to tell us of the "ashes of the original British pyre", the "flames from funeral piles long ago", and blazes of "Druidical rites and Saxon ceremonies"(23). He tells us that the sight resembled that of "Limbo", and gives his comment thus:

Moreover to light a fire is the instinctive and resistant act of man when, at the winter ingress, the curfew is sounded throughout Nature. It indicates a spontaneous, Promethean rebelliousness against the fiat that this recurrent season shall bring foul times, cold darkness, misery and death. Black chaos comes, and the fettered gods of the earth say, Let there be light. (23)

We find Hardy, like Shakespeare, indicating mood, emotion and theme through a texture of repeated images. Because of other references to Prometheus, "Tartarean situation", "Titanic form"(12), "rebel in high Promethean fashion"(261), and to

¹ Mod. Fict. Studies 1960 Aut. "The Poetics of The Return of the Native" p.216

innumerable descriptions of fire and burning - "scalding caldron"(22), "fire of feeling"(249), "smouldering rebelliousness" (75), etc., the above words of Hardy gain much significance in relation to the theme of the novel. From time immemorial, man has been rebelling against the injustice of gods, the decrees of Fate and the shackles of circumstance. Hardy's heroine too rebels against circumstances but, sadly enough, in spite of her divine appearance, she is completely defeated in her aim. Eustacia has many affinities with Prometheus. She has a "true Tartarean dignity"(75) upon her brow; coming from Budmouth to Egdon she feels "like one banished"(76) and reminds us of the Titans who had been banished to Tartarus. Egdon has the qualifications of "the facade of a prison"(12) - it is like the rock in Scythia to which Prometheus was bound, because Eustacia is unable to free herself from Egdon. She also calls Egdon her Hades (75) and we are led to think of her suffering as something like that of Prometheus in Hades. The colour of her soul can be fancied as "flame-like"(74). In her quarrel with Mrs Yeobright, she speaks with a "smothered fire of feeling"(249), and "scalding tears trickle from her eyes"(251). Clym Yeobright too is described as an image of the fettered god: "As is usual with bright natures, the deity that lies ignominiously chained within an ephemeral human carcase shone out of him like a ray"(145).

But in comparing Eustacia and Clym with Prometheus, we become aware of the contrast too, and of the smallness of the modern protagonists. Clym also says that he is capable of rebelling in the "high Promethean fashion"(261), but he never evokes our awe as the legendary hero does and his achievement in life has little significance.

One of the intentions of Hardy seems to have been in this novel to show the insignificance of man in this world. Life is a ruthless struggle and nature is indifferent to the individual. Life is not only difficult, it is incomprehensible with its "inequality of lots" and "perpetual dilemmas"(74). Science has so disillusioned man that he cannot find solace in a religious or spiritual vision of life:

The truth seems to be that a long line of disillusionive centuries has permanently displaced the Hellenic idea of life, or whatever it may be called. What the Greeks only suspected we know well; what their Aeschylus imagined our nursery children feel. 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.(174)

Clym makes efforts to change the plight of the whole community, Eustacia tries to change just her own fate, but both of them fail because a human being is as insignificant as an insect in the world of The Return of the Native. Mrs Yeobright

has to die "on the heath like an animal kicked out", (316) and looking at Clym from a distance she finds him like a caterpillar, he "seemed to be of no more account in life than an insect. He appeared as a mere parasite of the heath, fretting its surface in his daily labour as a moth ... (283) ⁵ We are reminded of the evaluation of man in King Lear: "Man's life is cheap as beast's"¹, "no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal"² "a comrade with the wolf and owl"³, "... I such a fellow saw; Which made me think a man a worm:...", "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods,"⁴. Hardy convincingly shows us the insignificance and pettiness of human beings. Such views about life and people, and the dramatic structure of the novel, tempt us to class The Return of the Native as a modern novel; but the cross-references to the ancient tragedies and the evocation of the world of antique grandeur compel us to regard it also as a work in line with the ancient tragedies.

¹ King Lear II.iv.266.

² Ibid. III.iv.107

³ Ibid. II.iv. 209

⁴ Ibid. IV. i. 33-4

⁵ Italics mine

CH. IV

THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

IN the preface to The Mayor of Casterbridge, Hardy speaks of this novel as "particularly a study of one man's deeds and character". (V) And, in fact, the hero engrosses our interest so much that for us the importance of every character and action depends on its relation to Michael Henchard. Yet, in the very beginning, the author plainly states that his hero has instincts of a "perverse character", (II) and he keeps reminding us that he is impulsive, fitful and self-willed. He does not attempt to draw our sympathy for his protagonist. He does not even try to palliate the enormity of his crime in selling his wife by presenting Henchard as horrified when he wakes up in the morning and discovers that he has really sold his wife just as gipsies sell their useless horses. Nor does Hardy comment upon his repentance, but leaves it to our discretion to draw whatever conclusion we like from Henchard's swearing of the oath. He does not even give us a detailed description of the pains that he took to find out his wife and child. He rather exposes the self-centredness of his protagonist with utter frankness. Henchard is not so much filled with the sense of loss of his wife as he is concerned about his disgrace for which he blames his wife's meekness and simplicity. We are told that "a certain shyness of revealing his conduct prevented Michael Henchard from following up the investigation with the loud

hue-and-cry such a pursuit demanded"(23) But as the story draws to a close, we are not only sympathetic towards him, we are also in complete agreement with Hardy's view that Michael Henchard is "a man of character". We feel pity and sorrow for the sufferings of a man who had immense capacities - who could have led a perfectly happy and successful life but for the faults of temper, jealousy and self-destructiveness.

Henchard is undoubtedly a tragic character, and in order to emphasise this fact, some critics have compared him with Oedipus. But if we try to assess the greatness of The Mayor of Casterbridge without linking it to Greek and other older tragedies, we find it a tragedy of its own kind. In the whole of Hardy's fiction, we find a remarkable variety. Melodramatic novels of ingenuity like Desperate Remedies and A Laodicean are very different from Jude the Obscure or The Return of the Native which are so typically modern in their theme, characterisation and novelistic devices. The Mayor presents a remarkable combination of the old and the new in literature. Though certain events remind us very much of the Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex, the hero, unlike King Oedipus, meets his down-fall because of the shortcomings of his own character rather than for some past sin or curse. He has committed a crime in the past and he may feel guilty at times but no supernatural power compels him to pay for his crime.

In his perversity and under the influence of strong rum he forgot the difference between animals and human beings and said to the people in the refreshment tent:

For my part I don't see why men who have got wives and don't want 'em, shouldn't get rid of 'em as these gipsy fellows do their old horses. Why shouldn't they put 'em up and sell 'em by auction to men who are in need of such articles? ... I'd sell mine this minute if anybody would buy her! (13).

What would seem incredible to the modern reader often becomes credible in Hardy's universe. A sailor - a stranger to the place - does buy her for five guineas. Henchard wakes up in the morning and realises that it was not all a dream, and that he had actually sold his wife and child. He hunts for Susan and little Elizabeth-Jane for days together but in the end discovers that they and the sailor have left the country. After this, as in the Winter's Tale, many years are allowed to lapse before the narrative is taken up again. Susan, now a middle aged woman, calling herself the widow of Mr. Newson, comes with her daughter to Casterbridge; for the furmity woman has informed her that the man who sold his wife "came back here to the next year's fair, and told me quite private like that if a woman ever asked for him I was to say he had gone to ... Casterbridge".(27) On entering Casterbridge they hear people grumbling because the blind selfishness of the business world has "made all the poor

volks' insides plim like blowed bladders" (35) - people have been deprived even of wholesome bread, and they tell these new-comers that they "may as well look for marna-food as good bread in Casterbridge just now. They can blare their trumpets and thump their drums, and have their roaring dinners but we must needs be put to for want of a wholesome crust".(34-35) Soon we learn that the corn-factor, Mr. Henchard, is responsible for this grievance of the people and, as we look through the open window at the scene inside the inn The King's Arms, we are made aware that the mayor's popularity is already on the wane. When he rises to make a speech, he is interrupted by people saying "Hey! How about the bad bread, Mr. Mayor?"(40-41) Solomon Longways, one of the loungers outside the hotel, tells Elizabeth-Jane:

Never a big dealing in wheat, barley, oats, hay, roots, and such-like but Henchard's got a hand in it. Ay, and he'll go into other things too; and that's where he makes his mistake. He worked his way up from nothing when 'a came here; and now he's a pillar of the town. Not but what he's been shaken a little to-year about this bad corn he has supplied in his contracts. (40)

So, not knowing the limitation of his own capacity, Henchard has already given cause for his popularity to be shaken, and we can not agree with D.A. Dike when he says that "the career of Michael Henchard ... is so organised that the pursuit of his conscious purpose, to atone for the crime committed in the Prologue by

sharing his wealth and prestige with his rediscovered family, reverses his fortune and prepares his downfall".¹ Henchard's fall is caused mainly by the flaws of his own character and one of the flaws of his character is a concern with his own interests even at the cost of other people's. He is not going to change himself, so there is no question of his rising again in the estimate of the people. He is not ready to accept his responsibility and to make amends to people by undergoing a loss himself. Moreover, at the slightest instigation he shows the same temper "which, artificially intensified, had banished a wife nearly a score of years before." (41) So we find much truth in A.J. Guerard's statement that "character is fate; and Newson and the furmity-woman, those symbolic reminders, were part of his character and fate. "Henchard would have destroyed himself even had they not returned".²

Henchard is as much the victim as the agent of his own misfortunes. He cannot judge properly his own capacities. He is unable to understand his own good. He is a slave to his emotions. He is violent, jealous, proud and domineering; and even though he has many good qualities, it becomes inevitable that he should turn love into hatred and should suffer from

¹ Essays in Crit. 1952 vol. 2 p.169

² Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories p.151

loneliness and separation from all and in the end wish for such complete oblivion:

'That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death,
or made to grieve on account of me.
'& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground ...
'& that no flours be planted on my grave.
'& that no man remember me... (333)

Filled with bitterness, and unable and undesirous of doing anything to change circumstances or people, Henchard completely cuts himself off from the world of the living - from family, society and nature. It is a long way from the "pillar of the town" (40) and the mayor with "diamond studs" (38) to the man who wishes - "that no murners walk behind me at my funeral". (333) But Henchard does not take long to travel this distance because he is not one to take good counsel and he is headstrong enough to continue in an error. Moreover, he is unable to get rid of his temper and we get glimpses of it on many occasions and at many deserving or undeserving persons - especially at the sale of his wife, at the great public dinner, at Abel Whittle when Henchard insisted that he should go to work half naked, and finally at Farfrae. He was impulsive enough to compel Farfrae with loads of his love and affection, and offers of money and position; but he was also quick in feeling hurt and wronged when people showed a preference for Farfrae's common sense and practicality. He could soon sense that much of people's admiration for him had been transferred to

Farfrae; and instead of trying to ignore the whole thing, he seems to find some cruel pleasure in hurting his own feelings by drawing out more truths about people's opinions of him. When a child-messenger tells him that he has been sent to fetch Farfrae and not him for valuing some hay, he asks:

'Why do people always want Mr. Farfrae?'

'I suppose because they like him so - that's what they say'.

'Oh - I see - that's what they say - hey? They like him because he's cleverer than Mr. Henchard, and because he knows more; and, in short, Mr. Henchard can't hold a candle to him - hey?'

'Yes -- that's just it, sir - some of it.'

'Oh, there's more? Of course there's more!

What besides? Come, here's sixpence for a fairing'.

"And he's better-tempered, and Henchard's a fool to him", they say And they said, "He's the most understanding man o' them two by long chalks. I wish he was the master instead of Henchard", they said'. (103-4)

Henchard is not only hurt at the swing in people's opinion, he is filled with dislike of a person whom he had impulsively made his best friend. Rejecting his open-hearted friendship, he harbours hatred, jealousy and rivalry. His simple wife can see wherein lies the good of all of them and she tries, in her weak way, to bring Elizabeth and Farfrae together. But Henchard, endowed as he is with the power of bringing about his own ruin, not only stops Farfrae from paying court to Elizabeth, but insists on competing with him in business and popularity, and makes it known that he regards Farfrae as his enemy. Full of jealousy, enmity and

perversity, he compels the churchmen to sing Psalm the Hundred-and-Ninth:

A swift destruction soon shall seize
On his unhappy race;
And the next age his hatred name
Shall utterly deface. (233)

When Farfrae passes that way, Henchard says openly, 'There's the man we've been singing about'. (234) He seems unaware of the ironical implication of the psalm to himself, and, thus openly expressing his emotions, he lowers himself more in the eyes of the churchmen and in his own eyes, for there are moments when he gains the right perspective and sees Farfrae as he is and not as his imagination presents him. Robert Kiely rightly observes that Henchard's knowledge of himself is so imperfect that "his understanding of others is limited to a simple dichotomy of identification or opposition".¹ When he was attracted towards Farfrae, he found him resembling his own brother - he found nothing but virtues in him. But once he turned against him, he saw him as evil incarnate. We pity Henchard for his foolishness and inability to understand things when he says that Farfrae "has taken away everything from me, and by heaven, if I meet him I won't answer for my deeds!" (235)

Henchard's behaviour at the reception of the Royal party shows how he himself causes his own humiliation. As he was no

¹ "Vision and Viewpoint in The Mayor of Casterbridge" Nineteenth Century Fiction Vol. 23 No. 2 Sept. 1968 p. 191

longer a member of the council, he could not be allowed to join the council men in the reception of the Royal visitor. Hardy tells us that it "had been only a passing fancy of his, but opposition crystallized it into a determination." (263) Henchard seems to be bent on degrading himself before all the townsfolk. Everybody was dressed in his best but Henchard dressed in his "fretted and weather-beaten garments of bygone years". (265) When he came forward to shake hands with the Royal visitor, Farfrae had to intervene and we cannot blame anybody but Henchard himself for his disgrace.

Another of his self-destructive qualities is his doggedness. Once he has made a mistake, he is loth to try to amend matters. He tells Newson an untruth regarding Elizabeth and afterwards he is always fearing disclosure of the truth; he gets opportunities of amending matters but he does not do anything about it. He lets Elizabeth think badly about him even though a timely confession of the truth and of his need for her would have gained her forgiveness. Even later on, when Elizabeth accuses him, she would have seen things in a different light if Henchard had told her how he himself had been deceived by his wife. He is not one to appeal for love, affection and understanding to anybody. As the author tells us, among "the many hindrances to such a pleading not the least was this, that he did not sufficiently value himself to

lessen his sufferings by strenuous appeal or elaborate argument".(326)

Even though it is clear that Henchard brings about his own doom, we cannot overlook the role that chance and circumstances play in his life. By an ill chance Susan's letter comes open and he discovers the truth regarding Elizabeth too early. Moreover, had Susan told him the truth in the very beginning, the complication would not have risen, for when he is inclined to love Elizabeth, he truly feels fatherly love for her even though she is no kin of his. And when he has at last found somebody to take away his loneliness, Newson, who has been long deemed dead, appears to take Elizabeth away from him. The appearance of Newson is like the appearance of a vindictive fate that has come to take revenge upon him, because, in his drunkenness, he had forsaken his daughter to the care of a stranger.

Although the reputation of Henchard is already on the wane, the appearance of the furmity woman and the disclosure of Henchard's deed of some twenty years ago lower him much more in the opinion of the people . It is again a matter of ill chance that the mayor being absent, Henchard should have to sit in judgement upon the furmity woman. But here also we find Henchard too ready to confess his guilt. He is not practical and worldly enough to take advantage of his position and silence the woman; on the contrary, he speaks out, "'Tis true as light". (203)

We are filled with admiration for his fundamental honesty, but this same virtue drags him to disgrace in public. We are convinced of the truth of Hardy's statement that "it was a part of his nature to extenuate nothing, and live on as one of his own worst accusers." (328)

Though Henchard has so many human weaknesses, we feel pained at his sufferings, misfortunes, disgrace and loneliness because he has many virtues. Had he but understood his own good and the ways of the world, he would have been a happy and successful man. He is not cruel or inhuman. He is only crude and impractical. He is impatient with Whittle, but he has been kind to his mother. Even though he is impulsive, he gives us instances of strength of character. He wishes to betray Lucetta, but he cannot bring himself to do so. He is not vicious like Heathcliff even though he has affinities with him in roughness and crudity. He wishes to end Farfrae's life, but he can not really kill him. Not many that have been addicted to it can abstain from alcohol for so many years as could Henchard. The strongest proof of his sense of justice is the fact that when he comes to fight with Farfrae, he ties one of his own hands because he knows that he is stronger than Farfrae and he does not want to take advantage of his weak stature.

Hardy uses the epithet "lonely" many times with regard to Henchard. As he hears Farfrae sing, Henchard reflects, " ... how that fellow does draw me! I suppose 'tis because I'm so lonely". (60) The very day on which Farfrae accepts his employment, Henchard hears from his wife and at once he confides to Farfrae, " ... I am a lonely man, Farfrae; I have nobody else to speak to" (80) And he goes on to speak of "... the loneliness of my domestic life, when the world seems to have the blackness of hell, and, like Job, I could curse the day that gave me birth." (81-2) References to his loneliness continue throughout the novel, and remind us of many modern protagonists who suffer from loneliness and find themselves separated from society, for they cannot adjust themselves in the world.

At the same time, The Mayor of Casterbridge has got some affinity with much older literature too. As Julian Moynahan points out in his learned essay on "The Mayor of Casterbridge and the Old Testament's First Book of Samuel", ¹ we find many resemblances between King Saul and Henchard and David and Farfrae. Some of the incidents and descriptions too are very similar: just as David's capability and popularity fill Saul with fear for his position and he seeks to destroy him, so also when Henchard learns how people admire Farfrae for his knowledge, insight and ways, "whenever he thought of Farfrae, it was with a

¹ PMLA lxxi 1956 pp. 118-130

dim dread". (105) He too does all in his power to destroy Farfrae although his fundamental humanity checks him from accomplishing his wish. Hardy must have had Saul's story in mind when he was writing The Mayor, for even in the description of Farfrae we are struck by the similarity with the description of David. About Farfrae we read - "He was ruddy and of a fair countenance, bright-eyed and slight in build"(42) David is described in the following words: "Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to".¹ Goliath and Philistine found him "but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance".² When Henchard goes to the weather-prophet and is surprised by the prophet's foreknowledge of his coming, Hardy says that "Henchard felt like Saul at his reception by Samuel".(187) Farfrae's music can charm Henchard as much as could David's harp soothe Saul whenever he was troubled. Both Saul and Henchard love the young man in the beginning and help him to get a position which makes them envious later on. But both of them are succeeded by the younger man.

When Henchard goes to the weather prophet, Fall, and wishes

¹ I Samuel 16: 12

² I Samuel 17: 42

to know the future, we are not only reminded of King Saul going to the witch who conjures the ghost of Samuel, we are also reminded of Macbeth who goes to the witches to find out what the future holds in store for him. Just as the prophecy is partly the cause of Macbeth's actions, Fall's prophecy completes Henchard's ruin.

Henchard resembles King Oedipus in the fact that both are very conscious of their duty. Henchard is eager to do his duty by Susan, Elizabeth and Lucetta. But there is a great difference between the life of the two heroes. To a great extent, Oedipus's tragedy is the outcome of his overconsciousness of duty and Henchard's tragedy is brought by very different causes.

A tragic hero of the past whom Henchard most resembles is King Lear. In the very beginning, when Henchard says: "Now then, stand up, Susan, and show yourself" (15), and he offers to sell her for five guineas, we are reminded of Lear offering Cordelia to Burgundy with the words:

But now her price is fallen,
Sir, there she stands ¹

In the opening scenes of both King Lear and The Mayor, the protagonist loses our sympathy because of a rash act. This act of rashness and folly is the result of a fundamental weakness

¹ King Lear I.i. l. 199

in their character - they suffer from egoism. Lear casts off Cordelia because she hurts his vanity and Henchard gets rid of his wife and child because he thinks that they are the cause of the frustration of his high aims and hopes. The egoism and rashness of character are aggravated by senility in Lear and by alcohol in Henchard. The selling of Susan is as unnatural an act as was the banishment of Cordelia; and in both cases the reader is horrified at the mad decisions of the protagonists. We are also reminded of A Winter's Tale where Leontes, in a fit of similar rashness, gets rid of his wife as inhumanly as Henchard does, and sixteen years pass before the story is resumed.

Both King Lear and Henchard give away their powers to their inferiors and soon regret the loss of their authority. In his bitter despair, Henchard soothes himself by thinking that he is still better than Farfrae in physical strength: "'I could double him up like that - ...' He laid the poker across his knee, bent it as if it were a twig, flung it down, and came away from the door." (235) Similarly, in his utter helplessness Lear speaks of the valour of his youth:

I have seen the day, with my¹ good biting falchion
I would have made them skip.

Just as Lear showers curses on the ungrateful recipient of his unreserved gifts, Henchard has the comminatory verses of Psalm

¹ King Lear V.iii.276-7

the Hundred-and-Ninth sung for him. Lear supplicates nature to help him have his revenge upon Goneril:

Into her womb convey sterility;
 Dry up in her the organs of increase;
 And from her derogate body never spring
 A babe to honour her! If she must teem,
 create her child of spleen, that it may live
 And be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her.
 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
 With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,
 Turn all her mother's pains, and benefits
 To laughter and contempt,

Henchard's feelings are no less venomous:

His seed shall orphans be,
 His vagrant children beg their bread
 Where none can give relief.

 None shall be found that to his wants
 Their mercy will extend,
 Or to his helpless orphan seed
 The least assistance lend.
 A swift destruction soon shall seize
 On his unhappy race;
 And the next age his hated name
 Shall utterly deface. (233)

When Henchard faces the furmity woman at the Petty Sessions, and the magistrate is found to be no less a sinner than the culprit he has come to judge, the whole thing echoes some lines of King Lear:

See how yond justice rails upon yond simple
 thief. Hark in thine ear: change places; and,
 handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the
 thief?....

¹ Ibid. I, iv. 278-87

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
 Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;¹
 Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it.

Later, when Henchard comes to Elizabeth's wedding with a caged goldfinch as a present and with hopes of reconciliation in his heart, we are reminded again of King Lear who wishes to be by the side of his daughter, Cordelia - even if it means going to the prison like caged birds:

Come, let's away to prison.
 We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage;
 When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down²
 And ask of thee forgiveness; ...

Both King Lear and Henchard are impulsive, childish, simple and foolish. They are both headstrong and unable to judge people or their own good. What Regan says of Lear is applicable to Henchard, too: "'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself."³ Henchard's dismissal of Farfrae is as big a mistake as King Lear's dismissal of Kent. Both of them have a faithful fool who is not ready to leave them in their misery. Like King Lear's fool, Abel Whittle tries to "be kind-like" to Henchard and remains with him in his last moments. Henchard says to him, "and can ye really be such a poor fond fool as to care for such a wretch as I!" (332)

¹ King Lear IV.vi. 151-54, 163-67

² King Lear V.iii. 8-11

³ Ibid. I.i. 292-3

Whittle's description of Henchard's last journey after he has been rejected by Elizabeth, is remarkably similar to King Lear's state when his daughters shut the door against him. Whittle too finds an empty house in which he brings him, but unlike Lear he dies before Elizabeth can come to him. In King Lear the king has many faithful followers and at the time of his death he is surrounded by his relatives. Henchard, on the other hand, is rejected by all except his fool.

The figure of the furmity woman stirring the mixture of furmity is faintly reminiscent of the witches in Macbeth. She is a "haggish creature" - "an old woman, haggard, wrinkled, and almost in rags. She ... occasionally croaked in a broken voice." (26)

When Hardy observes about Henchard that "it was a part of his nature to extenuate nothing", (328) we are reminded of Othello's last wish -

nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak,¹
Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well;.....

Like Othello, Lear, or Macbeth, Henchard has flaws of character which need little help from the outside world to bring about his destruction. He has what the psychologists term an impulse to self-destruction; and as is typical of modern tragic characters, Henchard experiences complete

¹ Othello III.ii 345-47

separation from society and, in the end, the author does not offer the assurance that all will be well again. The novel ends with these words: "happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain". (334)

The townspeople may be compared to the chorus of Greek tragedies, though they do not play so important a role. They complain of Henchard's bad wheat, they are fearless to state bald facts and they also tell us of some future events by their perceptions and conjectures. When Susan Newson marries Henchard, they observe: "She'll wish her cake dough afore she's done of him. There's a bluebeardy look about 'en; and 'twill out in time." (88) Only later on we realise how much insight they had. They appreciate Farfrae's qualities, but are not afraid to point out his or his wife's shortcomings:

Some difference between him now and when he zung at the Dree Mariners ... how folk do worship fine clothes! Now there's a better-looking woman than she that nobody notices at all, because she's akin to that hontish fellow Henchard... I do like to see the trimming pulled off such Christmas candles. I am quite unequal to the part of villain myself, or I'd gi'e all my small silver to see that lady toppered. (267)

After the erring Farfrae has received his punishment, they bear no ill-will towards him and they express satisfaction when Elizabeth is to marry him:

... as a neat patching up of things I see much good in it. When a man have put up a tomb of best

marble-stone to the other one, as he've done, and weeped his fill, and thought it all over, and said to hisself, "T'other took me in; I knowed this one first; she's a sensible piece for a partner, and there's no faithful woman in high life now"; - well, he may do worse than not to take her, if she's tender-inclined.(308)

Earlier they offer comments on Henchard's greatness as well as weakness:

though Mr. Henchard has never cussed me unfairly ever since I've worked for'n, seeing I be but a little small man, I must say that I have never before tasted such rough bread as has been made from Henchard's wheat lately. 'Tis that growed out that he could a'most call it malt, and there's a list at bottom o' the loaf as thick as the sole of one's shoe. (40)

And it is this chorus of Hardy's novel which tells us of the illness of the city:

'Danged if our country down here is worth singing about like that!... 'My ain countree!' 'When you take away from among us the fools and the rogues, and the lammigers, and the wanton hussies, and the shatterns, and such like, there's cust few left to ornament a song with in Casterbridge, or the country round.'

'True... Casterbridge is a old, hoary place o' wickedness, by all account. 'Tis recorded in history that we rebelled against the king one or two hundred years ago, in the time of the Romans, and that lots of us was hanged on Gallows Hill, and quartered, and our different jints sent about the country like butcher's meat; and for my part I can believe it'.

'... we be bruckle folk here - the best o' us hardly honest sometimes, what with hard winter, and so many mouths to fill, and God-a'mighty sending his little taties so terrible small to fill 'em with. We don't think about flowers and fair faces, not we - except in the shape o' cauliflowers and pigs' chaps'!.(56)

We see that like Thebes of King Oedipus, Casterbridge is suffering from a kind of plague. The harvest has been bad. The poor labourers are living a miserable and vicious life, they are suffering from degeneration and demoralisation. But Henchard's past crime of selling his wife has no connection with the state of people whereas the people of Thebes suffer because of Oedipus's sin. So once again this novel is different from the traditional tragedies where people's sufferings are linked with the hero's deeds - his deeds affect the people's conditions. But Hardy had studied Greek tragedies with appreciation and he had learnt much of the skill of ironic situation and the sudden reversal of fortune from them. Lucetta asks Elizabeth-Jane to stay with her so that Henchard may visit her frequently and freely without arousing people's suspicion. But she has unknowingly given Henchard reason for keeping away from her house and Farfrae, for being attracted to it. When Henchard is in trouble, he asks Lucetta to let his creditor know that she is his "intended", but his creditor is the same person who witnessed her marriage. When Lucetta at last feels secure of her secret, the whole town knows about it. Hardy's works are full of such ironic situations. His ideas about life and about people's conduct also show the influence of Greek tragedies. In Lucetta's conduct before her death, we see the dramatization of the Greek hubris - the pride

which comes before a fall. Lucetta is so proud of her fortune and status that she forgets how much Henchard had helped Farfrae: "Donald's genius would have enabled him to get a footing anywhere, without anybody's help!" (267) And the same day Lucetta witnesses her disgrace which comes as a punishment for her pride. Elizabeth-Jane is wise to have a "fieldmouse fear of the coulter of destiny despite fair promise". She is cautious, moderate and free from pride:

'I won't be too gay on any account,' she would say to herself. 'It would be tempting Providence to hurl mother and me down, and afflict us again as he used to do'. (90-91)

The artistic way in which Hardy presents the tragic end of Henchard through a simple narrator is also reminiscent of the Greek practice of not presenting the tragic catastrophe directly. At the same time Hardy has been able to make the description of Henchard's death very poignant and touching - more so because of the absence of sentimentality. The last three paragraphs, full of detached and philosophical observations are like the choral endings of many Greek plays. In fact some of the observations resemble those of the last chorus of King Oedipus:

Her position was, indeed, to a marked degree one that, in the common phrase, afforded much to be thankful for. That she was not demonstratively thankful was no fault of hers. Her experience had been of a kind to teach her,.... that the doubtful honour of a brief transit through a sorry world hardly called for effusiveness,... her youth had seemed to teach that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain. (334)

In the closing chorus of Oedipus Tyrannus we read something similar:

Therefore, while our eyes wait to see the
destined final day, we must call no one happy
who is of mortal race, until he¹ hath crossed
life's border, free from pain.

Hardy presents a striking amalgamation of the old and the new tragic art in the presentation of his story, but within the story he also explores the conflicts between the old and the new in life and in business. Henchard is defeated in the warfare of economic competition which is the result of the new civilisation. When a mere youth, he believed that he could "challenge England to beat me in the fodder business", (13) but, after he has gained some experience of the business world, he realises that he does not possess all that is required of a business success:

In my business, 'tis true that strength and
bustle build up a firm. But judgement and
knowledge are what keep it established. Unluckily,
I am bad at science, Farfrae; bad at figures - a
rule o' thumb sort of man. (52)

Abel Whittle's comment shows how Henchard, with all his good intentions and large-heartedness, was a failure because he could not discipline his emotions or practise planned materialistic ruthlessness.

1

Oedipus Tyrannus: Translated by R. Jebb 1902, lines 1528-30

Mr. Farfrae have bought the concern and all of we workfolk with it; and 'tis better for us than 'twas - ... We work harder, but we bain't made afeard now. It was fear made my few poor hairs so thin! No busting out, no slamming of doors, no meddling with yer eternal soul and all that; and though 'tis a shilling a week less I'm the richer man; for what's all the world if yer mind is always in a larry ... (222)

Thus we see that a simple and old-fashioned man like Henchard does not know the ways of the mercenary world and is defeated. The market, which is the arena of many incidents and which is continuously viewed by Lucetta and Elizabeth, is a symbol of the money-dominated business world of today. Curiously enough, Henchard himself seems to be dedicated to the business ethic - he sells Susan, then buys her back. He shows more generosity in giving material comforts to his family than love. He sends Lucetta a cheque as a compensation for not being able to marry her. All these show that Henchard too is business-minded, but we feel that Henchard's heart is not occupied by commerce. Farfrae can think of his business even when he is enamoured of Lucetta. He can even talk to her about it and leave her in order to attend to business. In Henchard we do not find such devotion to business. He is more preoccupied with removing his loneliness. He tells Farfrae that he wants him to be with him most of the time even though business may have to suffer a little. Farfrae is more suited to the demands of the modern commercial world, so he succeeds where Henchard fails.

The novel also depicts a tragedy of generations. The old must give way to the young and new. Henchard's well-intentioned but crude and old methods and old implements fail him; and Farfrae, with his worldliness, novel ideas and new methods, succeeds. Hardy was painfully aware of the changing conditions of rural life. The advancement of civilisation, the introduction of railways and the industrial revolution have brought comfort and luxury to many but they have also completely destroyed a way of life which had its own charms. As a symbol of the new which must succeed the old, Hardy describes the introduction of the new-fashioned machine called the horse-drill to Casterbridge. The machine is painted in "bright hues of green, yellow, and red"(168) and in the sun, produces "a fantastic series of circling irradiations". (167) It is so fascinating that everybody is attracted to it and Henchard is the only one to express any doubts in the wisdom of its introduction. He is a believer in the proverb "all that glitters is not gold", but the rest of the world is easily taken by outer show and novelty. When Farfrae praises the machine, we can sense how it is going to enter into the life of the people inevitably:

It will revolutionize sowing heerabout! No more sowers flinging their seed about broadcast, so that some falls by the wayside and some among thorns, and all that. Each grain will go straight to its intended place, and nowhere else whatever!(170)

Farfrae sounds like a predecessor of Gerald Crich of Women in Love who believed in bringing perfection in life by the introduction of everything modern. But when Women in Love was written, an artist could clearly see that after man had introduced all the modern machinery to life, man will feel that he has no purpose in life. The very perfection caused by mechanisation would make a man a misfit in life. So Gerald is filled with a killing emptiness. The Mayor was written about thirty^{five} years before Women in Love and here we are only made aware that this sort of change is inevitable but sad. When Farfrae speaks of the revolution that the machine will bring in the sowing of grains, Elizabeth-Jane observes:

'Then the romance of the sower is gone for good ...
 "He that observeth the wind shall not sow", so the
 Preacher said; but his words will not be to the
 point any more. How things change!'
 'Ay; ay ... It must be so!' Donald admitted,....
 'But the machines are already very common in the
 East and North of England,' he added apologetically.(170)

This episode occurs about the middle of the novel, but from the beginning to the end, in the background of the stage where Henchard's drama is being enacted, Hardy shows us Wessex in transition. The disorder that had entered English life with the changes in agriculture and the introduction of new implements and new forms of commerce is reflected in the unemployment, uprooting and migration of villagers and the gradual decline in

the prosperity of those who clung to older forms. In fact the whole tragedy starts because of the unemployment of the protagonist, who is a skilled countryman and is confident of his knowledge about one particular business. The fact that he has no stability in life - no home and no work - fills him with bitterness. Not knowing the real cause, he puts the blame on his marriage, and so the idea of getting rid of his wife enters his head. Change and disruption have been spreading fast. When the turnip-hoer of Weydon-Priors has given a black picture of the prospects of a job for the hay-trusser, Henchard asks him:

'Then is there any house to let - a little small new cottage just a builded, or such like?'

The pessimist still maintained a negative. 'Pulling down is more the nater of Weydon. There were five houses cleared away last year, and three this; and volk nowhere to go - no, not so much as a thatched hurdle; that's the way o' Weydon-Priors' (9)

In the next chapter Hardy comments on the changes that have taken place after about nineteen more years :

Certain mechanical improvements might have been noticed in the roundabouts and highfliers, machines for testing rustic strength and weight, and in the erections devoted to shooting for nuts. But the real business of the fair had considerably dwindled. The new periodical great markets of neighbouring towns were beginning to interfere seriously with the trade carried on here for centuries. The pens for sheep, the tie-ropes for horses, were about half as long as they had been. The stalls of tailors, hosiers, coopers, linendrapers, and other such trades had almost disappeared, and the vehicles were far less numerous. (24)

And the description of the change in the furmity woman is symbolical of the general change in the people of her status:

It was indeed the former mistress of the furmity tent - once thriving, cleanly, white-aproned, and chinking with money - now tentless, dirty, owning no tables or benches, and having scarce any customers except two small whity-brown boys, who came up and asked for 'A ha'p'orth, please - good measure, ' which she served in a couple of chipped yellow basins of commonest clay. (26)

Michael Henchard can also be seen as the symbol of the old order, and in his struggle for maintaining his power and his final defeat we get an artistic portrayal of the conflict of the old and the new ways of life. The theme of this great change in the English rural life attracted D.H. Lawrence also and the poetic expression of it in the first part of The Rainbow perhaps owes something to Hardy whose works he read again before he finally wrote this novel.¹

The general impression of The Mayor of Casterbridge is that life is very complicated in modern times and that the chances of happiness are very few. There is no supernatural witness to watch our actions and to ensure justice. Even though Henchard is compared to so many biblical figures, there is hardly any reference to God's justice. Life appears more tragic because people cannot understand each other. Even Elizabeth does not

¹ See chapter on The Rainbow for a detailed discussion of this.

understand Henchard completely and since there is no supernatural power to look after people, a silent sufferer like Henchard will have to struggle all his life and will die alone. Henchard is great but a misfit in the society in which he lives and his creator rightly observes that he "might not inaptly be described as Faust has been described - as a vehement gloomy being who had quitted the ways of vulgar men without light to guide him on a better way". (117) And the impression that Hardy offers for general people, about "life and its surroundings", is that "they were a tragical rather than a comical thing; that though one could be gay on occasion, moments of gaiety were interludes, and no part of the actual drama".(59)

Hardy often used to say that "in some respects The Woodlanders was his best novel"¹. On December 31, 1887 he also wrote a note that the completion of The Woodlanders had enabled him to hold his own in fiction.² It is clear that he regarded the writing of this novel as a great achievement and he even hoped to achieve a status close to that of Sophocles through this novel. The setting of the novel is Little Hintock, "such a little small place that,.... you'd need have a candle and lantern to find it,"(8) but this does not diminish the grandeur of the action recorded in this novel. Hardy writes in the opening chapter of the novel that Little Hintock "was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation; ...yet where, from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein".(10) Thus Hardy seems to invite comparison of The Woodlanders with the plays of Sophocles. But we find this novel lacking in the qualities of a drama, and especially lacking the qualities of a tightly

¹ Life p.185

² Ibid. p.203

constructed Sophoclean tragedy. There is no unity of time, place and action such as we find in The Return of the Native, and there is nothing of the "concentrated passions" that make Eustacia Vye so reckless, ruthless, passionate and unforgettable. The novel has some technical defects as well. It suffers from the absence of a distinct central character. Grace, Giles, Fitzpiers, Mr. Melbury, Marty, and Mrs Charmond: all seem to be of more or less equal importance. Moreover, in the beginning the author seems to be undecided as to who is to be his heroine; and incidents like Marty's losing her beautiful tresses, seem to have no real relevance to the main story. Conflicts are there in the story - between nature and culture, between the ideals of worldly life and woodland life, between the interests of Marty and of Giles and Grace, and again of Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond; but these conflicts are more hinted at than presented. We have more of the author's comment and narrative than dialogue. But in spite of all these non-dramatic qualities, the novel presents a very true picture of the life of the woodlanders - of the "drama enacted in the real", and the picture is touching. It affects our heart no less than a play by Sophocles.

Hardy has conveyed to us the idea that throughout the universe there is suffering and unhappiness and nothing can be

done to alter things. He writes in the preface that in

the present novel, as in one or two others of this series which involve the question of matrimonial divergence, the immortal puzzle - given the man and woman, how to find a basis for their sexual relation - is left where it stood:..(5)

The unhappiness caused by social institutions can be eradicated by bringing about some reforms. Hardy does hint at solutions to such problems, but his main motive seems to be to show that it is inevitable that man should be unhappy. Even if defective institutions did not exist to hamper people's happiness, they would still be unhappy because it is the law of nature and affects all the creatures of the universe. Even trees and plants are not happy to be alive ☹

How they sigh directly we put 'em upright, though while they are lying down they don't sigh at all... they sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest - just as we be.(69)

Trees and plants not only suffer like human beings, they show all the characteristics of human nature and life, and at the same time they influence human lives. Hardy accepted the theory of natural selection and with the help of his images and descriptions of the woodland, he produces an effect of malignancy and struggle:

Owls that had been catching mice in the outhouses, rabbits that had been eating the winter-greens in the gardens, and stoats that had been sucking the blood of the rabbits, discerning that their human neighbours were on the move discreetly withdrew from publicity, and were seen and heard no more till nightfall.(26)

The same struggle for life, the defeat of the weaker though innocent, and the thriving of the strong and the bullying, is perceptible in plants -

Here, as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy strangled to death the promising sapling.(56)

The author presents the Darwinian view of struggle for existence / throughout nature and similar sights confront the heroine more than once - "Next were more trees close together, wrestling for existence, their branches disfigured with wounds resulting from their mutual rubbings and blows." (320) When there is a storm, the trees fight and injure each other as though they received pleasure from the sufferings of the other:

Sometimes a bough from an adjoining tree was swayed so low as to smite the roof in the manner of a gigantic hand smiting the mouth of an adversary, to be followed by a trickle of rain, as blood from the wound.(317)

How different nature appears here from Wordsworth's description of her! The same kind of storm inspires Wordsworth to write

Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.¹

¹ E. De Selincourt and H. Darbishire (edited): The Poetical Works of W. Wordsworth Vol.II "Three years she grew ..."p.215 lines 21-4

Whereas Hardy portrays a bloody struggle for existence and the presence of animosity and discord amongst plants as well as animals, Wordsworth finds a perfect harmony in nature:

there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society.¹

Hardy portrays the strife and disharmony in nature because he is filled with bitterness against a universe where virtues like honesty, devotion and endurance go unrewarded. For all his love and selfless devotion, Giles finds nothing but disappointment in life and for the same virtues Marty gets the right of being the sole lover of a man who is already in his grave.

Even though Hardy finds the spirit of discord in the whole of the universe, he finds a peculiar sort of harmony between nature and human beings. In the midst of nature, man finds a contentment which the city-bred Mrs Charmond and Dr. Fitzpiers with their so-called "culture" have never known. Being able to communicate with nature in her own language, Marty can feel an apathy, a calm indifference, even in her state of utter destitution; and this indifference turns into solace in the end. With the help of a very striking image in the shape of John South's tree, Hardy has been able to show the influence of nature upon

¹ The Prelude Book I lines 340-344

the lives of the Woodlanders. John South is sick and he sits in his room, watching through the window the tall elm tree. Seeing it rock and sigh as the wind blows, he feels that it will dash him into his grave. We are told that it is this fear "rather than any organic disease, which was eating away the health of John South".(97) "He says that it is exactly his own age, that it has got human sense, and sprouted up when he was born on purpose to rule him, and keep him as its slave". (107) It is quite natural that, because of this strong belief, John should fulfil his own prophecy by dying within a few hours of the felling of the tree. But we find that most of the important events of The Woodlanders are connected with this tree. When Giles was "shrouding" the tree, he was first told by Grace that she meant to break their engagement, or the understanding that had existed till then. When the tree is felled, John South dies; and, since Giles's property depended upon John's life, he loses it. As Marty had prophesied, because of losing his property, Giles loses Grace and suffers that disappointment which finally kills him. Mrs Charmond's first meeting with Dr Fitzpiers is also indirectly connected with the tree, because on John's death the houses become her property and she has them demolished. And when she was driving on a phaeton, her servant was deceived by the gap caused by the demolition and she turned in upon the ruins instead of the road

which was a few yards further on. Mrs Charmond received slight scratches in the accident and took the opportunity of sending for the doctor. Their meeting brought about unhappiness in the life of Grace and her friends and relatives. So nature here dominates human life. It also actively shares in the life of the Woodlanders: it is not just a scene or a background, but an actor in the drama. By hinting at the conflicts and struggles within nature, Hardy foreshadows human conflicts. Nature also serves as a sustaining power in the lives of the woodlanders. When the woodland life comes in contact with the cultured life of the outside world, there is naturally a conflict and this conflict is best shown in the life of Grace Melbury. In her character we also find the conflict between traditionalism and modernism. Like Clym of The Return of the Native, she has lived in the city, been educated there, and seen the false glamour of city life. Like Clym she feels that real happiness lies not in the cultured life but in the simple ways of the woodland people. But, unlike Clym, she does not have strength of character and clear understanding of her inner desires and of what is really good for her. Within her, there is a conflict between her modern nerves and her primitive feelings. She wavers between the two attractions and is unable to decide in favour of her instinct and love for the quiet and old fashioned ways. Like Lettie of

Lawrence's The White Peacock, Grace loves the simple, unassuming but true and faithful Giles, yet lets herself be persuaded to marry another. Just as Lawrence's heroine has to lead a meaningless life because she rejects George who, like Giles, is a rustic, uncultured and unsophisticated but truly devoted to her, so also Grace is doomed to a life of unhappiness.

The cause of Grace's tragedy lies, to a great extent, in the foolish ambition of her father. He has spent lots of money on Grace's education so that she may not be one of the woodlanders. He does not understand that it is a blessing to be one of them. His vanity, his preoccupation with honour and his craving for social position remind us of John d'Urberfield. When Grace comes back home after her education, he becomes as vain as John d'Urberfield had become after the discovery of his grand lineage. He combines the follies of Tess's mother also. Like her, he feels sure that his daughter will marry well and feels overjoyed at Fitzpiers's attentions to her:

Why, you scamp, what's this you've been doing? Not home here more than six months, yet ... making havoc in the upper classes! (163)

And as Joan was mistaken in her estimate of Alec, so Melbury's opinion of Fitzpiers is based on something very unreliable:

That touching faith in members of long-established families as such, irrespective of their personal condition of character, which is still found among old-fashioned people in the rural districts, reached its full perfection in Melbury. (165)

But there is one difference, Whereas Joan hoped to get some monetary help by Tess marrying a rich man, Melbury's ambitions were selfless. He wished her to marry well for her own well-being. He believed that if she is married to a man of high position, she will not only satisfy his vanity by being so much above the common people, but will really be happier and more comfortable. He even tells Grace that she may look the other way if she meets him after marriage, for he would not like to talk to his daughter and lower her in the eyes of the people.

Melbury's ambition and vanity bring unhappiness in the lives of many because he makes the "almost irreparable error of dividing two whom nature had striven to join together in earlier days".(285) But by unintentionally marring the happiness of his daughter, he also mars his own happiness. He keeps on blaming himself for Grace's misfortunes and he has to bear the humiliation of begging for his daughter's happiness from a woman like Mrs Charmond. He also has the bad luck to have to listen to the humiliating words of Fitzpiers, and, in spite of his devotion to Grace, he is doomed in the end to lose even his daughter. His frantic search for her

and, in the end, his discovery that she had taken Fitzpiers back, evoke our pity for a man who loves his daughter too well, though not wisely.

Grace condescends to the wishes of her father because she knows that she is his "worldly hope", (93) but that is not the sole cause of the tragedy. She does not have a strong personality and she does not use her own judgement. She is weak enough to be lured by social status and simple enough to be beglamoured by the grandeur of Mrs Charmond. In her heart she knows the worth of Winterborne but she does not do anything but rub out the word "lose" and insert "keep" on the wall of Giles's house:

'O Giles, you've lost your dwelling-place,
And therefore, Giles, you'll lose your Grace.* (114)

By a stroke of ill luck Giles does not see her do this and Grace quietly reconciles herself to the wishes of her father. Hardy tells us that "the tender opportunity then missed through her fastidiousness"(287) will not arrive again. Earlier Grace had thought that everything was there in the world and it was only a matter of picking and choosing. Perhaps she also thought that if she was dissatisfied with one, she had only to drop him and pick another:

Nature was bountiful, she thought. No sooner had she been cast aside by Edred Fitzpiers than another being, impersonating chivalrous and undiluted manliness, had arisen out of the earth ready to her hand.(213)

But chance or nature cannot wait on. If we make a mistake once, we may not be able to retrieve it ever, however hard we may wish or try.

Amongst other causes of Grace's unhappiness are the defective social laws. The Woodlanders is the first novel of Hardy in which, together with Fate, Providence, etc., society and man-made rules are shown to be a cause of man's unhappiness. In his later novels we find a development of this idea, but it is in The Woodlanders that Hardy first hints at the tragic shortcomings of society and law in those days:

To hear these two Arcadian innocents talk of imperial law would have made a humane person weep who should have known what a dangerous structure they were building up on their supposed knowledge. They remained in thought, like children in the presence of the incomprehensible.(290)

The heroine of Tess also wants to free her virtue-conscious husband from the bond of marriage but he tells her that she is childish to think so and that she does not understand the law.¹

Social laws are not strong enough to free Grace from the clutches of the mistake that she had committed in the past, but even if somebody could have freed her, there is another stronger and undefeatable enemy of man's wishes - death. When Grace

¹ Tess p. 270

becomes bold enough to own that Giles is everything to her, he is taken away from her by death.

In the end Grace goes back to Fitzpiers and some critics wrongly feel that "they can resume their marital relationship with some prospect of quietly growing devotion, if not of passionate attachment; and at the novel's end they go forth from the Eden of Little Hintock to their new home in the Midlands like a chastened Adam and Eve."¹ But Hardy wrote in a letter that "the ending of the story - hinted rather than stated - is that the heroine is doomed to an unhappy life with an inconstant husband".² Throughout the novel, we are given hints that the spell of happiness and satisfaction is very transitory. Grace has told Mrs Charmond that Fitzpiers will soon tire of her, as he will of any woman. And after Grace has taken him back, Melbury says:

But let her bear in mind that the woman walks and laughs somewhere at this very moment whose neck he'll be coling next year as he does hers to-night; and as he did Felice Charmond's last year; and Suke Damson's the year afore! ... It's a forlorn hope for her; and God knows how it will end.(376)

And another of the woodlanders observes - "But how long 'twill last I can't say".(378) Hardy makes us feel that unhappiness in

¹ Drake, R.Y. (Junior). Mod. Fict. St. vol vi no 3 Aut. 1960
"The Woodlanders as Traditional Pastoral", pp. 256-257

² Life. p.220

marriage is the law of nature. Fitzpiers himself tells Mrs Charmond that "sorrow and sickness of heart" are "the end of all love, according to Nature's law". (200) Towards the end of the novel, Mr. Upjohn speaks of the hot and cool climates of love. When a youth wants to know more about it, he says - "They'll come to ye by nater, young man, too soon for your good." (378) With the help of such observations and by continuous references to the struggling and suffering aspects of nature, the author gives a wide perspective to the story of the woodlanders. It concludes the whole of the universe and includes the perspective in space as well as time, for he says -

There threatened, in fact, in Grace's case as in thousands, the domestic disaster, old as the hills, which, with more or less variation, made a mourner of Ariadne, a by-word of Vashti, and a corpse of Amy Dudley. (231)

Similarly, after Marty has cut off her locks, she is compared to "her own ancestral goddess" who had suffered "the rape of her locks by Loke the Malicious". (23)

Marty's character is not drawn in detail but from the very beginning she wins our heart. The book opens with an important incident in her life and ends with her speech. One may wonder whether Hardy had first wished to make her the heroine. Mrs Hardy writes that Hardy had taken up and put aside a woodland story some ten years before which he later made into

The Woodlanders. Perhaps at first Hardy had planned it to be the story of Marty South - the simple rustic girl who is far removed from the sham of city life. We are filled with pity for her hopeless devotion to a man who has always been beyond her reach. Hardy lets us understand that it is destiny that gives unhappiness to a person like Marty, for had she been given a chance, she too would have been a dignified and charming lady and would have been loved by many. But she accepts her fate without complaint. She is not tragic in the traditional sense of the word, because she does not revolt against her misfortunes, she rather takes solace from the fact that even the well-placed in life are not very happy - "So rich and so powerful, and yet to yawn! ... Then things don't fay with her any more than with we!" (44) She is very humble in her ambition and so she can get satisfaction in something which could have brought only despair to others: " ... you are mine, and only mine; for she has forgot 'ee at last, although for her you died!" (380)

Marty and Giles are so much a part of nature that there could not have been much cause for unhappiness had not the woodland been infiltrated by cultured life in the shape of Grace's city-education and in Dr Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond. Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond are outsiders in the Arcadia of the woodlands and they bring unhappiness and disturbance. We are reminded of

Lawrence's The Lost Girl where the outsider Cicio brings life, spirit and vitality to the dry and drab life of the heroine. The position is just the reverse in The Woodlanders. Fitzpiers is bored with life and hankers for novelty and adventure like Eustacia Vye or Hedda Gabler. Like Jude, he has a passion for knowledge and for women. He is estranged from nature and even his love is defective - "His was the passion of Congreve's Millamant, whose delight lay in seeing the heart which others bled for, bleed for me".(221) Like Eustacia Vye, he could love a person only so long as that person was loved by others too. Like her, Fitzpiers indulges in his passions because he has nothing better to do.

Giles's love, on the other hand, knows no tricks. He is a simple man, born and bred amongst orchards and trees and Grace thinks of him "as the fruit-god and the wood-god in alternation", (286) for she has seen his real self:

He looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as corn-flowers, his sleeves and leggings dyed with fruit-stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, his hat sprinkled with pips, and everywhere about him that atmosphere of cider ... Her heart rose from its late sadness like a released bough; her senses revelled in the sudden lapse back to Nature unadorned.(213)

Giles suffers silently, but the undiminished devotion that he feels for Grace throughout heightens our esteem for him and we

feel sorry that a man so deserving happiness should be so utterly bereft of it. And, in spite of Fitzpiers's assurance to the contrary, we feel that his death has been hastened by the fact that he cared too much for propriety and for people's opinion and so was compelled to sleep in the rain, even though he was sick.

In Giles's life chance plays a very important role. With regard to him we feel the truth of the saying "man proposes and God disposes". He had been planning to receive Grace in a befitting way but she arrived by an earlier train "and his arranged welcome [was] stultified". (40) She shows shamefacedness "at having to perform the meeting with him under an apple-tree ten feet high in the middle of the market-place". (41) Next we learn that Giles "had been unwittingly bidding against her father" (59) and so causing her to dislike him. At the party that he gives to straighten matters, all possible little misfortunes happen. Creedle has left the chairs oily to make them shine, but they spoil Grace's dress. He splashes some hot stew on Grace's face and a slug manages to come on her plate.

Giles unintentionally makes Mrs Charmond take against him by not turning his horses' heads and letting Mrs Charmond's coach pass. Later he discovers that he could have retained his houses if he had taken steps earlier: "There was no doubt that

he had lost his houses and was left practically penniless by an accident"(110) Here Hardy also hints at the peasants' insecurity of tenure. The spirit of renovation and change had entered even small places like Little Hintock and lifehold properties were being pulled down instead of the lease being renewed. Giles's losing his house was not something unique. Many were made homeless and felt insecure in life.

Giles's life seems to have been wasted because the one thing he wanted he could not get, but as Hardy remarks: "the Unfulfilled Intention makes life what it is", (56) and so even when Grace is looking at the bountiful orchards, she feels that in "all this proud show some kernels were unsound as her own situation, and she wondered if there were one world in the universe where the fruit had no worm, and marriage no sorrow." (212)

While writing Tess of the d'Urbervilles Hardy was consciously writing a tragedy which, he hoped, would be comparable to the great traditional tragedies. Early in the novel, as the overtired maiden falls asleep in "The Chase - the oldest wood in England," (87) the novelist observes:

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order. One may, indeed, admit the possibility of a retribution lurking in the present catastrophe. - Doubtless some of Tess d'Urberville's mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time. But though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be a morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature, and it therefore does not mend the matter. (90-1)

The above lines take us back to the Greek plays in which suffering was caused by some past sin. Clytemnestra had to take revenge upon Agamemnon, but in return she too must be killed. And Orestes must suffer for having killed Clytemnestra. One person's crime leads to another crime, even though the motive is just to avenge the previous crime. And so the cycle of suffering goes on and on. When John Durbeyfield dies and his

family is turned out of the house, the author suggests that the law of retribution might be the cause of all this trouble:

Thus the Durbeyfields, once d'Urbervilles, saw descending upon them the destiny which, no doubt, when they were among the Olympians of the county, they had caused to descend many a time, and severely enough, upon the heads of such landless ones as they themselves were now. So do flux and reflux - the rhythm of change - alternate and persist in everything under the sky. (394)

In the novel, we are twice given hints that Tess's sufferings are related to the crime of one of her ancestors. Just after the wedding, as Tess sits in the carriage, she feels that she has seen the carriage before. She seems to be very well acquainted with it, although the only explanation that she can think of, is that she "must have seen it in a dream". (244) Angel tells her that she must have heard the legend of the d'Urberville Coach. Tess, oddly enough, has not heard of the legend and entreats Angel to tell her about it. Angel just tells her that some ancestor of hers "committed a dreadful crime in his family coach; and since that time members of the family see or hear the odd coach whenever - But I'll tell you another day -". (244) The incompleteness of the account adds a sinister touch to the legend and when Tess asks whether members of her family see the coach before their death or when they have committed a crime, we are inclined to feel with the author that the furies are

demanding retribution. A little before the beginning of the last phase, Tess again hears "a carriage and horses". (397) In utter poverty and wretchedness, she has waited and waited for Angel's forgiveness. Now she is on the point of losing all faith. The tempter has found an opportune moment and Tess finds that only by listening to him she can make some reparation to the family. She has proof enough that the family would not have been driven away from home like this if she, the sinner, had not been living with them. "Ever since the occurrence of the event which had cast such a shadow over Tess's life, the Durbeyfield family ... had been tacitly looked on as one which would have to go when their lease ended, if only in the interests of morality". (395-6) These protectors of morality are heartless enough to resent Tess's trying to restore the obliterated grave of her baby and they scold Tess's mother for "harbouring" her sinful daughter in the house. Joan offers to leave the place and they are relieved that their village will be saved from pollution by the presence of one who had sinned against society, though not against nature. So, Tess rightly reflects that had "she not come home her mother and the children might probably have been allowed to stay on as weekly tenants". (396) Just at this point, when she is more inclined towards desperation than faith, she hears the coach. But it is only Alec, who says that

perhaps she heard the d'Urberville Coach. He also tells her that

this sound of a non-existent coach can only be heard by one of d'Urberville blood, and it is held to be of ill omen to the one who hears it. It has to do with a murder, committed by one of the family, centuries ago ... One of the family is said to have abducted some beautiful woman, who tried to escape from the coach in which he was carrying her off, and in the struggle he killed her - or she killed him .. (397)

And when a similar scene has been enacted at the stylish lodging house at Sandbourne, and when, in return, the heroine is punished with death, Hardy concludes: " 'Justice' was done and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess." (446) Florence Emily Hardy records that when Hardy was writing Tess, before he had christened his story, he jotted down the following observation:

When a married woman who has a lover kills her husband, she does not really wish to kill her husband; she wishes to kill the situation. Of course in Clytemnestra's case it was not exactly so, since there was the added grievance of Iphigenia, which half-justified her.¹

While living with Alec, Tess is like "a soul bound to some Ixionian wheel". (426) So, her trying to kill her unfortunate situation like Clytemnestra, and Hardy's use of "the Aeschylean phrase", together with the other details discussed above, confirm

¹ Life p. 221

our feeling that Hardy wished to link his tragedy with the great Greek tragedies. Such a wish is not something new in Hardy, for, as we have seen, in the very beginning of The Woodlanders, in the course of giving the topography, Hardy says that, even in small places, often dramas of Sophoclean grandeur and unity are enacted in the real. In linking his writings with those of the Greek tragedians, Hardy was not doing something inconceivable, for many of us would agree with W.L. Courtney that there "is a great deal of Aeschylus in Mr Thomas Hardy - a certain ruggedness, austerity, elevation, a definite philosophical scheme at the back of all his creations and a gift of high-sounding rhetoric and occasional poetry?"¹ But on the other hand there are some critics who would object to this comparison on the ground that Hardy does not offer any reconciliation at the end. Lawrence too, observes that Hardy's Tess "contains the elements of the greatest tragedy"² and that it is comparable to Aeschylus's plays about the fate of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and Orestes. But he also adds:

There is no reconciliation. Tess, Angel Clare, Alec d'Urberville, they are all as good as dead. For Angel Clare, though still apparently alive, is in reality no more than a mouth, a piece of paper, like Clym left preaching.

There is no reconciliation, only death. And so Hardy really states his case, which

¹ "Mr Thomas Hardy and Aeschylus", Fortnightly Review, March 1917, p.464

² Phoenix, p. 488

is not his consciously stated metaphysic,
by any means, but a statement how man has
gone wrong and brought death on himself....¹

We cannot disagree with Lawrence, for Hardy himself says,
"What are my books but one plea against 'man's inhumanity to
man' - to woman - and to the lower animals? ... Whatever may
be the inherent good or evil of life, it is certain that men
make it much worse than need be"² And even though Hardy
tells us of the joined hands of Angel and 'Liza-Lu in the last
sentence of the novel, our bitterness at the sad fate of Tess
is not the least bit lessened. This made some critics think
that Hardy had forgotten that a complete Greek tragedy consisted
of three parts and that the last part showed reconciliation
and hope. A certain Dr Walter Lock "told Hardy that his
book was the Agamemnon without the remainder of the Orestian
trilogy. Hardy thought this inexact, though interesting."³
Hardy received many letters accusing him of pessimism. His
reply was - "if it is pessimism to think, with Sophocles, that
'not to have been born is best', then I do not reject the de-
signation."⁴ This is why he makes Angel quote "a line from
a poet, with peculiar emendations of his own -

¹ Phoenix. p. 488

² W. Archer: Real Conversations: p 47

³ E. Blunden: Thomas Hardy. p. 72-3

⁴ W. Archer: Real Conv. p. 46

"God's not in his heaven: all's wrong with the world!"(288)

He also keeps reminding his readers that "the serpent hisses where the sweet birds sing", (93) and that,

it had not been in Tess's power - nor is it in anybody's power - to feel the whole truth of golden opinions while it is possible to profit by them. She - and how many more - might have ironically said to God with Saint Augustine: 'Thou hast counselled a better course than thou hast permitted.' (118)

In his preface to Tess Hardy speaks of this world as a place "where one so often hungers in vain for friendship" (vi) His heroine's feelings are no different. She tells Angel how lonely and separated she feels her life to be from humanity as well as nature. The future is not to be contemplated with happiness and hope but with horror and dread:

The trees have inquisitive eyes ... and the river says, - "Why do ye trouble me with your looks?" And you seem to see numbers of tomorrows just in line, the first of them the biggest and clearest, the others getting smaller and smaller and they stand farther away; but they all seem very fierce and cruel and as if they said, "I'm coming! Beware of me!" ...(146)

In the face of such lines, the reader has to say that Hardy is a pessimist. He always tried to defend his pessimism with quotations from great works of literature of the past. About eight years after the publication of Tess in book form, he wrote in his Notebook:

Pessimism. Was there ever any great poetry which was not 'pessimistic'?
 'All creation groaneth' - etc.
 'Man that is born of woman' - etc.
 'Man dieth and wasteth away' - etc.
 'I go hence like the shadow that departeth' -
 and other psalms. Is this pessimism, and if not,
 why not? The answer would probably be because
 a remedy is offered. Well, the remedy tarries long.¹

Hardy believed that "a good deal of the robustious, swaggering optimism of recent literature is at bottom cowardly and insincere."² An artist could not achieve anything beneficial by closing his eyes to the sad aspects of life and pretending that they did not exist. Nor could he help matters by asserting that "black is but a necessary contrast and foil, without which white would be white no longer." He wished to improve the world and for this he thought it essential to make people aware of the dark side of life, even at the risk of being thought a pessimist.

Another charge against Hardy was the use of a disrespectful phrase about the Immortals. Hardy's reply was -

... to exclaim illogically against the gods, singular and plural, is not such an original sin of mine ... I could show that the sin was introduced into Wessex as early as the Heptarchy itself. Says Glo'ster in Lear ...

'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
 They kill us for their sport.' (viii)

¹ Evelyn Hardy: Thomas Hardy's Note Book. pp. 68-9

² Archer: Real Conv. p.46

Some critics argue that Hardy forgets what Edgar says -

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices,/Make instruments to plague us."¹ But one could argue back that Hardy's gods do not only kill Tess, they also kill Alec. In both King Lear and Tess the reader remains grieved at the fate of the protagonists in spite of the death of the villains.

The words "as flies to wanton boys" seem to have influenced Hardy very much, for not only do we find Tess subjected to almost continuous suffering, pain and hardship without any fault of hers, but Hardy compares her twice to a fly showing to us the insignificance of humanity against the background of vast and indifferent Nature. We are also reminded of an earlier novel, The Return of the Native, in which Charley walking on the heath is compared to "a fly on a negro".² Tess too has descended the same Egdon heath and, not "quite sure of her direction Tess stood still upon the hemmed expanse of verdant flatness, like a fly on a brilliant table of indefinite length, and of no more consequence to the surroundings than that fly." (125) By thus comparing humanity to an insignificant, unpleasant and helpless manifestation of nature, Hardy makes it clear how utterly helpless and of no consequence is man in the world. Tess

¹ King Lear V iii. p.170-1

² RN p.134

and Marion are working in the field, "... the whole field was in colour a desolate drab; it was a complexion without features, as if a face, from chin to brow, should be only an expanse of skin. The sky wore, in another colour, the same likeness; a white vacuity of countenance with the lineaments gone. So these two upper and nether visages confronted each other all day long ... without anything standing between them but the two girls crawling over the surface of the former like flies." (322) Later, we are told; "There had not been such a winter for years. It came on in stealthy and measured glides, like the moves of a chess-player". (324) The chess player is not very much better than "wanton boys".

The whole novel is full of animal imagery which compels us to wonder whether it is worthwhile for a human being ever to feel dignified. Tess winces "like a wounded animal", (249) to "fling elaborate sarcasm at Tess,... was much like flinging them at a dog or cat", (261) Clare finds her "with the constraint of a domestic animal that perceives itself to be watched", (142) Alec finds her "as weak as a bled calf", (376) she looks at him "with the hopeless defiance of the sparrow's gaze before its captor twists its neck", (373) and she feels "as if she had been hounded up that hill like a scorned thing". (339) All these animals remind us of the world of Shakespeare's

tragedies, where small birds have to fight against the owl in order to save their young ones in the nest,¹ where Macduff's son wishes to live as birds live, ignorant of the nets that are set for them,² and where Caesar is "bay'd" and the "brave hart" lies in his blood "like a deer stricken by many princes".³ When Tess is about to narrate her past history to Angel, "each diamond on her neck gave a sinister wink like a toad's". (257) At this we are reminded of the "cistern for foul toads" ⁴ in Othello and a "most toad-spotted traitor" in King Lear ⁵. Besides these animals, the world of Tess is also inhabited by hissing serpents (93) and there are recurring references to Adam, Eve, the garden of Eden and the Tempter. Alec says to Tess -

... this is just like Paradise. you are Eve,
and I am the old Other One come to tempt you
in the disguise of an inferior animal ...
"Empress, the way is ready, and not long,
... If thou accept
My conduct, I can bring thee thither soon".
"Lead then", said Eve. (392)

This is very grim, but when Adam and Eve are first mentioned in the book, the comparison seems not only apt but also pleasing.

¹ Macbeth IV.ii 10-11

² Ibid. 32-34

³ Julius Caesar III. i 205-11

⁴ Othello IV. ii 60

⁵ King Lear V.iii.138

Tess and Angel are "the first persons up of all the world ... The spectral, half-compounded, aqueous light which pervaded the open mead, impressed them with a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve." (153)

Both Tess and Angel seem to enjoy perfect happiness in each other's company and everything seems right with the world. Tess regards Angel as "Eve at her second waking might have regarded Adam", (196) but Hardy the artist feels the need of making his readers aware of the shadows of coming events. This he does with the help of images and symbols. On careful study, these symbols and images are seen to play as important a role in conveying the author's ideas in the novel as do some of the main characters. Tess, hardly aware of Angel's presence, is yawning, "and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's". (195) This comparison with a snake at once strikes us as something dissonant. We are also reminded of the snake in the garden of Eden who marred the happiness of human beings for ever and we get a glimpse of the character of Clare who finds the beautiful Tess's mouth like that of a snake. We become aware of the fundamental weakness of his nature and judgement which makes him see a depravity in the innocence and beauty of natural things. In the same way, we are reminded of the passage which describes Tess's being attracted by Angel's harp:

The outskirts of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch; and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells - weeds whose red and yellow and purple hues formed a polychrome as dazzling as that of cultivated flowers. She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights, which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunks, made madder stains on her skin; thus she drew quite near to Clare.....(145)¹

This leads to the first heart-to-heart talk between Angel and Tess and paves the way for their friendship and love; but the italicised words of the above passage are enough to disquiet the reader - they suggest sexual excitement as well as some sort of threat. The reader gets enough warning of the coming catastrophe. We know of the stains that Tess has received on her person and we feel that the stains of the past will stick to her. The sticky blights appear as white on the tree trunks but they make dark red stains on Tess's skin. Perhaps Hardy is again alluding to the original stain which is not ordinarily regarded as a stain by the clever dames of whom Joan Durbeyfield tells Tess. We get a glimpse of the character of Tess who is too conscious of her guilt and merely by being over conscientious makes the

¹ Italics mine.

stain appear as such. Had she been different, she might not have told Angel of her past.

This method of conveying deep meaning through clusters of images was followed by Hardy from the very beginning of his career as a writer. Even in Desperate Remedies, his first novel and a mere melodramatic thriller, we find some similar passages. Manston, the villain is pressing Cytherea into a marriage. They are

standing by the ruinous foundations of an old mill in the midst of a meadow. Between grey and half-overgrown stonework - the only signs of masonry remaining - the water gurgled down from the old mill-pond to a lower level, under the cloak of rank broad leaves - the sensuous natures of the vegetable world ... All dark objects on the earth that lay towards the sun were overspread by a purple haze, against which a swarm of wailing gnats shone forth luminously, rising upwards and floating away like sparks of fire ... Thinking and hesitating, she looked as far as the autumnal haze on the marshy ground would allow her to see distinctly. There was the fragment of a hedge - all that remained of a 'wet old garden' - standing in the middle of the mead, without a definite beginning or ending, purposeless and valueless. It was overgrown, and choked with mandrakes, and she¹ could almost fancy she heard their shrieks.

Compared with the scene from Tess, this passage is crude and the implications are too obvious but here too we find the inter-connection between man and nature and a hint of corruption.

The tempting, threatening and corrupting influence of Miss Aldclyffe and Manston on Cytherea is very well expressed in

¹ DR pp. 265-66

this passage. Earlier in the same novel, Manston looks at the rain-water-butt and wonders how he may marry Cytherea. As he looks at the stagnant surface, he finds that hundreds

of thousands of minute living creatures sported and tumbled in its depth with every contortion that gaiety could suggest; perfectly happy, though consisting only of a head, or a tail, or at most a head and a tail, and all doomed to die within the twenty-four hours.

'Damn my position! Why shouldn't I be happy through my little day too?' ¹

Here too we get a glimpse of the character of Manston who proves of no more worth than these undignified slimy creatures.

Not only do we find similarity of artistic methods in this early novel and Tess, even the circumstances and characterisation are faintly similar. Cytherea gives way to Manston's entreaties out of consideration for her brother and because of poverty, just as Tess was compelled to yield to Alec's temptation for the sake of her mother, brother and sisters and because of her utter poverty.

We find what R.C. Carpenter calls the "imagery of the grotesque" ² in all the novels of Hardy and they are always able to convey meanings which would have otherwise been difficult to convey. Such imagery "is incongruous to the tone of the

¹ Ibid. pp. 256-7

² "Hardy's Gargoyles" Mod. Fict. Studies Vol.VI Aut.1960 p.226

incidents we are encountering and ... intense in its evocation of physical sensations ... yokes man and his environment together in strange relationships" ¹ As Tess, unable to hear the story about Jack, who had deceived some girl, goes out and looks at the sky, the "evening sun was now ugly to her like a great inflamed wound in the sky. Only a solitary cracked-voiced reed-sparrow greeted her from the bushes by the river, in a sad, machine-made tone". (158) Later, after Angel has heard Tess's history, he finds the dawn "ashy and furtive, as though associated with crime". (267) We are reminded of The Woodlanders in which Marty cuts off her locks and in the morning, "the bleared white visage of a sunless winter day emerged like a dead-born child". ² These images, by their mere grotesqueness, make an impression on the mind of the reader and give him an insight into the underlying sadness and tragic qualities of the events. They call up a sense of dislocation and disharmony, because traditionally we expect nature to be beautiful. Hardy's anti-Wordsworthian images of nature remind us of Eliot's:

When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon the table. ³

¹ Ibid. p. 226

² W p.26

³ The Waste Land ll. 1-2

In all the above examples we find the authors humanising nature in a grotesque way, rather than giving humanity the dignity of nature.

Hardy uses symbols to endow some of his scenes and incidents with special meaning. The most striking symbols are used in one of the very early scenes of Tess. Tess's father is drunk and tired and he cannot go to the market with the beehives. Tess wants to help the family and so, sacrificing her sleep, offers to go. This act of hers becomes symbolical. All through the novel Tess does things for her family and makes sacrifices. As was quite natural for so young a girl, and at such an hour, she falls asleep in the waggon. When she gains consciousness, she finds that the "pointed shaft" of the morning mail-cart, had "entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword, and from the wound his life's blood was spouting in a stream, and falling with a hiss into the road. In her despair Tess sprang forward and put her hand upon the hole, with the only result that she became splashed from face to skirt with the crimson drops." (41-2) Later on in the novel, Tess has to use a sword-like knife and make a similar wound in the breast of her betrayer and so get herself stained with blood. We are told of the profuse bleeding of Alec's wound which may be compared to the hissing blood stream of Prince's wound.

Prince and Alec both are said to have had very small wounds but both prove fatal.

Even before Tess gets Alec's blood on her hands, she gets "madder stains" on her arms in her efforts to come near her beloved Angel and in the end, when she stains her hands with Alec's blood, it is for the same reason - for coming near Angel - for being accepted by him. We get hints of this bloodshed also in the scene in which Tess tries to establish contact with Angel and to end her misery through Angel's parents, but instead of the welcoming in-laws, she finds a blood-stained paper at the door, which symbolically tells her that there has to be some bloodshed before she can come near Angel. She goes inside the gate of her in-law's house, rings the bell and waits. She is tired after a walk of fifteen miles, and is agitated. She has to ring again and wait in her state of nervousness and agitation. She is aware of the keen wind shaking the ivy-leaves, and then an object catches her eye - a "piece of blood-stained paper, caught up from some meat-buyer's dust-heap, beat up and down the road without the gate; too flimsy to rest, too heavy to fly away;..."(336)

Before Alec's death, when he had infuriated Tess, she had struck him hard on the mouth and made it bleed. She confesses to Angel that there is a relationship between that bloody blow and this fatal wound, because even then she had feared that she

might kill him.

The scene of Prince's fatal accident has significance in another sense also, for Tess cries out " 'Tis all my doing - all mine!" (43) This guilt complex and self reproach proves the cause of her undoing. She sees "herself in the light of a murderess," (44) and so is compelled to do things which really make her a murderess in the end. And because she is always ready to reproach herself for things, she looks upon herself as "a figure of Guilt" and Hardy tells us of "a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy - a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out of harmony with the actual world, not she". (104)

More than once Hardy observes that what had happened to Tess was not something unique in Nature though it was against convention and society; "shameless Nature who respects not the social law" (115) would not have thought Tess guilty of any crime. Hardy has observed a harmony between nature and womankind: "A field-man is a personality afield; a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it." (106) Tess too finds solace in the midst of nature when society regards her as a sinner. She is compelled to shun human society, and is left very lonely. But when she goes into the woods, she feels

least solitary. "On these lonely hills and dales her quiescent glide was of a piece with the element she moved in. Her flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene." (104) But unfortunately we are all slaves of convention, and society has taught us to think as it wants us to think. Even from aspects of nature, Tess can imagine hearing reproaches as from people:

The midnight airs and gusts, moaning amongst the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulae of bitter reproach. A wet day was the expression of irremediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood, and could not comprehend as any other.

But this encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy - ... Walking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism she was in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly. (104)

Later on Hardy speaks of Tess's shame at her gloom and unhappiness "based on nothing more tangible than a sense of condemnation under an arbitrary law of society which had no foundation in Nature." (315)

Perhaps it is these observations which make Lawrence remark that the heroines of Hardy as well as Tolstoi "were not at war with God, only with Society. Yet they were all cowed by the mere judgement of man upon them, and all the while by their own souls they were right".¹

There is a lot of truth in the above lines but we can not agree with Lawrence that Tess was right by her own soul. On the contrary, she saw herself as a sinner. She may have thought herself to be more sinned against than sinning, but she did regard herself as a criminal, so much so that she could entertain thoughts like this - suppose "this robe should betray her by changing colour, as her robe had betrayed Queen Guenever". (236) Throughout the novel Hardy keeps reminding us of the antagonism between Nature and society. Whereas the one stands for life and happiness, the other stands for misery, guilt, reproach and death. Within Tess, there is a continuous struggle going on between the two. "So the two forces were at work here as everywhere, the inherent will to enjoy, and the circumstantial will against enjoyment." (323) The reproaches of convention only compel Tess to wish for death. She even contemplates suicide - with the help of the cord of her box, (271) and by drowning. She tells Angel - "I don't see how I can help being the cause of such misery to you all your life. The river is down here.

¹ Ph. p. 420

I can put an end to myself in it. I am not afraid." (265)

So, it is clear that "most of the misery had been generated by her conventional aspect, and not by her innate sensations," (111) but we cannot ignore the other causes of Tess's tragedy. Social convention is only one of the main causes. Chance and Providence too play an important role. Had Prince not been killed, Tess would not have been compelled to go to Alec, had she told Angel her secret earlier, the tragedy would have been avoided - there are many similar incidents which are caused merely by bad chance. In fact, had the parson not revealed to Tess's father his ancestry, no Alec would have appeared in the life of Tess. The poverty of Tess's family too is very much responsible for the tragedy. It is a sad thing that when leading a virtuous life one should have to live without proper food, clothing and shelter, and that only a fallen person should get these comforts easily. Hardy has written some touching and satirical lines on persons like Tess in his poem "The Ruined Maid" -

You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!¹
'Yes: thats how we dress when we're ruined', said she.

The cause of Tess's tragedy also lies in the main characters .

¹ Coll. Poems p. 145

themselves. Lawrence gives a very acute account of Alec's character:

Alec d'Urberville sees her (Tess) as the embodied fulfilment of his own desire: something that is, belonging to him. She cannot, in his conception, exist apart from him nor have any being apart from his being. For she is the embodiment of his desire Such a man adheres to the female like a parasite ... Alec could reach some of the real sources of the female in a woman and draw from them. Troy could also do this ... They draw from the depth of her being. And what they draw, they betray ... Troy and Alec d'Urberville, what they received they knew only as gratification in the senses; some perverse will prevented them from submitting to it, from becoming instrumental to it.

Which was why Tess was shattered by Alec d'Urberville, and why she murdered him in the end. ¹

The above lines not only show us the character of Alec and the inevitability of the crime, but they also throw light on one of Lawrence's own tragic characters, Gerald. Gudrun feels that she is in his power. "And because she was in his power, she hated him with a power that she wondered did not kill him." ² In both the cases, the man-woman relationship is such that tragedy is inevitable. Instead of being a mutual give and take, it is a selfish, one-sided gratification of the senses of one person at the cost of another.

Angel, with his wonderful but defective principles, ideas

¹ Ph. pp. 483-4

² WL p.512

and judgement brings about the ruin of both himself and Tess. The main defect in him is that he sees Tess as he wants her to be and not as she actually is. Tess knows that he loves his own idea of her and not her real self but she cannot force him to see her as she is. She is full of apprehension: " 'O my love, my love, why do I love you so!' she whispered there alone; 'for she you love is not my real self, but one in my image; the one I might have been!' "(245) We are told that in the early hours of the morning Angel sees her as a mere "soul at large", not a milkmaid, but "a visionary essence of woman". (153) The words "ghostly", "apparition", and "spirit" often occur when we are being told how Angel saw Tess. It is natural that when at last Tess opens his eyes and tells him that she is not an apparition beyond sin, he is blinded by the light of reality. His eyes and his understanding adjust themselves to the crude reality, but too late, and so Tess ends in tragedy. In Lawrence's The Trespasser, too, Helena lets her wishful thinking blind her vision. She loves Siegmund, but not the real man, rather she loves the image of her dream of him - her ideas of him. When she sees Siegmund as he is, she too finds it difficult to accept him.

Angel also reminds us of Knight, the second lover of Elfride in A Pair of Blue Eyes. Knight sought in Elfride a purity of the bygone days and he too came back to her too late. He too

understood the value of Elfride's true love when it was too late. Like Knight's, Angel's conventional standard of judgement sees sin where none exists - at least none according to the laws of Nature. And Hardy says that the shade which brought gloom in the lives of Tess and Angel was "the shade of his own limitations ":

With all his attempted independence of judgement this advanced and well-meaning young man, a sample product of the last five-and-twenty years, was yet the slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teachings. No prophet had told him, and he was not prophet enough to tell himself, that essentially this young wife of his was as deserving of the praise of King Lemuel as any other woman endowed with the same dislike of evil, her moral value having to be reckoned not by achievement but by tendency. ... In considering what Tess was not, he overlooked what she was, and forgot that the defective can be more than the entire. (300)

Not only are his ideas and principles defective, even his love is faulty:

... Clare's love was doubtless ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability. With these natures, corporeal presence is something less appealing than corporeal absence; the latter creating the ideal presence that conveniently drops the defects of the real. (277)

Tess finds that her beauty and feminine charms fail to win Angel's heart, for, he has "the will to subdue the grosser to the subtler emotion, the substance to the conception, the flesh to the spirit.

Propensities, tendencies, habits, were as dead leaves upon the tyrannous wind of his imaginative ascendancy". (278) His false ideals make him blind to Tess's selfless and unblemished love; they also rob him of the power to know his own heart - when "Tess had passed over the crest of the hill he turned to go his own way, and hardly knew that he loved her still". (288)

Tess is a pure creation of nature - uninstructed in the ways of men and society, incapable of deception and unacquainted with the use of womanly wiles for the preservation of self-interest. She seems to be a curious combination of two characters of The Woodlanders. Like Marty she is true and devoted but like Suke she contains "the invincible instinct towards self-delight" (120) - but with a difference; unlike Suke, Tess always commands our respect, pity and sympathy. In her we find a struggle between conscience, which is directly influenced by conventions and social morality, and natural impulses. She has taken a vow not to marry anyone but she finds she cannot but heed the call of Nature, the instinct towards self-delight. So she marries Angel, but again her conscience and her simplicity make her confess everything to Angel and so bring her own ruin.

In keeping with the rules followed by the traditional tragedians, Hardy makes his protagonist one of high birth - although only in blood. Ironically enough, the very fact of her

being the descendant of the high and mighty d'Urbervilles proves the main cause of her tragedy. She is very poor, and in the clutches of evil circumstances, but even then we can, at times, see glimpses of regal qualities and tragic dignity in her. She wants to have her dying baby baptised, and when her father prohibits her from sending for the parson, she does an act of great courage and keen thought. She awakes her little brothers and sisters, takes the infant in her arm, and proceeds to baptise the child. We are told that at this time her "figure looked singularly tall and imposing as she stood in her long white nightgown." (114) The dimness of the candle light hides the proofs of her life of hard labour, misery and weariness, and her face shows itself as "a thing of immaculate beauty, with a touch of dignity which was almost regal." (114)¹ Similar dignity is to be seen in her as she narrates her sad tale to Angel - her "narrative ended:... Tess's voice throughout had hardly risen higher than its opening tone; there had been no exculpatory phrase of any kind, and she had not wept". (258) She maintains composure and tragic dignity even when Angel decides to part with her. And when at Stonehenge she finds that her life's journey has reached its end, she does not indulge

1
Italics mine

in an emotional outburst. She accepts her fate with dignity and composure:

'What is it, Angel?'... Have they come for me?'

'Yes, dearest', he said. 'They have come.'

'It is as it should be', she murmured

She stood up, shook herself, and went forward, neither of the men having moved.

'I am ready', she said quietly.

Tess had to kill Alec in order to ensure Angel's love, but it is a weakness of her character that she succumbed to his temptations for the sake of her mother, brothers and sisters. She is too unselfish not to be concerned about them and is self-sacrificing enough to go back to the man who was the cause of her ruin. So, together with fate, circumstances, poverty and chance, the inherent weaknesses in the main characters are also responsible for the tragedy of Tess. Hardy's Tess combines the qualities of the Greek tragedies, Shakespearean tragedies and some of the more recent tragedies. Tess's hearing of the coach is directly linked with the crime of one of her ancestors and reminds us of Ibsen's Ghosts in which the son asks for "the sun" because of the crime of his father. It is also like King Oedipus's situation: in order to fulfil the oracle, Oedipus has to do things that he never wished to do. At the prompting of Nature and under the influence of circumstances, Tess too has to do things against her wishes.

Like all great works of literature, the story of Tess is representative. The author often reminds us that in most respects she is like many others - in the very beginning we are told that she is "not handsomer than some others".(21) Later on, when Angel expresses his dislike of her as coming from a "decrepit family", she tells him -

Lots of families are as bad as mine in that! Retty's family were once large landowners, and so were Dairyman Billett's. And the Debbyhouses, who now are carters, were once the De Bayeux family. You find such as I everywhere; 'tis a feature of our country, and I can't help it. (264)

Even regarding her sin Joan Durbeyfield says - "Many a woman - some of the Highest in the Land - have had a Trouble in their time". (219) And Tess tries to defend herself to Angel - "my mother says that it sometimes happens so! - she knows several cases where they were worse than I". (263)

When Tess falls in love with Angel, she is one of four milkmaids that are in love with Angel. When she has to do hard work in the fields, other women are also working - even her friend-milkmaids. And when her family has to move out of the house on Old Lady-Day, so have innumerable others, even the girls Marian and Izz. Thus skilfully linking the story of Tess with those of many others, Hardy narrates to us also the tragic aspects of Wessex life.

In his essay, "The Dorsetshire Labourer",¹ and in The Woodlanders Hardy makes it clear that lack of stability in the lives of the village labourers is something tragic for the whole culture. Previously people used to live in the same place for generations. Life holdings and copyholdings gave a surety and stability to people. But now, "as the long holdings fell in they were seldom again let to similar tenants, and were mostly pulled down, if not absolutely required by the farmer for his hands". (395) Moreover, it was a time of "agricultural unrest". (395) The introduction of more and more machines had also lessened the demand for hand-labour and given cause to unemployment. Tess has to work "as a supernumerary only", (308) and when the seasons are not suited to field work, she finds it "increasingly difficult to get employment". (311) Hardy is grieved at the uprooting and the destruction of the age-old local life. The large migrations denote a dissolving social order:

These families, who had formed the backbone of the village life in the past, who were the depositaries of the village traditions, had to seek refuge in the large centres; the process, humorously designated by statisticians as 'the tendency of the rural population towards the large towns', being really the tendency of water to flow uphill when forced by machinery. (395)

The introduction of machinery and the gradual mechanisation

¹ H. Orel (ed) Thomas Hardy: Personal Writings

of even farm life destroys all the beauty and humanity of farm work. In the daily of Talbothays there is a feeling of a large family - full of contentment, mutual sympathy, love, and contact. Even hard work does not tire the people because the spring of human feelings keeps them contented. The use of machines requires human beings to become mechanical, hard and metallic. Machines destroy human sympathy and contact -

Close under the eaves of the stack ... was the red tyrant that the women had come to serve - ... - the threshing-machine which, whilst it was going, kept up a despotic demand upon the endurance of their muscles and nerves.

A little way off... was the engine which was to act as the primum mobile of this little world. By the engine stood a dark motionless being, a sooty and grimy embodiment of tallness, in a sort of trance, with a heap of coals by his side: it was the engineman. The isolation of his manner and colour lent him the appearance of a creature from Tophet, who had strayed into the pellucid smokelessness of this region of yellow grain and pale soil, with which he had nothing in common, to amaze and to discompose its aborigines.

What he looked he felt. He was in the agricultural world, but not of it. He served fire and smoke; these denizens of the fields served vegetation, weather, frost, and sun He spoke in a strange northern accent; his thoughts being turned inwards upon himself, his eye on his iron charge, hardly perceiving the scenes around him, and caring for them not at all: holding only strictly necessary intercourse with the natives, as if some ancient doom compelled him to wander here against his will in the service of his Plutonic master. The long strap which ran from the driving-wheel of his engine to the red thresher under the rick was the sole tie-line between agriculture and him

the perspiring ones at the machine, including Tess, could not lighten their duties by the exchange of many words. It was the ceaselessness of the work which tried her so severely, and began to make her wish that she had never come to Flintcomb-Ash

Dinner-time came, and the whirling ceased; whereupon Tess left her post, her knees trembling so wretchedly with the shaking of the machine that she could scarcely walk. (365-68) ¹

In the above description of the engineer we also get a glimpse of the dehumanised coal-miners of Lawrence's fiction and the high priest of their religion - Gerald Crich. Gerald also has "something northern about him". ² In both Hardy and Lawrence the north stands for evil and coldness of the anti-life.

We find an echo of certain scenes of Tess in Lawrence's fiction. Quite early in the course of her friendship with Angel, Tess becomes aware of the vastness of his knowledge. The distance between her own "modest mental standpoint" and the "abundance of his illuminations" leaves her very dejected.

He observed her dejection one day, when he had casually mentioned something to her about pastoral life in Ancient Greece

'Why do you look so woebegone all of a sudden?' he asked.

'Oh, 'tis only - about my own self', she said, with a frail laugh of sadness 'Just a sense of what might have been with me! My life looks as if it had been wasted for want of chances!

¹ Double underlining indicates my italics

² WL p.15

When I see what you know, what you have read, and seen, and thought, I feel what a nothing I am!

'Bless my soul, don't go troubling about that! Why', he said with some enthusiasm, 'I should be only too glad, my dear Tess, to help you to anything in the way of history, or any line of reading you would like to take up - ... Would you like to take up any¹ course of study - history, for example?' (148-9)

Miriam in Sons and Lovers is very different from Tess in temperament, but she too is "very much dissatisfied with her lot". Paul asks her what she wants,

'I want to do something. I want a chance like anybody else. Why should I, because I'm a girl, be kept at home and not allowed to be anything? What chance have I?'

'Chance of what?'

'Of knowing anything - of learning, of doing anything

'But what do you want?' he asked.

'I want to learn. Why should it be that I know nothing?'

'What! such as mathematics and French?'

'Why shouldn't I know mathematics?....'

'Well, you can learn as much as I know,' he said, 'I'll teach you, if you like.' ²

The image of the sun as a masculine being and the idea of sun-worship appealed to both Hardy and Lawrence. Hardy describes "a hazy sunrise in August"; (104)

¹ Italics mine

² SL pp. 191-2, double underlining shows my italics.

The sun, on account of the mist, had a curious sentient, personal pronoun for its adequate expression. His present aspect, coupled with the lack of all human forms in the scene, explained the old-time heliolatries in a moment. One could feel that a saner religion had never prevailed under the sky. The luminary was a golden-haired, beaming, mild-eyed, God-like creature, gazing down in the vigour and intentness of youth upon an earth that was brimming with interest for him. (105)

We find similar, though more detailed commentaries and accounts in Lawrence's fiction, especially the story "The Sun". But the image of the sun as the golden-haired youth gazing at the earth and the earth's whole-hearted response to the gaze, together with the picture of Tess "holding the corn in an embrace like that of a lover" (107) - these take us to very similar poetic images in The Rainbow:

They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that comes under the wind in autumn,.... Their life and interrelations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to their furrows for the grain, ... and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire....¹

Both Hardy and Lawrence ridicule the inability to respond naturally and the other limitations of those that devote their lives to the service of the Church. The two brothers of Angel and the girl Mercy Chant, have all attained a peculiar mental

¹ The Rainbow p.8

attitude towards things of the world. They may be happy in this attitude, but according to Angel, it was obtained by "a curiously unnatural sacrifice of humanity to mysticism". (301)

To Angel, his brother Felix seems "all Church" and Cuthbert "all College". The two brothers of Angel

were both somewhat short-sighted, and when it was the custom to wear a single eyeglass and string they wore a single eyeglass and string; when it was the custom to wear a double glass they wore a double glass; when it was the custom to wear spectacles they wore spectacles straightway, all without reference to the particular variety of defect in their own vision. When Wordsworth was enthroned they carried pocket copies; and when Shelley was belittled they allowed him to grow dusty on their shelves. When Correggio's Holy Families were admired, they admired Correggio's Holy Families; when he was decried in favour of Velasquez, they sedulously followed suit without any personal objection neither saw or set forth life as it really was lived. Perhaps, as with many men, their opportunities of observation were not so good as their opportunities of expression. Neither had an adequate conception of the complicated forces at work outside the smooth and gentle current in which they and their associates floated. Neither saw the difference between local truth and universal truth; that what the inner world said in their clerical and academic hearing was quite a different thing from what the outer world was thinking. (183-185)

Lawrence's ridicule of the young clergyman Mr Massy,¹ (who is a Master of Arts of Oxford and has written his thesis on Roman Law), is more passionate and vitriolic, though he too attacks

¹ "The Daughters of the Vicar", The Prussian Officer

mostly the same points that Hardy does. Mr Massy too is spectacled and has "a certain inhuman self-sureness.... He had not normal powers of perception."¹ He seems to live only through his mind. The full range of human feeling is beyond him. When he takes part in conversation, there is

no spontaneous exclamation, no violent assertion or expression of personal conviction, but all cold, reasonable assertion ... His most irritating habit was that of a sneering little giggle, all on his own, which came when he perceived or related some illogical absurdity on the part of another person. It was the only form of humour he had ... In normal human relationship he was not there. Quite unable to take part in simple everyday talk, ... but perfect in his sense of duty: as far as he could conceive Christianity, he was a perfect Christian ... His kindness almost frightened Miss Mary ... For, in it all Mr Massy seemed to have no sense of any person, any human being whom he was helping: he only realised a kind of mathematical working out, solving of given situation,²

Thus we see that both the novelists had very keen observation of human ways, and cold and calculated priggishness and ridiculous oddness of behaviour at the cost of naturalness and spontaneity could not escape the keen satiric power of their pen.

¹ The Prussian Officer p.59

² The Prussian Officer pp. 60-61

AFTER reading Jude the Obscure, Swinburne considered Thomas Hardy the most tragic of authors. He wrote in a letter to Hardy: "The tragedy ... is equally beautiful and terrible in its pathos ... there has been no such tragedy in fiction ... since he (Balzac) died."¹ Hardy himself must have had similar views of his work because he speaks of its having the same cathartic qualities as Aristotle found in the classic tragedies. In his Preface he tells us that the marriage laws are used in great part as the tragic machinery of the tale, and that marriage "seemed a good foundation for the fable of a tragedy, told for its own sake as a presentation of particulars containing a good deal that was universal, and not without a hope that certain cathartic, Aristotelian qualities might be found therein." (vii) Later on also, the mention of Atreus, Agamemnon and Antigone keep reminding us that Hardy is presenting to us a great tragedy. When Jude and Sue have decided to marry, Mrs Edlin tells them what she knows of their ancestors. They have all been kind-hearted people, "wouldn't kill a fly if they knowed it ... But things happened to thwart 'em". (291) And she goes on to tell them how one of their ancestors was gibbeted. His wife had run away from him with their child. The child died.

¹ Life. pp. 270-271

The grieved father wanted to bury his body where his people lay, but his wife did not give him their dead child. In the night he broke into the house in order to steal the child's coffin, but he was caught. He never told why he had broken into the house and so he was accused of burglary and hanged and gibbeted. After this his wife went mad.

This story makes Sue nervous and she tells Jude: "It makes me feel as if a tragic doom overhung our family, as it did the house of Atreus". (292) In fact, many times we are told of the unhappy married lives of their ancestors and in a way, are prepared for the tragic ending of their union. After the death of his three children, Jude quotes from the chorus of the *Agamemnon*, "Nothing can be done,.... Things are as they are, and will be brought to their destined issue". (351) So far as the death of the children is concerned, and also in many other instances, we do feel with Jude that nothing can be done against what destiny has ordained. Even Sue is baffled that Jude should have missed everything in life in spite of his efforts, capacities and self-obtained knowledge. When Jude tells her that he is quoting from *Agamemnon*, she says, "My poor Jude - how you've missed everything!.... To think you should know that by your unassisted reading, and yet be in poverty and despair!"(351)

And towards the end, when Jude feels "as if death-claws were grabbing" him, he tells Arabella, "As Antigone said, I am neither a dweller among men nor ghosts". (407)

Besides thinking of himself in terms of the protagonists of the classic tragedies, Jude also compares himself with Christ, "he sat down by the well, thinking as he did so, what a poor Christ he made". (132) It is natural for a man in suffering to remember those that suffered in the past. Like Jude, Lawrence's Siegmund in The Trepasser also thinks that life was treating him in the same manner as it had treated Christ, though his tragedy was very small compared with the Christ tragedy.¹ But in Jude the Obscure, comparisons with Christ, with Job and other biblical figures and references to the Bible are so frequent that they create a kind of biblical parallel with the plot of the novel.

To Jude, Christminster looks like the "heavenly Jerusalem", (25) in the night he can see "a halo ... overarching the place", (27) "There actually rose the faint halo, a small dim nebulousness, hardly recognisable save by the eye of faith". (81) Jude calls it "a city of light". (30) Later, the author tells us that he "considered that he might so mark out his coming years as to begin his ministry at the age of thirty - an age which much attracted him as being that of his exemplar when he first began

¹ The Tresp. p. 79

to teach in Galilee". (136) Full of hopes that Christminster will acknowledge him as her beloved son and prepare him for his ministry, he comes to this city and has his dreams shattered. Christminster also introduces him to Sue who inflicts so much suffering on him that he tells her: "crucify me, if you will! You know you are all the world to me, whatever you do!" (252)

The culmination of the crucifixion and Christ imagery takes place in the martyrdom of Little Father Time and the other two children. When Jude comes to Christminster, before the death of his children, Sue observes, "Leaving Kennetbridge for this place is like coming from Caiaphas to Pilate!" (341) As Norman Holland Jr. points out, the very name Christminster combines both Christ and "the institutionalised form" of Christianity - "minster".¹ Little Father Time sees that he and the other children are a source of trouble to their parents, "If we children was gone there'd be no trouble at all!" (345) So, in order to free his parents from troubles and in order to give them perfect happiness, he sacrifices his own life as well as the life of the other two children. The description of the hanging figures of the three children reminds us of the crucifixion of Christ and the two thieves. Like Christ, Father Time has died for the good of others. The other two children are innocent babies and very different from

¹ "Jude the Obscure: Hardy's Symbolic Indictment of Christianity" Nineteenth Century Fiction, June 1954, p.55

the two thieves but circumstances make them seem to be the cause of discomfort and harassment to their parents, and so, to Father Time, they may have appeared no better than thieves stealing their parents' happiness. About Father Time, Hardy observes that for "the rashness of those parents he had groaned, for their ill-assortment he had quaked, and for the misfortunes of these he had died". (348) These words would fit very well the life of Christ if we changed the word "parents" for people. As Norman Holland suggests, Father Time, with his aged appearance, may suggest "a figure 2,000 years old, come back to enact a second time his tragic and futile fate".¹ Hardy tells us that Little Father Time

was Age masquerading as Juvenility, and doing it so badly that his real self showed through crevices. A ground swell from ancient years of night seemed now and then to lift the child in this his morning-life, when his face took a back view over some great Atlantic of Time, and appeared not to care about what it saw.

... He then seemed to be doubly awake, like an enslaved and dwarfed Divinity, sitting passive and regarding his companions as if he saw their whole rounded lives rather than their immediate figures. (285)

Little Time's coming to Jude is referred to as an "advent". (289)

But the irony lies in the fact that this voluntary crucifixion

¹ Ibid p.54

of the little Christ proves futile. Instead of bringing comfort to Jude and Sue, it brings unhappiness, bitterness, misery and separation. Sue starts disbelieving what she has strongly believed; instead of continuing to be unconventional and revolutionary, she turns to meaningless conventionality. She sacrifices her own as well as Jude's happiness for the sake of useless conventions: " ... the self sacrifice of the woman on the altar of what she was pleased to call her principles was acquiesced in by these two friends...".(381) The sacrifice of the children as well as of Sue proves the futility of self-sacrifice. Sue advised Jude to practise self-mortification: "Remember that the best and greatest among mankind are those who do themselves no worldly good.... Charity seeketh not her own"(374) But later on Jude rightly reflects: "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing".(389)

The scene of the crucifixion of the little children is in itself enough to justify Swinburne's remark to Hardy - "how cruel you are!"¹ Critics have pointed out that nothing can equal the cruelty of the scene and that the closest parallels to be found in tragic literature, the blinding of Gloucester and the account of Oedipus's self-blinding, are not quite so harrowing. For immediately after Gloucester's blinding we have a scene in which "Poor Tom"

¹ Life. p.270

relieves the tension; and Oedipus's long speech after he blinds himself hints at an understanding of, and reconciliation to, his fate. But Hardy offers only the ironical background music: "Truly God is loving unto Israel". (349) All through Jude, the author offers nothing to relieve the tension. Even in Tess the idyllic life at Talbothays Dairy and the few happy days of Tess's reunion with Angel relax the tension. In some other novels Hardy uses rustic humour for the same purpose. But Jude offers nothing of the kind. Even about the happy life of Jude and Sue the author only makes this remark: "That the twain were happy - between their times of sadness - was indubitable". (298) Hardy seems as merciless in contriving the fates of his characters as in the telling of the tale. As he once observed, the main villain of the novel is "blind Chance".¹ He refers to Jude as his "poor puppet"² who has to suffer because of "A doom or curse of hereditary temperament peculiar to the family"³. When the reader finds Jude faced with so many misfortunes, he thinks that Jude is being put into the hands of an unusually cruel fate. But Hardy feels that to think like this shows only the insensitivity and the lack of experience of the reader. In a letter he writes that the story of Jude "is really sent out to those into whose

¹ Ibid. p.433

² Life p.272

³ Ibid p. 271

souls the iron has entered, and has entered deeply at some time of their lives".¹ Hardy believes that Jude's fate is representative: "the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead ... It is, in fact, to be discovered in everybody's life, though it lies less on the surface perhaps than it does in my poor puppet's"². The contrast between the ideal and the real is so great in the life of Jude that the reader not only sympathises with him, he also feels bitter against his creator. In every sphere of life, Jude meets with failure, frustration and unhappiness. In spite of his sincere efforts and ardent desire to gain admittance to the "castle manned by scholarship and religion"(31) - to a place where the "tree of knowledge grows"(30) Jude is destined to meet with failure, for "his dreams were as gigantic as his surroundings were small".(27) Even when he finds out how Christminster hates "the so-called Self-taught" men like him, he says: "Nevertheless, it is the centre of the universe to me, because of my early dream: and nothing can alter it."(331) Jude's high, idealistic, romantic expectations of Christminster and education are seen also in Ursula of The Rainbow at the beginning of her college-career. But unlike Jude, she soon sees the whole

¹ Ibid. p.271

² Ibid. p.272

thing in its true light and accepts it as it is, whereas Jude's attraction for Christminster persists. In the beginning of her college career, Ursula too is fascinated and awed:

She would not consider the professors as men, ordinary men who ate bacon, and pulled on their boots before coming to college. They were the black-gowned priests of knowledge, serving for ever in a remote, hushed temple. They were the initiated, and the beginning and the end of the mystery was in their keeping.¹

But soon we are told that for Ursula,

The glamour began to depart from college. The professors were not priests initiated into the deep mysteries of life and knowledge. After all, they were only middle-men handling wares they had become so accustomed to that they were oblivious of them. What was Latin?—So much dry goods of knowledge. What was the Latin class altogether but a sort of second-hand curio shop, where one bought curios and learned the market-value² of curios; dull curios too, on the whole.

But Sue is right about Jude when she tells Arabella that "Christminster is a sort of fixed vision with him, which I suppose he'll never be cured of believing in. He still thinks it a great centre of high and fearless thought, instead of what it is, a nest of commonplace schoolmasters whose characteristic is timid obequiousness to tradition".(323)

¹ The Rainbow, p.431

² Ibid. p.434

Jude's history proves to us how difficult it is for a man to fight against circumstances and surroundings, to rise above the sphere to which he is born. In reply to an entreaty for help, he gets a letter of advice, "... 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". (125)

Unfortunately, Jude is not only bereft of chances of intellectual development, his whole life is tragic. Circumstances, bad chances, poverty, society and his own weaknesses combine to make his life a succession of miseries and failures. But we admire him for his tenacity and endurance. He is kind and sympathetic by nature, and has a keen perception of "the flaw in the terrestrial scheme, by which what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener." (21) He cannot bear to hurt birds or worms, he

could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them; This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again. (21)

In the above lines, the author has not only given us an idea of what Jude's life is going to be like, he has also hinted at his own ideas about life, man and suffering. Jude's life will be deemed "unnecessary" by the world and he himself will be suffering,

because sensitive people are made to suffer; and Jude will not be able to change the conditions in which he lives. His suffering can end only when his life ends, he will have to bear everything until he is granted eternal rest. Once Jude tries to end his suffering, but he is incapacitated by some invisible hand: he tries to commit suicide by jumping in the river, but the water has turned to ice and will not melt even when he jumps on it.

Jude is not easily daunted, the efforts that he makes for acquiring knowledge and the impediments that he meets with, prove to him only the injustice of the world. When he fails to get admittance to any college at Christminster, he writhes at the injustice that the world deals to him and writes on the wall of one of the colleges: " 'I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?' - Job xii.3." (127) We find many quotations from the Book of Job in Jude and they enhance our awareness of the suffering of the hero and of people in general. In the very beginning, when little Jude allows the "dear little birdies" to "have some dinner", (19) Farmer Troutham not only gives him a good beating, but also gives him the sack. At this Jude's aunt quotes the words of Job: "Now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with

the dogs of my flock." (22) Later on, when Sue does not care for Jude's suffering and his passion, he tells her, "... I've waited with the patience of Job, and I don't see that I've got anything by my self-denial". (273) He quotes from the Book of Job again when he tells Sue how the neglected child of Arabella may feel. Since Jude knows how a child feels when there is nobody to love and care for him, he can accurately apprehend his son's thoughts:

"Let the day perish wherein I was born,
and the night in which it was said, There
is a man child conceived!" That's what the
boy - my boy, perhaps, will find himself
saying before long! (284)

The same words and some more from the Book of Job come to the lips of Jude when he is on the point of death. Sue has gone away to Phillotson in order to save her soul and Arabella has gone out to enjoy herself, for the whole town is in festivity. The only response that Jude can get to his entreaties for a drop of water are the shouts and hurrahs of people taking part in Remembrance games. Then Jude whispers slowly:

'Let the day perish wherein I was born
Let that day be darkness....
Why died I not from the womb?...
Wherefore is light given to him that is in
misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?"

At the end of every sentence Hardy adds the "hurrah!" of the festive people, to signify how unconcerned people are with the

suffering of their fellow-creatures, and to be born and to have to live in such a world seems only a tragic necessity. Jude's whole life has been a selfless and self-sacrificing one, but he has no friend that can stay with him at the time of his death. The world does very often treat people cruelly, but we feel that Hardy is too bitter against the world. If we study the causes ^{of} to Jude's tragedy, we find that Jude is presented as extra sensitive and different from ordinary people and this is one of the causes of his suffering. He cannot adjust himself to the ways of society and he is not powerful enough to change society, but he is sharp enough to "perceive (that) there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas". (338) So he finds himself an outsider not only in Christminster and the festivities of the Remembrance day but also in the whole world, "Well - I'm an outsider to the end of my days!" (339) This feeling of loneliness and separation from society is combined with a sense of physical and spiritual uprootedness in Jude. Modern ideas and modern conditions are mainly responsible for this. Hardy has made not only the protagonist, but many of the problems of his life also, representative of modern times. In fact Sue and Jude both rightly feel that they are a little ahead of their time. Hardy tells us about Jude,

He would accept any employment which might be offered him on the strength of his late employer's recommendation; but he would accept it as a provisional thing only. This was his form of the modern vice of unrest. (91)

Later on, when Jude understands what he calls his "mundane ambition", he recognises his affinity with the artificiality of modern civilisation: "He feared that his whole scheme had degenerated to, even though it might not have originated in, a social unrest which had no foundation in the nobler instincts; which was purely an artificial product of civilization". (135)

When Sue tells Jude that the Cathedral has become outdated and now the railway station is the centre of the town life, Jude says - "How modern you are!" (141) He also calls her a "creature of civilization" (154) Even Little Father Time is representative of modern times,

The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us - boys of a sort unknown in the last generation - the outcome of new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live. (348)

Hardy makes a similar observation on the predominance of gloom and sobriety in modern people in The Return of the Native also: in olden times, only tragedians like Aeschylus could even imagine the gloom of life that is experienced and fully comprehended by

even our nursery children. We know more about the defects of natural laws which make life tragic and this knowledge makes the "old fashioned revelling in the general situation"¹ almost impossible for us.

Jude and Sue are, in many respect, representatives of modernism, and they are different from most of the people of their world. So they feel like outsiders in the world though they know that "everybody is getting to feel as we do. We are a little beforehand, that's all". (296) But such are the ways of the world that even being a little ahead of time is treated as a crime and they have to pay heavily for it. They rightly reflect: "Perhaps the world is not illuminated enough for such experiments as ours! Who were we, to think we could act as pioneers!" (364), Jude tells Mrs Edlin, " ... the time was not ripe for us! Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be of any good to us". (414)

But there are also other causes responsible for Jude's tragedy. He aspires towards intellectual growth and spiritual development but at the same time he has some weaknesses. As he puts it, "My two Arch Enemies ... - my weakness for womankind and my impulse to strong liquor". (366) These two sides of his nature are constantly coming into conflict and causing him great

¹ RN p.174

misery. When he is busy preparing for admission to Christminster, Arabella attracts him. He is too weak to resist the temptations offered by Arabella, and has to forget all his ambition and marry her. Arabella is "a complete and substantial female animal - no more, no less," (44) so it is natural that Jude's spirit and mind should be starved in her company. When she leaves him, he meets Sue who can satisfy his intellect and his spirit to the utmost, but then his body must be starved. As Hardy puts it, Jude has to face "the tragic issues of two bad marriages, owing in the main to a doom or curse of hereditary temperament peculiar to the family of the parties."¹

Sue knows that people think her "cold-natured" and "sexless".(156) She is also aware that she was, to a great extent, responsible for the death of her first comrade: "He said I was breaking his heart by holding out against him so long at such close quarters; he could never have believed it of woman. I might play that game once too often, he said." (155) And Jude rightly fears that he might have to meet the same fate. Sue has always had an aversion to physical love. She cannot bear to live with Phillotson, and she yields to Jude only when she is afraid that Arabella might win him back. She has a perverseness that is part of her. (140) Like Lawrence's Gudrun, she wants to hunt up new

¹ Life p. 271

sensations (181): she makes Jude "rehearse" her marriage with Phillotson. Pained and bewildered Jude wonders whether Sue was "so perverse that she wilfully gave herself and him pain for the odd and mournful luxury of practising long-suffering in her own person, and of being touched with tender pity for him at having made him practise it." (183) When Jude impulsively places his hand upon hers, she takes it "quite freely into her own little soft one, dividing his fingers and coolly examining them, as if they were the fingers of a glove she was purchasing." (139) We are told that she "was something of a riddle to him". (141) Lawrence describes Jude's dilemma in his poem "And Jude the Obscure and His Beloved":

Oh my God what a bitter shame
 ...
 That she should ward away the flame,
 Yet warm herself at the fire, and blame
 Me that I flicker in the basket;
 Me that I glow not still in content
 When all my substance is being spent;
 What a bitter shame that she should ask it
 Of love not to desire.

We get a glimpse into her nature when we observe her behaviour at the great Wessex Agricultural Show.

She adored rosesSue (was) detaining Jude almost against his will while she learnt the names of this variety and that, and put her face within an inch of their blooms to smell them. 'I should like to push my face quite into them - the dears!' (306)

¹ CP p.680

She seems very happy and Jude asks her if it is because she has come in his company to the show, but her answer is:

"because I am improving my mind." (307) Lawrence rightly observes that Sue "could only live in the mind".¹ He repeatedly asserts that she is not a woman and that "she was not alive in the ordinary human sense... the senses, the body, did not exist in her; she existed as a consciousness".² Many times in the novel, Sue is called a "spirit" a "disembodied creature", "a sweet, tantalizing phantom - hardly flesh at all ..." (255) The only moment of ecstasy that we find Jude sharing with Sue, is near the roses at the agricultural show. Lawrence appreciated the scene very much and his comments on the scene also throw some light on one of his own characters, Miriam of Sons and Lovers. He observes that Jude and Sue

never knew happiness, actual, sure-footed happiness not for a moment. That was incompatible with Sue's nature. But what they knew was a very delightful but poignant and unhealthy condition of lightened consciousness ... So that, when they went to the flower-show, her sense of the roses, and Jude's sense of the roses, would be most, most poignant..... they had their own form of happiness, nevertheless, this trembling on the verge of ecstasy, when, the senses strongly roused to the service of the consciousness, the things they contemplated took flaming being, became flaming symbols of their own emotions to them.

So that the real marriage of Jude and Sue was in the roses. Then, in the third state, in the spirit, these two beings met upon the roses

¹ Ph. p. 497

² Ibid. p.501

and in the roses were symbolized in consummation. The rose is the symbol of marriage - consummation in its beauty. To them it is more¹ than a symbol, it is a fact, a flaming experience.

To Lawrence's Miriam also flowers are a similarly "flaming experience". Watching her amongst flowers is very much like watching Sue in the midst of roses:

Paul passed along a fine row of sweet-peas,...
Miriam followed, breathing the fragrance.
To her, flowers appeared with such strength
she felt she must make them part of herself.
When she bent and breathed a flower, it was
as if she and the flower were loving each other.²

We can easily understand that Sue is not capable of loving a man as she can love flowers, but, like Eustacia Vye, she has a passion for being loved. She gets more and more interested in Jude as she learns that he loves her. She tells him towards the end: "When I first knew you I merely wanted you to love me ... the craving to attract and captivate, regardless of the injury it may do the man - was in me; ... however fondly it ended, it began in the selfish and cruel wish to make your heart ache for me without letting mine ache for you". (365) And Jude loves her not only because he needs somebody to love but also because in many ways she is the projection of his own self - his intellectual and spiritual self. Even Phillotson is struck by the affinity of their natures. He speaks of "the extraordinary sympathy, or similarity, between the pair They seem to be one person

¹ Ph. pp.506-7

² SL.p.214 (for a more detailed comparison, see the Chapter on SL pp.261

split in two!" (239)

Hardy shows us the similarity of their nature in the rabbit incident. They hear the cry of a rabbit caught in a gin. Both of them are feeling themselves to be in a similar state - bound down by convention to a life of misery, yet their souls striving for freedom and for each other's company. They are both unable to rest till the rabbit has been put out of its pain.

Lawrence might have been influenced by Hardy in his use of the rabbit incident in Women in Love. Both the authors show us the true nature of their characters with the help of a symbolical scene with a rabbit. When Jude hears the cry of the rabbit caught in a gin, he "could rest no longer till he had put it out of its pain". Sue shares the same tenderness of heart for animals and birds. She tells Jude: "I haven't been able to sleep at all, and then I heard the rabbit, and couldn't help thinking of what it suffered, till I felt I must come down and kill it". (223) On the other hand, both Gudrun and Gerald share a hardness of heart and cruelty to living creatures; and their reaction to the rabbit when it struggles for freedom, shows the deadness and qualities of anti-life which characterise their whole being. They are both unnecessarily cruel to the rabbit and when Gerald has subdued it, Gudrun looks at him with "darkened eyes, strained with underworld knowledge ... He felt the mutual

hellish recognition".¹

Phyllotson is aware of the extraordinary affinity that exists between Jude and Sue, so he writes to Jude - "You are made for each other: it is obvious, palpable, to any unbiased older person". (250) But even though they seem to be counterparts, their union is very short-lived. At first Jude suffers because Sue is "such a phantasmal, bodiless creature, one who ... has so little animal passion ..." (268) And later on she gives suffering to herself as well as to Jude because she retains something of the conventions that she has been hating. At the first stroke of unhappiness, her modern beliefs flee from her and she gets converted to very primitive beliefs. She goes back to Phyllotson for she thinks the Church-marriage to be truer than the marriage of Nature. So we see "the shattered ideals of the two chief characters", (vi) because of the incongruity that exists between the ideal and the real. Hardy calls this novel "the tragedy of unfulfilled aims" (v) and this theme is concerned with the frustrations of all of us. This quality imparts to the novel a universal appeal. Hardy also tells us that this novel attempts "to tell, without mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit".(v) Jude's sufferings are mostly caused by this inner

¹ WL p. 272

conflict, by the struggle between the body and the spirit.

A. Alvarez rightly observes that it

is a kind of Anna Karenina from the male point of view, with the basic action turned upside down. Where Anna moves from Karenin to Vronsky, from dessication to partial satisfaction, Jude, swinging from Arabella to Sue, does the opposite.¹

Arabella is not only merely physical, she is also selfish and heartless like Alec d'Urberville. Like him too she undergoes a temporary conversion after the death of her second husband. She says she goes to the chapel regularly and receives great comfort there. But just as Alec's belief in religion vanished when he saw Tess, Arabella's devotion too disappeared when she heard about Jude: "I've heard of Jude, and I've seen his wife. And ever since, do what I will, and though I sung the hymns with all my strength, I have not been able to help thinking about 'n; which I've no right to do as a chapel member". (325)

It is significant to note that, when she takes him to an inn, Jude sees a picture of Samson and Delilah in the room and soon afterwards Arabella leaves him as shattered as Samson was by Delilah. In September 1926, Hardy was writing to a friend about a proposed dramatisation of Jude and he observes, "Would not Arabella be the villain of the piece?"² She does seem to be so,

¹ A.J. Guerard (ed) Twentieth Century Views : Hardy. p. 113

² Life p. 433

at least as much as Alec is in Tess. But Lawrence thinks it is Hardy's "bad art"¹ to make her seem so. She has got her shortcomings, but at the same time she has got something that makes her dynamic, natural and truly living. She cannot understand or appreciate the whole being of Jude, but she recognises his maleness and responds naturally to it:

I've got him to care for me: yes! But I want him to more than care for me; I want him to have me - to marry me" I must have him. He's the sort of man I long for. I shall go mad if I can't give myself to him altogether! (55)

She does not regard sex as a mystery and is not reverential towards it, as some of Lawrence's characters are, but she has that vital quality which would have made Sue a perfect woman. Sue lacks this quality and in spite of everything else, she can only give and receive unhappiness and dissatisfaction in life. Arabella, on the other hand, is happy in an animal sense, she is gross and coarse, but she has an intuition and wisdom which make her have the last word in the novel.

In its technique, Jude reminds us a little of King Lear. Just as Gloucester and his sons repeat the tragedy of King Lear and his daughters, so also Phillotson repeats the tragedy of Jude. Of course there are a few differences, but the similarities are

¹ Ph. p. 489

more striking. Both Jude and Phillotson were ambitious to become scholars of a Christminster college, both have been frustrated. Both love the same woman and both suffer because of her. Phillotson has to lose his friends, his fame and his job. He is not less considerate and large-hearted than Jude. Just as Jude ignores and suppresses his passion in order to please Sue, Phillotson sacrifices his happiness and his good name to make her happy. The only difference is perceived in the end. Sue goes back to Phillotson - Jude the senior; and Jude is left to die friendless. The critic in Hardy did not appreciate Shakespeare's presentation of Gloucester's tragedy as a parallel to King Lear's. He made a note after reading King Lear:

Shakespeare did not quite reach his intention in the King's character, and the splitting of the tragic interest between him and Gloucester does not, to my mind, enhance its intensity,¹ although commentators assert that it does.

But as we have just seen, the artist in Hardy differed from the critic in him and presented a similar parallel in this novel.

Even though Hardy would have wished his novel to have Aristotelian qualities of tragedy, we cannot call it a perfect tragedy if we judge it according to Aristotle's definition, but still we have to acknowledge that it has great tragic qualities.

¹ Life p. 282

It may not have the unities required of a tragic drama, but it has emotional unity and the imagery and symbolism of the novel give it a poetic touch. Besides the rabbit, Christminster, and Christ imagery, Hardy takes help of imagery from the world of small creatures to show the quality of human-life in the world: forced to prevent the hungry birds from pecking at the corn, Jude is filled with sympathy for them. "They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them ... Puny and sorry as those lives were, they much resembled his own". (19) When he is being beaten for having felt this sympathy, he is "helpless ... as a hooked fish" (20) In the end he wishes that somebody should be as merciful to him as he was to his pig. (398)

The vision of life presented here is very sad and unedifying, but the vision is depicted truly as seen by Hardy. Society and conventions are enemies of human beings and when they combine with fate and a man's inherent weaknesses of character, they can easily crush him. Social conventions and laws are proved to be against nature. They are traps that ultimately kill human beings. Here Hardy's attack is mainly directed against the conventions of marriage. As Jude reflects, he finds himself in a position no better than that of a rabbit caught in a gin: "... is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springs to noose

and hold back those who want to progress?" (226) Jude tells Arabella that their marriage is a mistake and they are tied in a bond that "galls both of us devilishly". (74) But Jude's aunt knows that marriage is a punishment for all the married couples: " 'Ah - you'll rue this marrying as well as he!', she added, turning to Sue. 'All our family do - and nearly all everybody else's' " (199) To Sue, living a married life is no better than having a limb amputated (221), and she is tortured by the "dreadful contract to feel in a particular way in a matter whose essence is its voluntariness" (221-222). We are also given the impression that marriage is becoming more and more dreadful as life is becoming more and more complex with the advancement of civilisation. Mrs Edlin remarks:

I don't know what the times be coming to! Matrimony have growed to be that serious in these days that one really do feel afeared to move in it at all. In my time we took it more careless; and I don't know that we was any the worse for it! (380)
Weddings be funerals 'a b'lieve nowadays. Fifty-five years ago, come Fall, since my man and I married! Times have changed since then! (412)

Time and again we are told that genuine wedlock means absence of love and prevalence of bitterness and hatred. Sue does not have the courage to marry Jude because she fears their love would vanish as it has vanished from the lives of married couples. She

believes that marriage is a tragedy in the lives of most people: it "is none of the natural tragedies of love that's love's usual tragedy in civilized life, but a tragedy artificially manufactured for people who in a natural state would find relief in parting! ... I daresay it happens to lots of women; only they submit, and I kick". (224) Lawrence too believed in kicking at misery instead of submitting to it, but Hardy shows that even though his characters have the courage to kick, the iron-hands of conventions can crush them into submission. Sue's return to conventionality symbolises man's defeat by this enemy which is too great for him. But, as Hardy was showing life in all its complexities, we find complex causes of tragedy. And of these, Sue's own abnormalities are no less responsible. Changes in the marriage code could not have solved the problems of Jude's life. Hardy himself considered "blind Chance"¹ to be the main villain of the novel. He offers no way out of the gin in which man is caught because his aim is only to "give shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impressions" (v), and the impression of life as presented here is sad and disturbing.

¹ Life p. 433

CH.VIII

THE WHITE PEACOCK

IN THE White Peacock we find not only most of the important themes and ideas of Lawrence's fiction, but also the influence of Thomas Hardy - the great lover of nature and depicter of the tragic lives of human beings in this universe. In his first novel, Lawrence is not yet assuming the role of a prophet and a preacher, but we can see what aspects of life and what ideas are going to be the main concern of Lawrence's later works. In The White Peacock we find the germs of all the ideas that are going to grow in Lawrence's fiction.

Lawrence's essay on Hardy is proof of the fact that he had esteem for the art of Hardy, even though he does not agree with many of Hardy's views, and a study of Lawrence's novels shows that he had learnt and perhaps unconsciously imbibed many things of Hardy's. His later novels also owe something to Hardy, but in The White Peacock we find many similarities with scenes and characters from Hardy's novels. And the most important thing is that, even though the general impression that we get from The White Peacock is not that of serious conflicts, a careful study of the novel shows that the tragic aspects of human relationships are already taking shape. Neither The White Peacock nor Hardy's Under the Greenwood Tree is a simple pastoral

story. We can get glimpses of the dark and tragic aspects of Hardy's later novels in his Under the Greenwood Tree as well.

When Mrs Penny says :

Well, 'tis humps and hollers with the best of us; but still and for all that, Dick and Fancy stand as fair a chance of having a bit of ¹ sunsheen as any married pair in this land.

we are prepared for the following lines to come from the same pen sometime later -

In the poorest spots the hedges were bowed with haws and blackberries; acorns cracked underfoot, and the burst husks of chestnuts lay exposing their auburn contents as if arranged by anxious sellers in a fruit-market. In all this proud show some kernels were unsound as her own situation, and she wondered if there were one world in the universe where the ²fruit had no worm, and marriage no sorrow.

Similarly, when we read the following lines -

The proud fool! - look at it! Perched on an angel, too, as if it were a pedestal for vanity. That's the soul of a woman - or it's the devil ... A woman to the end, ... all vanity and screech and defilement, (175)

we are prepared for the following description of Gudrun in

Women in Love:

¹ UGT p.201

² W p.212

And her pity for him was as cold as stone, its deepest motive was hate of him, and fear of his power over her, which she must always counterfoil Her senses were entirely apart from him, cold and destructive of him. It was her overbearing will that insisted.¹

So we can say that like Hardy's early novels, The White Peacock foreshadows Lawrence's special preoccupations as a novelist.

The White Peacock is full of beautiful descriptions of nature and these scenes often remind us of the pastoral settings of Hardy's novels. The following two quotations from both the authors not only show the varying effects of the wind on trees, but also bring human beings in close relation to nature:

To dwellers in a wood almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature. At the passing of the breeze the fir trees sob and moan no less distinctly than they rock; the holly whistles as it battles with itself; the ash hisses amid its quiverings; the beech rustles while its flat boughs rise and fall. And winter, which modifies the note of such trees as shed their leaves, does not destroy its individuality.²

The long-drawn booming of the wind in the wood and the sobbing and moaning in the maples and oaks near the house, had made Lettie restless... We crossed the tangle of fern and bracken, bramble and wild raspberry canes that spread in the open space before the house,... The wind whipped up noisy little wavelets, and the cluck and clatter of these among the pebbles, the swish of the rushes and the freshening of the breeze against our faces, roused us. (23)

¹ WL p.498

² UGT p.11

But even though man may observe nature and be affected by her, he finds nature to be totally indifferent to his aspirations and to his fate. Hardy's Tess finds no sympathy in nature for her sorrow -

... Meanwhile the trees were just as green as before; the birds sang and the sun shone as clearly now as ever. The familiar surroundings had not darkened because of her¹ grief, nor sickened because of her pain.

Similarly Lawrence's Cyril finds no response to his yearnings in the beautiful clouds -

Across the infinite skies of March great rounded masses of cloud had sailed stately all day, domed with a white radiance, softened with faint, fleeting shadows as if companies of angels were gently sweeping past; ... All day the clouds had moved on to their vast destination, and I had clung to the earth yearning and impatient. I took a brush and tried to paint them, then I raged at myself. I wished that in all the wild valley where cloud shadows were travelling like pilgrims, something would call me forth from my rooted loneliness. Through all the grandeur of the white and blue day, the poised cloud masses swung their slow flight, and left me unnoticed. (151)

Both the writers have a deep and sensuous perception of the beauties of nature; and rural settings and scenery are used by both not just for ornamental purposes but to illuminate and illustrate the meaning of human actions, the nature of the characters and the situations that guide their behaviour. Lawrence

¹ TD p.110

appreciated the importance of the setting in the novels of Hardy -

And this is the quality Hardy shares with the great writers, Shakespeare or Sophocles or Tolstoi, this setting behind the small action of his protagonists the terrific action of unfathomed nature; setting a smaller system of morality, the one grasped and formulated by the human consciousness within the vast, uncomprehended and incomprehensible morality of nature or of life itself, surpassing human consciousness.¹

Hardy displays this faculty of imparting a personality to his setting more in his later novels; and Lawrence's snowy mountains where Gerald Crich goes to sleep forever, are no less imposing than Egdon Heath.

But in the earlier novels of both the writers, descriptions of nature are often presented for the sheer beauty of the scenery. The first chapter of Under the Greenwood Tree gives us a description of a winter night -

On a cold and starry Christmas-eve within living memory a man was passing up a lane towards Mellstock Cross in the darkness of a plantation that whispered... distinctly to his intelligence ... and to his eyes, casually glancing upward, the silver and black - stemmed birches with their characteristic tufts, the pale grey boughs of beech, the dark-creviced elm, all appeared now as black and flat outlines upon the sky, wherein the white stars twinkled so vehemently that their flickering seemed like the flapping of wings. Within the woody pass, at a level anything² lower than the horizon, all was dark as a grave.

¹ Ph p.419

² UGT pp. 11-12

Similarly young Lawrence presents a description of winter in

The White Peacock:

On the second Saturday before Christmas the world was transformed; tall, silver and pearl-grey trees rose pale against a dim-blue sky, like trees in some rare, pale Paradise; the whole woodland was as if petrified in marble and silver and snow; the holly leaves and long leaves of the rhododendron were rimmed and spangled with delicate tracery.

.... tonight even the glare of the distant little iron works was not visible, for the low clouds were gone, and pale stars blinked from beyond the moon (111)

In The White Peacock we find some similarity with Hardy's novels in character, situation and theme also. George is very unlike Jude but his attraction for the two so very different women and his final fate remind us of Jude the Obscure. Meg, in her physical beauty and health, is similar to Arabella. Cyril says -

... I have never seen a woman who had more physical charm; there was a voluptuous fascination in her every outline and movement...(165)

And like Arabella, Meg cannot understand higher or intellectual things. Meg too is shallow and coarse and after sometime we find that she has neither love nor respect for George. She does not even stay with George when he is about to die. The last glimpse of George that we get is of a man alienated from everybody - "like a condemned man".(368)At this point we are

reminded of the sick Jude whom Arabella leaves because she wants to see the festivity of the Christminster city, and who dies a lonely death cursing the day that he was born. Like Sue, Lettie proves "too good" for the hero who still loves her with all his being. Both Jude and George meet their tragic end because of their love for the refined heroine who rejects them.

George's nature and standing remind us of two of Hardy's heroes - Dick in Under the Greenwood Tree and Giles in The Woodlanders. Dick has fallen in love with Fancy and wants to meet her. He gets a handkerchief of hers and so an opportunity of visiting her and delivering it to her. But the author tells us -

... he delayed taking the extreme measure of calling with it lest, had she really no sentiment of interest in him, it might be regarded as a slightly absurd errand, the reason guessed, and the sense of the ludicrous, which was rather keen in her, do his₁ dignity considerable injury in her eyes;.....

George also is too cautious and careful to achieve what he aspires for. He is oversensitive to feminine rebuke and resistance and the narrator observes-

... You should have had the courage to risk yourself - you're always too careful of yourself and your own poor feelings - you never could brace yourself up to a showerbath of contempt and hard usage, so you've saved your feelings and lost ... (225-6)

¹ UGT p.67

George is coarse, clumsy and constrained in his behaviour like Giles Winterborne. Like Giles too he would not have aspired after an union with the heroine had he not been led to aspire after it. And like Giles he fears that his beloved is of a higher class, more refined and better educated than him. He is ready to believe that he is not good enough for her. He tells Cyril -

"...I thought she looked down on us - on our way of life. I thought she meant I was like a toad in a hole."

"You should have shown her different"

"How could I when I could see no different?"(82)

Graham Hough says that "George Saxton owes a little to Gabriel Oak,"¹ but I think he is very unlike Oak who is practical and worldly-wise. George, on the other hand, indulges in impractical dreams of fulfilment. He tells Cyril -

... If it was a fine dream, wouldn't you want to go on dreaming?(83)

George suffers from a fatal inertia and is not sure what he wants. He does not want a thing actively and he is unable to make decisions. Opportunity comes, but he is not prompt enough to seize it. In him we find the fate of Giles Winterborne being reenacted. When Grace is just waiting for Giles to own her, he is too convinced of his own incompetence and unsuitability as her life-partner and writes to Grace's father relieving her of his

¹ The Dark Sun p.24

claims. Similarly Lettie offers George many opportunities and even Cyril knows when it is the right moment to win her, but George is too timid to "make the struggle, to rouse himself to decide the question for her," (241) and so he loses her.

When George is engrossed in his work, his physique looks as attractive and as much in unison with nature as that of Giles. We see him mowing in the field -

... George had thrown off his hat, and his black hair was moist and twisted into confused half-curls. Firmly planted, he swung with a beautiful rhythm from the waist. On the hip of his belted breeches hung the scythestone; his shirt, faded almost white, was torn just above the belt, and showed the muscles of his back playing like lights upon the white sand of a brook. There was something exceedingly attractive in the rhythmic body. (63)

And Giles can be seen working at the apple mill -

... He had hung his coat to a nail of the outhouse wall, and wore his shirt-sleeves rolled up beyond his elbows, to keep them unstained while he rammed the pomace into the bags of horsehair. Fragments of apple-rind had alighted upon the brim of his hat - ... while brown pips of the same fruit were sticking among the₁ down upon his fine round arms, and in his beard.

Lettie reminds us of Fancy Day and Grace Melbury. She loves George but marries Leslie. George says -

She - she's like a woman, like a cat - running to comforts - she strikes a bargain. Women are all tradesmen. (109)

And Hardy presents a justification for Grace who loves Giles but still accepts Dr. Fitzpiers's offer of marriage:

No woman is without aspirations, which may be innocent enough within limits; and Grace had been so trained socially, and educated intellectually, as to see clearly enough a pleasure in the position of a wife to such a man as Fitzpiers. ¹

Fancy Day loves Dick, is engaged to him, and still accepts the offer of the parson and is ready to flirt with the rich Mr. Shiner. Fancy Day, Grace, and Lettie - they are all attracted to outward glamour and show. In spite of her attraction towards Giles, Grace thinks that she has married well because Fitzpiers is refined and sophisticated and he has the taste and means to present her with "rings of sapphire and opal" which decorate "her white and slender fingers". ² From her window she can see Giles toiling with his cider-making mill, and her womanly pride and vanity force her to attract his attention and show him her glittering rings and her general splendour. Very similar incidents are presented in The White Peacock. Instead of Grace's rings of sapphire and opal, Lettie has received an engagement ring of sapphires and diamonds from Leslie, the son of the rich mine-owner. In her vanity she too goes near George and Emily and shows her hand -

"look - do you like it?" (134)

¹ W p.170

² Ibid. p.183

She knows how George feels towards her but still she insists: "You must congratulate me" (134) After her marriage, when she meets George, she proudly displays her gorgeous attire and dazzling beauty -

She knew her own splendour, and she drew up her throat laughing and brilliant with triumph. (292)

Grace and Lettie have other things in common too. They have both received higher education and can talk more on intellectual levels than their coarse suitors. Grace uses "dictionary words"¹ and discusses literary styles² which make Giles feel as stupid as George when Lettie uses Latin quotations and indulges in intellectual discussions.

Raney Stanford rightly observes that an important "impact of Hardy upon Lawrence (as) revealed in The White Peacock is the interest in female psychology common to both."³

In many of the novels of both the writers, women dominate the interest, and very often we are presented with pictures of life as seen through a woman's eyes - of things as seen from a woman's point of view. This was possible because both the writers were interested in the type of woman that is "the supremest product of

¹ W p. 94

² Ibid. p.71

³ "Thomas Hardy and Lawrence's The White Peacock", Mod. Fiction Studies Vol V no I 1959 p. 23

our civilization ... and a product that well frightens us"¹

Of all Hardy's heroines Sue is the one that fascinates Lawrence the most. In his study of Hardy, he has discussed her character and behaviour at a much greater length than any other character of Hardy and we find traces of her characteristics in many of Lawrence's heroines, and Lettie is the first heroine of Lawrence to correspond to the psychological complexity of Sue Bridehead. Cyril tells us that Lettie "read all things that dealt with modern woman" (92) and that from her mother she inherited "democratic views" which she debated warmly with her lover. (150) And Jude is surprised at Sue's unconventional views, and says "How modern you are!"² Lawrence's analysis of Sue helps us to understand what a modern woman is -

The suppressed, atrophied female in her, like a potent fury, was always there, suggesting to her to make the fatal mistake.³

She has received intellectual emancipation, but at the cost of the suppression of feminine traits which results in the "most deadly anarchy in her own being".⁴ She develops sado-masochistic complexes "in which the unfortunate victim expresses a failure to have real human and sexual relationships by hurting others or

¹ Ph. p.497

² JO p. 141

³ Ph. p.497

⁴ Ibid.

the self".¹

Sue hurts and tortures Jude by asking him to participate in her marriage with Phillotson:

Jude, will you give me away? I have nobody else who could do it so conveniently as you, being the only married relation I have here on the spot...²

But the extreme of her cruelty is the scene in which she makes Jude pose as her bridegroom for a mock-wedding rehearsal in the same church in which he has to give her away to Phillotson in just two hours. When Lettie proudly shows her engagement ring and insists on being congratulated, she reminds us of the merciless Sue. After her engagement and even after her marriage, she finds a particular pleasure in playing with the emotions of George and in tempting him. But she brings unhappiness and boredom to herself as well by going against instinct. Her instinct draws her to George - to his manliness and to his simplicity, but she also wants a sophisticated life and social position. George's appeal to her is much deeper than the social appeal of Leslie. Her weakness lies in the fact that she is attracted by the false glamour of sophisticated society. She ignores her instinct and lets things take their own course. She justifies herself by believing that human beings are as helpless as chessmen -

¹ Raney Stanford, D H L Miscellany p.24

² JO p.178

You see, I couldn't help it I have been brought up to expect it - everybody expected it - and you're bound to do what people expect you to do - you can't help it. We can't help ourselves, we're all chessmen. (225)

But her words are not as convincing as are those of Eustacia Vye when she rages against the gods and her fate. Neither the author nor the narrator of The White Peacock believes in fate. Cyril thinks that one can make one's own destiny! And Lawrence makes us understand that we bring unhappiness on ourselves if we ignore instinct and nature and the healthy demands of the body. So, even though Lettie is eager to put the blame on fate, ("Ah, Fate-Fate! It separates you whether you want it or not."(194)), she does not convince us as Hardy's heroines do. She is not true to herself. Emily rightly observes that "she could take a role in life and play up to it." (137) She plays the role of a sophisticated lady well; but there have to be intervals when she takes off her mask and feels uneasy and unhappy. The false values of a sophisticated life do not give Lettie inner happiness and so she takes refuge in a meaningless motherhood. She is dissatisfied and her life seems to be a tragic waste. Cyril tells us that she tries "to live her life at second hand. This peculiar abnegation of self is the recourse of a woman for the escaping of the responsibilities of her own development ... she puts over her living face a veil, as a sign that the woman no longer exists for herself" (323) She is not unique in taking refuge in

meaningless motherhood from her failure to live life at first hand. We find her type appearing again in The Rainbow. Unfortunately the types of Lettie bring unhappiness and destruction on themselves as well as others. George, after he was roused into consciousness, started believing that Lettie could give meaning and purpose to his life. R.E. Gajdusek writes: "The inseparability of character and fate is integral to the novel and the character of George is essentially Greek".¹ George does not pose to himself as a great tragic hero, rather in his very humbleness and frankness he touches the heart of the reader when he speaks of the shattering of his hopes:

... You see I built on Lettie ... You must found your castles on something, and I founded mine on Lettie. You see I'm like plenty of folks, I have nothing definite to shape my life to. I put brick upon brick, as they come, and if the whole topples down in the end, it does. But you see, you (Cyril) and Lettie have made me conscious, and now I'm at a dead loss ... (274)

In his disappointment George turns to an opposite type of woman. He marries Meg who, unlike Lettie, is coarse and purely physical. Soon after their marriage, she turns completely to her children. And, according to Lawrence, motherhood can endow a woman with the power of destroying man:

A woman who has her child in her arms is a tower of strength ... that may in its turn stand quietly dealing death. (332)

¹ Miscellany p.198

So, even though unlike Giles Winterborne, George tries to forget Lettie in the arms of another woman, he does not escape his tragic fate. Unloved and uncared for by his wife and children, he finds refuge in drink. In the last chapter of the novel, we find him alienated from everybody - even from his friend Cyril - and reduced to a state of alcoholism and moving along the path of self-destruction. The artistry of the novelist is remarkably displayed in the way in which he makes the tragic situations of George's life more prominent by means of two parallels. In the very beginning we meet Cyril's father who is "worn with sickness and dissipation". (35) Later on, we learn that he suffered from chronic alcoholism and was forsaken by everyone. Even at the time of death he was alone. As the story develops we find George moving along the same path of destruction.

Another parallel is provided by Annable, who is close to nature and is called a Pan. Just as Lettie seemed to be giving a purpose to the life of George but left him soon after, so too Annable had been discarded by Lady Crystabel after she had attracted him towards her and tricked him into marriage. She had been infatuated with him and she used to compare him to Croton and Hercules, but, after the infatuation died down, he was merely "her animal" "son animal, son boeuf" (177) just as George is "my taurus" (33) for Lettie. So, naturally, Lawrence's assertive and sensitive male

left his "peacock". Outwardly he seems to be flourishing in life, but he tells Cyril "I feel, somehow, as if I were at an end too". (177) And then he meets his tragic end. We see George, too, rejected by his "peacock", heading towards the same doom.

The rich background of nature that we find all through the novel adds to the actions and emotions of the characters; it also gives an extra tragic touch to certain scenes. When Annable dies, all nature seems to be in mourning:

But the peewits are not frightened, they add their notes to the sorrow, they circle after the white, retreating coffin, they circle round the woman; it is they who forever 'keen' the sorrows of this world. They are like priests in their robes, more black than white, more grief than hope, driving endlessly round and round, turning, lifting, falling and crying always in mournful desolation, repeating their last syllables, like the broken accents of despair. (184)

Nature here seems to play the role of a Greek tragic chorus. R E Gajdusek rightly places the description of Annable's funeral "among the great pastoral elegies in English."¹ References to the tragic writings of Maxim Gorky, Hardy, Etc., quotations like "I have supped full ... of horrors" from Macbeth and comparisons of George to the unfortunate Lovborg (162) with vine leaves in his hair (Hedda Gabler), and chapter headings like "A Prospect Among the Marshes of Lethe" - all these serve to provide a tragic atmosphere to the novel. E.W. Tedlock is right

¹ Miscellany p.192

when he says that the "dominant mood of the novel is a brooding over failure."¹ The misery of the man-woman relationship is the theme of The White Peacock. The male and the female stand for different values, but they are attracted to each other and they need each other. This gives rise to an unending conflict. Moreover the barriers of class, education, culture and idealism comes in the way of their union. In the end we find that Cyril has failed in his "search for a life-sustaining relation",² and he can offer no cure for the blighted life of the people. As Moynahan points out:

Unfulfilled by man, woman becomes the white peacock, 'all vanity and screech and defilement' Unfulfilled by woman, man gives way to the anti-social destructiveness of an Annable or the self-destructive, shapeless emotional vagaries of drunkenness.³

The relationship between men and women remains tragically unbalanced. Cyril's own relationship with Emily is also a failure, perhaps because they are both inhibited. With some hopes he turns to friendship with men. This theme is developed in the later novels, but in this novel it comes to nothing. George and Cyril cannot establish an enduring relation upon the "perfect"(257)

¹ D H L Artist and Rebel p.47

² Moynahan, J.: The Deed of Life p.8

³ Ibid. p.11

love that they experience momentarily. Their "passionate attachment" is worn away by the passage of time, (253) Annable has withdrawn himself from the sick cultured world where women humiliate "the pride of (a man's) ... body," (177) but the withdrawal either came too late or it was not a complete withdrawal, because he announces Lady Crystabel's death and says that he too feels that he is at an end; and he actually dies soon after. Cyril tells us that Annable "hated any sign of culture" because according to him "all civilization was the painted fungus of rotteness he reflected on the decline of the human race into folly and weakness and rotteness. 'Be a good animal, true to your animal instinct', was his motto" (172-3) But Cyril also tells us that even though he believed in his motto, he had not found happiness. "With all this, he was fundamentally very unhappy - and he made me also wretched." (173)

The only hint that we get of any recipe for happiness is the fact that nature reminds us that we have lost some knowledge which we need, and which we may perhaps find in nature. Lettie says about the snowdrops -

They belong to some knowledge we have lost,
that I have lost and that I need .(154)

Soon afterwards Annable appears and says, " ... tell a woman not to come in a wood till she can look at natural things - she might see something." (157) Julian Moynahan says that Annable perhaps

means that she may see a man who can give her happiness and fulfilment as Mellors gave to Connie,¹ but in The White Peacock there is no such suggestion and the novel ends on a note of total despair.

¹ The Deed of Life p.12

IN HIS study of Hardy, Lawrence writes about the tragic situation of the characters of Hardy -

These people of Wessex are ... always shooting suddenly out of a tight convention, a tight, hide-bound cabbage state into something quite madly personal ... (their) self suddenly bursts the shell of manner and convention and commonplace opinion, and acts independently ... And from such an outburst the tragedy usually develops. For there does exist, after all, the great self-preservation scheme, and in it we must all live. Now to live in it after bursting out of it was the problem these Wessex people found themselves faced with ... there is the greater idea of self-preservation, which is formulated in the State, in the whole modelling of the community. And from this idea, the heroes and heroines of Wessex, like the heroes and heroines of almost anywhere else, could not free themselves. In the long run, the State, the Community, the established form of life remained, remained intact and impregnable, the individual, trying to break forth from it, died of fear, of exhaustion, or of exposure to attacks from all sides, like men who have left the walled city to live outside in the precarious open. ¹

The above description of Hardy's protagonists is also applicable to Lawrence's own tragic hero in The Trespasser. Siegmund revolts against the monotony of his life. He goes away from home and does something unconventional - something for which the community does not grant permission to the individual. To use Lawrence's own phrase, Siegmund's "self suddenly bursts the

¹ Ph. pp. 410-11

shell of manner and convention and commonplace opinion and acts independently". So here, too, tragedy follows. Siegmund finds himself "out of the piece" (185) when he comes back to that from which he had "burst out":

He felt as if he were a limb out of joint from the body of life... The question was, How should he reset himself into joint? The body of life for him meant Beatrice, his children, Helena, the Comic Opera, his friends of the orchestra. How could he set himself again into joint with these? It was impossible... it was all absurd and impossible ... what remained possible? Why, to depart. 'If thine hand offend thee, cut it off'. He could cut himself off from life. (185)

Siegmund finds that he cannot take up the old way of life again because he cannot leave Helena and he cannot go on playing the violin for musical comedy night after night at the opera. But the most important reason is that henceforward he would have to bear himself with humility towards his family. His unconventional act has not only made him a stranger in his own home, it has also dubbed him a selfish - sinner in the eyes of his own children. So there is only one way left for him - forget his home and children, and turn really selfish. Leave them and live with Helena. But unfortunately Siegmund is very much like the protagonists of Hardy as Lawrence sees them. He is not strong enough to bear isolation from those who have been dear to him till now. Lawrence's own words regarding Hardy's characters again adequately describe the situation of Siegmund.

This is the tragedy ... of those who... have died in the wilderness, whither they had escaped for free action, after having left the walled security, and the comparative imprisonment, of the established convention . . . be passionate, individual, wilful, you will find the security of the convention a walled prison, you will escape, and you will die, either of your own lack of strength to bear the isolation and the exposure, or by direct revenge from the community, or from both. This is the tragedy, and only this: it is nothing more metaphysical than the division of a man against himself in such a way: first, that he is a member of the community, and must, upon his honour, in no way move to disintegrate the community, either in its moral or its practical form; second, that the convention of the community is a prison to his natural, individual desire, a desire that compels him, whether he feels justified or not, to break the bounds of the community, lands him outside the pale, there to stand alone ... doubting and saying: "Was I right, was I wrong? If I was wrong, oh,¹ let me die!" - in which case he courts death.

Siegmund too is baffled by the question whether he was wrong in defying convention and snatching some moments of happiness from life. He too is afraid that he has really done wrong, and naturally the death-wish overpowers him.

Like a man tangled up in a rope, he was not strong enough to free himself. He could not break with Helena and return to a degrading life at home; he could not leave his children and go to Helena.

Very well, it was impossible! Then there remained only one door which he could open in this prison corridor of life. ²(185)

It is remarkable that Siegmund compares life to prison, and Lawrence has used the same simile so many times in writing about the

¹ Ph. pp. 411-12 (*italics mine*)

² *Italics mine*

life in conventional society in his Hardy study.

Siegmund was unhappy with the routine of his meaningless and dreary life, and he tried to search for joy - for a life of fulfilment. He had great hopes in Helena. But she happens to be a woman who cannot take a man in his completeness. "For centuries a certain type of woman has been rejecting the 'animal' in humanity ..." (30) and Helena belongs to this type:

She belonged to that class of 'dreaming women' with whom passion exhausts itself at the mouth. Her desire was accomplished in a real kiss.(30)

It is significant that one of the alternative titles of The Trespasser was "The Man and the Dreaming Woman."¹ It seems that Lawrence learnt the phrase from Rachel Annand Taylor who wrote "The Prologue of the Dreaming Women" in her volume of sonnets - The Hours of Fiammetta (1910). Lawrence had a great admiration for Rachel Annand Taylor and he was impressed by her account of the two types of women:

There are two great traditions of womanhood. One presents the Madonna brooding over the mystery of motherhood; the other, more confusedly, tells of the acolyte, the priestess, the clairvoyant of the unknown gods. This latter exists complete in herself,² a personality definite and as significant as a symbol.

Helena too is portrayed as being "complete in herself", and when she understands that her lover is not satisfied with a mere kiss,

¹ CL p. 105

² Rachel Annand Taylor - Preface to The Hours of Fiammetta p.5
Italics mine.

"she looked up at him afraid. Lit by the firelight, in her white, clinging dress, cowering between her uplifted arms, she seemed to be offering him herself to sacrifice." (35) Later on we are told: "she wanted to sacrifice to him, make herself a burning altar to him..."(56) At this point we are reminded of a similar scene in Sons and Lovers, where the reaction of such a sacrificial offering on the male becomes more clear:

She lay as if she had given herself up to sacrifice; there was her body for him; but the look at the back of her eyes, like a creature awaiting¹ immolation, arrested him, and all his blood fell back.

Siegmund too is very sensitive and unselfish, so his relationship with Helena fills him with disgust at himself. He is unable to understand her and feels humiliated -

I am at my best, at my strongest,... She ought to be rejoiced at me, but she is not; she rejects me as if I were a baboon under my clothing... Why doesn't she like me? (41)

Helen Corke feels that Lawrence has been able to portray the psychological conflicts of Siegmund's mind as accurately as if he had put himself "into the position of Siegmund. He did his very best psychologically to get into the same relation with me as Siegmund had done."² Some of Lawrence's poems, written at this period are proof of the genuineness of Siegmund's dilemma. When Helena finds that Siegmund is "something of the 'clothed animal

¹ SL pp. 353-4

² The Listener 25:7:68 p.105

on end', like the rest of men," she becomes frantic, sobs bitterly and struggles to get away from Siegmund. Siegmund is simply bewildered:

What is it? Wont you tell me what is the matter?
 ... Have you heard anything against us? Have I done
 anything? Tell me - at any rate tell me, Helena.(100)

The same pleading voice can be heard in the following lines -

Is it with pain, my dear, that you shudder so?
 Is it because I hurt you with pain, my dear?

... you speak through close-shut teeth.
 Was this too much for you?

...You hold yourself all hard, as if my kisses
 Hurt as I gave them; you put me away -¹

Similarly when Siegmund understands how Helena is repulsed by his physical hunger, his humiliation is beautifully expressed in the following lines -

I am ashamed, you wanted me not to-night.
 And it is always so,.....

And now I know, so I must be ashamed;
 You love me while I hover tenderly
 Like moonbeams kissing you; but the body of me
 Closing upon you in the lightning - flamed

Moment, destroys you,....
 Humiliation deep to me, that all my best
 Soul's naked lightnings:

Means but to you a burden of dead flesh.²

Helena is a type of woman whose first glimpse Lawrence saw perhaps in Hardy's Sue Bridehead, and Lawrence the artist was as

¹ CP p. 87

² Ibid. p. 87

fascinated by her as was Jude. She appears again and again in Lawrence's novels and the author always takes great pains to describe her truly to us - to present her to us as she really is - full of destructive power, but at the same time, overflowing with fascination.

The best sort of women - the most interesting - are the worst for us ... By instinct they aim at suppressing the gross and animal in us. Then they are supersensitive - refined a bit beyond humanity. We, who are as little gross as need be, become their instruments...

She can't live without us, but she destroys us. These deep, interesting women don't want us; they want the flowers of the spirit they can gather of us. We, as natural men, are more or less degrading to them and to their love of us; therefore they destroy the natural man in us - that is, us altogether. ... - why will she help to destroy you, when she loved you to such extremity?

... Fools - the fools, these women! (84-5)

Both Sue and Helena are aware that in their relationship with men, they bring only destruction to their partner. Speaking of her first lover, Sue tells Jude -

He said I was breaking his heart by holding out against him so long at such close quarters.... I might play that game once too often, he said ... His death caused a terrible remorse in me for my cruelty - though I hope he died of consumption and not of me entirely. ¹

And later on,

... the poor Christminster graduate whom she had handled thus, returned to Jude's mind; and he saw himself ² as a possible second in such a torturing destiny.

¹ JO p.155

² Ibid. p. 251

Helena makes a similar observation about herself -

... no one had she touched without hurting. She had a destructive force; anyone she embraced she injured. Faint voices echoed back from her conscience. The shadows were full of complaint against her. It was all true, she was a harmful force, dragging Fate to petty, mean conclusion. (99)

Towards the end of the novel, when Helena is at Tintagel and she receives no letter from Siegmund, she starts wondering why no letter has come. "She imagined all of them terrible, and endued with grandeur, for she had kinship with Hedda Gabler." (196)

So we find that Helena, to whom Siegmund turns for finding what his wife could not give him - for getting real happiness and satisfaction, is a woman who can only drain him in spite of her efforts to supplement him with new vigour and joy. Naturally, "Siegmund felt a sense of doom." (85) Even in their love-making, Siegmund is left terribly isolated:

He had Helena, in his arms, which was sweet company, but in spirit he was quite alone. (103)

Earlier we are told:

Helena, not understanding, left him so much alone; the moon was nearer. (77)

In fact, of all the protagonists of Lawrence's novels, Siegmund seems to be the worst sufferer from the feeling of alienation. Even when living in the same house, he and his wife are so far apart that there can be no question of true communication. So he seeks Helena. But when he observes her

"watching the flowers, and making fancies out of them", (119) he feels he is left out of her world. "... he could not understand her meaning ... What is she thinking? ... She is sufficient to herself - she doesn't want me. She has her own private way of communing with things, and is friends with them ... She is incommunicable..." (119)

So when he comes back home, he has one last hope left in his children. The bigger children understand things and side with their mother. But he hopes that his youngest daughter will return his affection. "Often, when all the world was hostile, he had found her full of love, he had hidden his face against her...." (171) And had she come to him now, Siegmund need not have ended his life. Full of suspense he waits as his beloved daughter Gwen stops a yard from his chair and undecided, shifts from one foot to another. But ill chance, (the same that prevents Angel from discovering Tess's letter), shatters his hopes. Before the child can decide one way or the other, Vera calls her, and she leaves, "She had gone. His excitement sank rapidly, and the sickness returned stronger, more horrible and wearying than ever." (171) At this stage Siegmund reminds us of the Mayor of Casterbridge who loses interest in everything when Elizabeth Jane turns against him. He too dies rejecting the world that had rejected him.

As Siegmund is rejected one by one by all his dear ones, we are reminded also of Macbeth at the end of his career; even though Siegmund is a very small man compared to Macbeth. He is himself aware that he is a "small and futile" man and that his life presents a "small, and futile tragedy." (79) But even though a man may appear insignificant in the eyes of the world, to him, the incidents of his life are as important as the incidents in the life of any great hero. Looking at a carved Christ upon His cross, Siegmund feels that "life was treating him in the same manner as it had treated the Master, though his compared small and despicable with the Christ tragedy." (79)

Lawrence was aware of the tragic significance of The Trespasser. Helen Corke tells us that he read The Trojan Women to her,

and that tragedy in a sense came into line with the personal tragedy. Somehow he'd brought the personal¹ tragedy in line with the universal tragedy.....

Siegmund does not have the stature of a great hero. He is a passive figure, who is not willing to take drastic steps to change circumstances to suit himself. This is a flaw in his character which together with the peculiar circumstances of his life brings about his death. He has got one quality that we find

¹ The Listener 25 Jul.'68 p. 105

in all tragic heroes - he is very much aware of the gulf between desire and fulfilment. This is the cause of his suffering. He wants Helena as well as his children and he can have only one. So there is a conflict in his mind. He also has the element of guilt which, according to Richard B. Sewall, distinguishes truly tragic suffering from the pathetic suffering which is the suffering of the guiltless.¹ Siegmund feels that he has wronged his children by going away with Helena and this awareness mars the pleasures of his trip.

Siegmund is a common man but an artist, who could, if circumstances were favourable, give happiness and pleasure to others through his art. But he finds himself so trapped that he cannot go on living - life's sufferings are unendurable to him. And when he ends his life, we respond to the sense of the tragic waste of so much possibility of goodness.

Siegmund lacks the strength and the will to rebel strongly and full-heartedly against circumstances; but, besides this weakness of character, other things are also responsible for his tragedy. That his wife had made his life miserable, becomes clear in these words:

Whenever her thoughts wandered towards a consideration of how he must have felt, what his inner life must have been, during the past six years, she felt herself dilate with terror.(202)

¹ "The Tragic Form"; in Tragedy ed. by R. Levin p.179

Moreover, Helena, in whom Siegmund hopes to find sympathy and love is not capable of making him forget his miseries in a union with her, because she can not understand him. She can only give him comfort as a mother gives comfort to her child. But "he did not want comfort". His cry was for something that Helena could not give him. "He was abroad seeking courage and faith for his own soul. He, in loneliness, must search the night for faith." (103)

Helena loves Siegmund, but she loves a Siegmund that her own imagination has created, not the real earthy Siegmund - with his aspirations and weaknesses. Her dream of Siegmund was more to her than Siegmund himself. She confused him with her god and was naturally disappointed. Siegmund's feelings can best be described by Lawrence's poem 'Image-Making Love'

Always
in the eyes of those who loved me
I have seen at last the image of him they loved
and took for me
mistook for me.

So now, he wants to be alone and away from everybody -

Nakedly to be alone, unseen
is better than anything¹ else in the world
a relief like death.

We find that, after his return from the Isle of Wight, the death-wish has become stronger in Siegmund. Helena's relationship with him has proved more destructive than anything else.

¹ CP p. 601

Throughout the novel, Helena is associated with whiteness and with the moon:

There (in the drawing room) the moonlight entered and he thought the whiteness was Helena. (14)

For Lawrence, the moon is the symbol of the powerful possessive female that destroys the male, and whiteness is opposed to warmth and life. Helena is described in the novel as "a heavy white cat" (30) and she wears a white dress. She is also described as the sea which is self-sufficient and careless of others. So instead of responding to Siegmund's passion, she makes him restrain himself and he feels "physical sensation of defeat". (122) At this point Siegmund's troubles gain the wide applicability which we look for in a tragedy. This difficulty of the man-woman relationship is common to many people and all ages.

In the first chapter we get a feeling that Helena and Louisa have a lesbian relationship, and that may be one of the reasons why Helena finds it difficult to respond to Siegmund's passion.

Siegmund has taken the trip to the Isle of Wight in order to escape from his dreary and drab life into a dreamland. But Helena's characteristics, the haunting memory of his children and his own sensitivity have prevented him from having long and pleasant dreams. Moreover he does not have the will and the initiative to make his dreams come real. Lawrence's comment on Siegmund's photograph

throws ample light on his character:

He was leaning slightly forward, as if yielding beneath a burden of life, or to the pull of fate. He looked out musingly, and there was no hint of rebellion in the contours of the regular features. (10)¹

Even though he did not do it enthusiastically, he yet made an effort to find some change and happiness, but circumstances are such that he can do nothing to change things. Like Oswald of Ibsen's Ghosts, he must submit to his doom. Siegmund reaches the state of complete resignation. He loses even the will to live, and thus becomes, what Schopenhauer would have called a real tragic hero.

At some points the novel presents attitudes and views very similar to those of Schopenhauer and Hardy. When Siegmund makes preparations for his suicide, we are told that he was acting "as if he were the servant of some stern will" (188) Phrases like "the pull of fate". (10) "dare to tempt Fate", (45) "we are in the hands of God" (81) he "felt a sense of doom". (85) "heavy with a sense of impending fate", (93) "All along Fate has been resolving, obvious discords..." (94) "The Master-Fate is too great an artist ..." (95) "fate, with wide wings, was hovering just over her. Fate, ashen grey and black, like a carrion crow, had her in its shadow." (99) -- such phrases remind us of Hardy's novels where the characters have so often to submit to fate or

¹ Italics mine

chance, Siegmund tells us how little significance an individual has in the vast world: "if one bee dies in a swarm, what is it, so long as the hive is all right." (147) In Hardy's novels also we are made aware of the insignificance of human beings - they are compared to flies, insects, caterpillars, etc. (RN, TD, TT, etc.)

References to omens and premonitions also show an influence from Hardy. When Siegmund has made his decision, he sees a shooting star and observes: "It is a good sign - a shooting star. It was a good sign for me. I know I am right." (154)

The day Siegmund dies, there is a great storm at Tintagel:

The night opened, revealed a ghostly landscape, instantly to shut again with blackness. Then the thunder crashed. Helena felt as if some secret were being disclosed too swiftly and violently for her to understand. The thunder exclaimed horribly on the matter. She was sure something had happened. (195-6)

We are reminded of the storm scene in Desperate Remedies on the night before Cytheria's marriage to Manston. Cytheria also feels that nature is trying to convey to her something terrible.

Lawrence's description of the "storm of thunder and Lightning" with its supernatural glare, its "pallid vision of a ghost-world," and "revealing a ghostly landscape;" reminds us of similar scenes and macabre descriptions in Hardy's novels.

It (the flash) sprang east, west, north, south, and was a perfect dance of death. The forms of skeletons appeared in the₁ air, shaped with blue fire for bones -

¹ FMC p. 280

Even after the death of Siegmund the sense of doom prevails in the novel. Mr. Allport, one of the lodgers living in the house of Siegmund's widow, seems to echo Siegmund:

What is there to do but to hop out of life
as quickly as possible? (205)

And Byrne feels some kinship with him. He even remarks "History repeats itself," (212) giving us the feeling that the same tragedy will be enacted over and over again. This sense of fatality and doom that pervades the whole of this novel and especially the character of Siegmund, who has no faith in life, seems strange because Lawrence the man, believed that for

man, the vast marvel is to be alive ...
Whatever the unborn and the dead may know, they
cannot know the¹ beauty, the marvel of being alive
in the flesh.

But Lawrence the artist was also aware of the misery of so many thousands of people who find life a burden, and unable to change things, are destroyed by their total despair.

The Trespasser is full of references to Wagner's tragic romance Tristan and Isolde and to Siegfried which enhance the tragic note of the novel. Very artistically Lawrence introduces to us the gloomy nature of the Helena-Siegmund relationship. Just after they have come to the Isle of Wight, we are told:

Outside the sea mist was travelling thicker
and thicker inland (231)

¹ Apocalypse pp. 222-3

From then on, the repeated mention of fog and mist reminds us of Eliot's

Unreal city
Under the brown fog of winter dawn.¹

Lawrence liked to believe that tragedies could be avoided, so at least for Helena, he offers a chance of new life. Helen Corke has observed that the "end of The Trespasser is Lawrence, complete Lawrence."² In Helen Corke's novel Derrick Hamilton is the Lawrence figure like Byrne in The Trespasser. Derrick also falls in love with Ellis, the heroine. But in Neutral Ground, Derrick too is rejected by the heroine. Ellis can not love a man in the normal way: when she sees his passion, he appears no better than a despicable animal to her. In Neutral Ground we are told that Derrick wants Ellis badly, but in him "had developed also the conviction that she could never give him satisfactions his nature craved for, and might, later, most imperiously demand."³ He had unfortunately "fallen in love with an image of his own making",⁴ not the real Ellis. But later, he realises the truth and tells Ellis: "you have a sort of sub or superhuman blindness. You only see men as trees walking! Men, as men, you never see at all."⁵ So Derrick tells Ellis that he cannot marry her.

¹ Eliot: The Waste Land lines 60-61

² The Listener p. 105

³ Neutral Ground. p. 286

⁴ Ibid. p. 298

⁵ Ibid. p. 284

Moreover, he realises, "there would always be Domine ... Domine first, me second. The primitive part of me couldn't bear it."¹ Ellis has full realisation of herself. She knows what she lacks and she accepts the situation:

She had been blind to him, it was true. Blind and self-absorbed, with Derrick as with Domine ... She had lost Domine; she must lose Derrick. They were men, and their sex called to her as woman. She could not answer² that call; God had not given her the answer.

But Lawrence's heroine is far from rejecting Byrne. As we get a description of Helena and Byrne sitting snug and warm, it seems that she is ready to become more intimate with him -

Helena put her arms round him under his coat. She was cold. He felt a wave of joy suffuse him .. she sank her head on his chest ... 'I want rest and warmth', she said ... (216-17)

The defiance of tragedy - of an unhappy ending is certainly typical of Lawrence. In fact, after the death of Siegmund, what happens to the other characters, seems of very little importance to the reader. The convictions of Lawrence - the ideas that he liked to believe in - seem to have compelled him to attach the chapter of hope to the end of the novel. It reminds us of the last chapter of The Return of the Native in which we are told of the happy marriage of Tamsin and Venn Diggory, and which Hardy had to add only under compulsion to please his

¹ Ibid. p. 284

² Ibid. pp. 285-6

readers. But there is one justification for Lawrence's having added the chapter of hope - for, with the help of his friendship, he was able to create a new interest in life for Helen Corke. She tells us that Lawrence made her see that there was something "beyond those memories which was of value"¹ to her in life. And she writes that as she started taking interest in Lawrence's work about Siegmund, the "closing words of the Chorus in the Alcestis of Euripides became charged with an almost personal significance:

There be many shapes of mystery;
and many things God brings to be,
past hope or fear,
and the end men looked for cometh not,
and a path is there where₂ no man thought.
So hath it fallen here."

So, Helena saw life as worth living after all, but this does not mean that there was any chance of her accepting Byrne as a lover and of returning his passionate love.

In spite of what Helen Corke said and felt at that time, her own novel about the same tragedy, written about twentyone years later, ends, as we have seen, very differently. And, in Lawrence's novel also, the hopeful life of the heroine cannot make the reader forget the tragic life and death of Siegmund, or the sad observations on life of which the novel is full. Hampson tells Siegmund that to live in the world is like lying "naked against

¹ The Listener p. 5

² The Croyd. Years p. 8

Lawrence's main theme has been the portrayal of the difficulties of life arising out of the division between body and mind.

The intellectual and the spiritual look down upon the physical and natural. Man's instincts get neglected and starved and the result is hatred of each other and meaninglessness in life.

So we see that even though The Trespasser is a deeply personal novel, it gains much wider significance through its theme of the miseries caused by a woman who is too self-sufficient, who lives too much in the mind and the spirit: this theme, recurrent in Lawrence, transcends the merely personal.

CH.X

SONS AND LOVERS

LAWRENCE speaks of tragedy as a "loud noise louder than is seemly",¹ and he asserts that he does not care for tragedy:

I can't very much care about the woes and tragedies of Lear and Macbeth and Hamlet and Timon;² they cared so excessively themselves.

But at the same time Lawrence feels that tragedy is as essential a part of human existence as are the emotions of love, desire and pain:

When love is gone, and desire is dead, and tragedy has left the heart then grief and pain go too, withdrawing from the heart and leaving strange cold stretches of sand.³

And so when he felt that he had been able to write a tragedy, he was full of the feeling of self-importance:

It is a great tragedy, and I tell you that I have written a great book. It's the tragedy of thousands of young men in England... Read my novel. It's a great novel.⁴

This great tragedy and great novel is Sons and Lovers, which deals with the destructive effects of a mother's love on her sons. It all starts with a woman marrying beneath her. Attraction for a lover outside one's own class very often results in tragedy in Hardy's novels because there are many obstacles to inter-class

¹ CP p.508

² Ibid. p.508

³ Ibid. p. 509

⁴ CL p. 161

marriages. But in Lawrence's novel the heroine is completely free to marry whosoever she chooses and parents and society are not going to present difficulties to the union. But still one of the causes of the tragedy is her marriage beneath her own class. Lawrence, trying to summarise the theme, writes: "a woman of character and refinement goes into the lower class, and has no satisfaction in her own life ..."¹ Gertrude Coppard had no idea what a miner's life would be like. She was teaching in a private school and hoped to marry a young man whose ambition was to become a minister. But this man married a rich widow and Gertrude met a young miner who attracted her by his "rich, ringing, laugh," and his "soft, non-intellectual, warm" (17) humour. She herself was just his opposite:

She had a curious, receptive mind, which found much pleasure and amusement in listening to other folk ... She loved ideas, and was considered very intellectual. What she liked most of all was an argument on religion or philosophy or politics with some educated man. (17)

But she was fascinated by Walter Morel, the young miner, who was "so full of colour and animation". (17) She herself was:

a puritan,... high minded, and really stern. Therefore the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her. (18)

¹ Ibid p.160

Walter was attracted to her only because to him she was "that thing of mystery and fascination, a lady", (17) so we find that both are attracted to each other because of the novelty and contrast that they find in the other and it is inevitable that a marriage between persons who have nothing in common, should lead to dissatisfaction on both sides. Even if they had belonged to the same class, very soon they would have found their natures incompatible. But there would have been one difference. There would not have been the perpetual economic strain to force Gertrude "to seek her fulfilment in the over-possessiveness towards her sons".¹ Frank O'Connor makes a remarkable statement when he says that a "hundred pounds a year would have been sufficient to mask the whole achievement and tragedy of Mrs Morel".² Just as in Tess's case we feel that, had her parents not been so poor, she would not have been forced to seek Alec d'Urberville and her life would not have been so tragic, so also we feel that, had Mrs Morel not had to struggle for every penny, had she had economic satisfaction, she would not have clung to her sons so hard as she did. But since she had not a single satisfaction in life, she started to hope that she might bring some change through her children:

¹ G. Salgado, Sons and Lovers p.10

² G. Salgado (ed.) Sons and Lovers p.146

The world seemed a dreary place, where nothing else would happen for her - at least until William grew up. But for herself, nothing but this dreary endurance - till the children grew up... If it were not for William and Annie, she was sick of it, the struggle with poverty and ugliness and meanness.(12)¹

Moreover, Mrs Morel has to endure what she thinks to be the lowness of Walter's character and nature. As Lawrence makes it clear, it is not so much that Walter is a bad person, as that he is different from his wife, and even though she had been attracted towards him because of the very difference of nature, now she hates him for the same thing.

The pity was, she was too much his opposite, she could not be content with the little he might be; she would have him the much that he ought to be. So, in seeking to make him nobler than he could be, she destroyed him.(25)²

Her ambition to have her husband "the much that he ought to be" has something in common with Lady Macbeth's ambition. Mrs Morel's ambitions are not so mighty or murderous but they are as powerful as Lady Macbeth's, and she too works ruthlessly for their fulfilment. She too sacrifices a lot for them. Her ambitions, unfulfilled in Walter Morel, reach for her sons. It is true that she is the main force in bringing out her sons' talents in stimulating and developing them, but at the same time her will and her determination that they must succeed for her, put an

¹ Italics mine

² Italics mine

unnecessary and unhealthy strain on them. In his essay "Parent Love" Lawrence analyses the fate of the sons who have to succeed in life because their father could not satisfy their mother:

The unhappy woman beats about for her insatiable satisfaction, seeking whom she may devour. And usually, she turns to her child. Here she provokes what she wants. Here, in her own son who belongs to her, she seems to find the last perfect response for which she is craving. He is a medium to her, she provokes from him her own answer. So she throws herself into a last great love for her son, a final and fatal devotion, that which would have been the richness and strength of her husband and is poison to her boy.¹

In the novel as well as in this essay, which was published ten years later, Lawrence emphasises the fact that even though such a devoted mother helps her son to succeed in life, at the same time she damages something vital in him:

The son gets on swimmingly for a time, till he is faced with the actual fact of sex necessity. He gleefully inherits his adolescence and the world at large, without an obstacle in his way, mother-supported, mother-loved. Everything comes to him in glamour, he feels he sees wondrous much, understands a whole heaven, mother-stimulated. Think of the power which a mature woman thus infuses into her boy. He flares up like a flame in oxygen. No wonder they say geniuses mostly have great mothers. They mostly have sad fates.²

The sadness of their fate is best seen in their sex-life. By her deep love and attachment to the son, the mother arouses in him a

¹ FU p.122

² Ibid. p.124

really deep love for herself, and Lawrence feels that this love "inevitably provokes the lower sex-sensual centres into action, even though there be no correspondence on the sensual plane between the two individuals concerned."¹ The son loves his mother so much and gives her so much that he has very little left for any other woman. But at the same time a mother cannot give to her son all that he expects to get from his beloved. So these sons try to get the rest from other women, but they cannot get any real satisfaction because their mother keeps so much of them for herself. And as Lawrence wrote in his "Original Foreword" to Sons and Lovers,

... if a son-lover take a wife, then is she not his wife, she is only² his bed. And his life will be torn in twain...

This is what happens to the two beloved sons of Gertrude Morel. Lawrence had summarised the main situation of the novel in a letter to Edward Garnett:

... as her sons grow up she selects them as lovers - first the eldest, then the second. These sons are urged into life by their reciprocal love of their mother - urged on and on. But when they come to manhood, they can't love, because their mother is the strongest power in their lives, and holds them ... As soon as the young men come into contact with women, there's a split. William gives his sex to a fribble, and his mother holds his soul. But the split kills him, because he doesn't know where he is. The next son gets a woman who fights for his soul - fights his mother ... The battle goes on

¹ FU pp.123-4

² Salgado (ed.) Sons and Lovers p.37

between the mother and the girl, with the son as object. The mother gradually proves stronger... The son decides to leave his soul in his mother's hands, and, like his elder brother go for passion. He gets passion. Then the split begins to tell again. But, almost unconsciously, the mother realises what is the matter, and begins to die. The son casts off his mistress, attends to his mother dying. He is left in the end naked¹ of everything, with the drift towards death.

As we read this account of the characters of Sons and Lovers, and as we find the sons submitting to the will of their mother in the novel, we are struck by the note of inevitability in the tragedy. Louis Fraiberg speaks of Sons and Lovers as a "tragedy of fate"². The circumstances in which Paul is born, the parents he has, the surroundings in which his life starts taking shape - all these contribute to impose upon Paul "rigid patterns of emotional life"³ in his childhood. These patterns cannot be destroyed or altered by him. And he has not been the agent in forming them. So the hero seems to be a victim of circumstances like most of the passive tragic characters of Hardy's novels. He is not the master of his own destiny. Twice in the novel we find such observations which might bring Sons and Lovers very close to the fate-dominated world of Hardy's fiction. In the very first chapter, the author observes: "Sometimes life takes hold of one, carries the body along, accomplishes one's history..." (13) And then very late in the novel, he describes a trip that Paul

1 CL pp.160-16)

2 E.W. Tedlock, (ed.) D.H. Lawrence and Sons and Lovers, "The Unattainable Self" p.217

3 Ibid

and Mrs Morel take to Lincoln:

Something in the eternal repose of the uplifted cathedral, blue and noble against the sky, was reflected in her, something of the fatality. What was, was. With all his young will he could not alter it. He saw her face, ... her mouth always closed with disillusion; and there was on her the same eternal look, as if she knew fate at last.(294)

At these points the characters seem to profess the supremacy of fate, the helplessness of human beings and the impotency of their efforts. But at the same time Paul is not a passive character. As he grows up, we find him dissatisfied with life. He makes several efforts to find satisfaction and real happiness. He even makes the supreme effort of defying his mother's wishes. He really becomes independent of her and she feels that if "he had made up his mind, nothing on earth would alter him" (342):

He went to Willey Farm as a man now, not as a youth. She had no right over him. There was a coldness between him and her. He hardly told her anything. Discarded, she waited on him,... There was nothing for her to do now but the housework; for all the rest he had gone to Miriam. She could not forgive him...

He went on determinedly. He realized more or less what his mother felt. It only hardened his soul. He made himself callous towards her; but it was like being callous to his own health. It undermined him quickly; yet he persisted.(342)

At this juncture we cannot doubt that Paul has really freed himself of his mother's grip: "Mrs Morel was tired. She began to give up at last; she had finished. She was in the way". (342) But

the most remarkable thing is the utter failure of Paul in that for which he has sought his independence. His affair with Miriam convinces him that something had gone irrevocably wrong with him a long time back - perhaps even when he was in his mother's womb. He finds that he is a "spiritual cripple" (343) and independence at this stage cannot help him. So we find that Paul strives hard like a classic hero, but he fails miserably in his efforts to alter things. For his failure he tries to hold others responsible, but later on, he realises that the flaw is mainly in his own character. And yet, as we have seen, Paul's character is shaped by forces outside himself, and the strongest force is his mother. Paul had just one inborn weakness. In his childhood he was rather delicate and quiet and he used to trot after his mother like her shadow. His soul always seemed to be attentive to her. And as he grew up, his mother's strong will reinforced his innate tendencies in such a way that he was for ever doomed to a tortured and tragic life. But even for his innate weakness, perhaps something outside himself is responsible - and again perhaps it is his mother. He was conceived without love and his mother even wished him dead. But when Walter Morel had pushed her out of his house in the night, the child Paul "boiled" (34) within her womb and he "too, melted with her in the mixing pot of moonlight..." (35) And sometime

after the child was born, she "felt as if the naval string that had connected its frail little body with hers had not been broken. A wave of hot love went over her to the infant ... With all her force, with all her soul she would make up to it for having brought it into the world unloved" (50-1) In the face of such circumstances, can we hold Paul responsible for his helplessly dancing to his mother's tune? In this background and under these circumstances, the characters had to be as they are. The characters are trapped in the toils of an inescapable fate even though this fate is no other than their own history, their nature, their background and special circumstances. Even Mrs Morel's clinging to her sons is the inevitable result of her unsatisfying marriage.

Lawrence shows that the unfortunate sons fail in their sex-life because even in their beloved they seek their mother. While William is discussing his sweetheart, his brow is gloomy:

You know, she's not like you, mother. She's not serious, and she can't think. (148)

Later he shows his incapacity to love this young girl:

You know, mother, when I'm away from her I don't care for her a bit. I shouldn't care if I never saw her again. But, then, when I'm with her in the evenings I am awfully fond of her.

And the mother says: "I wouldn't call it love." (150-1) We find that even Lily's beauty seems to hurt him and to bring "a certain baffled look of misery and fierce appreciation".(161) in him.

He finds no companionship in her and for this he hates her. "All summer long," his letters show him to be "unnatural and intense" (166), and he seems to be full of conflict and struggle. Soon after this he dies. Later on, when we see the miseries of Paul, we feel that William has been lucky to die so early because he has escaped a lot of suffering. William had a foreboding of his death, or perhaps it was his unconscious desire to end his conflict by dying, because many times he talks of his death to his mother. The death wish is very strong in Paul and reminds us of Prince Hamlet:

O that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, God,
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,¹
Seem to me all the uses of this world!

About Paul Mrs Morel feels that she has to "fight for his very life against his own will to die... At this rate she knew he would not live. He had that poignant carelessness about himself, his own suffering, his own life, which is a form of slow suicide." (315) Joe in Lawrence's play The Daughter-in-Law is also bound to his mother and in his helplessness he too finds death attractive: "An' I wish, yi, often, as I wor dead."²

¹ Hamlet Act I sc. ii lines 129-234

² CoPP: Plays p.258

After Mrs Morel's death Paul's drift towards death is strongest. He has lost interest in everything and remains in a sort of unknowing trance. Then he asks himself: "What am I doing?", and he receives the reply:

'Destroying myself'.

Then a dull, live feeling, gone in an instant, told him that it was wrong

'Why wrong?'

Again there was no answer, but a stroke of hot stubbornness inside his chest resisted his own annihilation...

'You've got to carry forward her living, and what she had done, go on with it.'

But he did not want to. He wanted to give up. (499-500)

In Paul we find the same indecisions and questionings that we find in Hamlet. Both of them would have preferred to end their life had it not been for the awareness of "His canon 'gainst self-slaughter."¹ Besides the resemblance between some of the characteristics of Paul to those of Prince Hamlet - his uncertainty, wavering, conflict and death-wish, there are certain other similarities between the two tragedies. Paul's mother has the same Christian name that had Hamlet's mother. Gertrude Morel is only the wife of a common miner, but in describing her relationship with her sons, the author often uses the word 'Queen' and 'queenly' and somewhat lessens the difference between Gertrude Morel and Gertrude, Queen of Denmark. When her first son wins a prize in a

¹ Hamlet I, ii, l.132

race, he brings the prize to his mother, for he had run only for her. And the author tells us: "That was the first real tribute to herself. She took it like a queen." (69) Later, when he is prospering in London, we are told: "he was like her knight who wore her favour in the battle." (101) When she is preparing for William's arrival during Christmas, she feels "queenly". (101) And when Paul makes plans for the time when he will grow rich and live with his mother, he tells her: "And then you s'll have a pony-carriage. See yourself - a little Queen Victoria¹ trotting round." (301)

In Miriam's sad fate we find some resemblance with Ophelia's. Both of them love the hero too well and both of them are rejected. In the end Hamlet dies and Paul experiences death in life.

We get a foreboding of Paul's fate in the sufferings of William. Like William, Paul too is torn between his love for his mother and the need of finding fulfilment in the love of another woman. William dies because he is unable to endure this split and Paul keeps on struggling, suffering and enduring throughout the novel. From the very beginning, Paul, like Hardy's Jude, makes us fear that he is not going to have a happy and comfortable life. About the child Jude we are told that his face wore "the fixity of a thoughtful child's who has felt

¹ Italics mine

the pricks of life somewhat before his time."¹ And about Paul, the small child, Lawrence says:

As a rule he seemed old for his years. He was so conscious of what other people felt, particularly his mother. When she fretted he understood, and could have no peace. His soul seemed always attentive to her.(75)

As a child, Jude also had a very sensitive heart. He did not focus his care and tenderness on any one person, but he too fretted for the misery of people, birds, beasts, and trees alike." ... he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything."² And the observation that Hardy makes about Jude is applicable to Paul Morel also:

This weakness of character (tender and sensitive nature), as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his ... life should signify that all was well with him again.³

Since Paul was so much in sympathy with Mrs Morel, "his heart ached for her" (108) whenever he found her faced with anxiety and trouble. He tried to bear what part of the burden he could and Mrs Morel shared almost everything of her life with him. She used to talk to him as though she were thinking aloud.

¹ J0 p.15

² Ibid. p.21

³ Ibid. p.21

After William had left for London, she "made a companion of Paul" (89), with whom her intimacy was more subtle than with her first son. Paul seems to have wanted this intimacy with her. He wants to be the male head of the house and his only ambition in life is to live in a small cottage with his mother after his father dies. This attachment to his mother becomes the cause of his torment as soon as his young heart is attracted to another young person. Mrs Morel is terribly jealous of Miriam and she demands of Paul why he runs to her so often: "You only want me to wait on you - the rest is for Miriam." (261) She does not flinch from telling him what kind of love and attention she expects from him: "And I've never - you know, Paul - I've never had a husband - not really -." (262) Paul understands that he is Mrs Morel's life and he feels a sort of satisfaction in the fact that she is for him "the chief thing... the only supreme thing." (261) He is happy that he loves his mother best but some part of him bleeds for the companionship of a woman who could give him complete love. For his torture the mother blames Miriam saying that she wants to suck the soul out of a man. We find a tragic irony in her accusation, for while she accuses Miriam of vampire-like traits, she herself has such traits. Paul too blames Miriam: "You don't want to love - your eternal and abnormal craving is to be loved." (268) Here we find an echo of Hardy's description of Eustacia:

"To be loved to madness - such was her great desire."¹ But Paul does not understand Miriam so well as Hardy understands his Eustacia Vye. In Paul's eyes Miriam is excessively spiritual, but when he accuses her of not wanting him, she tells him that it is he who does not allow her to take him. The truth does dawn on Paul. He realises that he too is much to blame. It is true that Miriam is not an ideal lover because she wants to possess what she loves:

... Then she could love him. If she could be mistress of him in his weakness, take care of him, if he could depend on her, if she could, as it were, have him in her arms, how she could love him! (178)

The same desire to clutch and possess can be seen in her attitude to all and to everything that she loves - whether it be her baby brother or a bunch of roses or daffodils. On her walk with Paul, Miriam discovers some daffodils.

... Miriam went on her knees before one cluster, took a wild-looking daffodil between her hands, turned up its face of gold to her, and bowed down, caressing it with her mouth and cheeks and brows ... One after another she turned up to him the faces of the yellow, bursten flowers appealingly, fondling them lavishly all the while (267)

Miriam's attitude to the flowers is very similar to that of Sue Bridehead's:

¹ RN p.77

She adored roses.... she .. put her face within an inch of their blooms to smell them 'I should like¹ to push my face quite into them - the dears!'

Miriam has got some other qualities also in common with Sue. Jude tells his fascinating beloved: " ... you, Sue, are such a phantasmal, bodiless creature ..." ² And about Miriam once Paul feels that she "had no body, only a voice and a dim face." (346) Jude says:

... You spirit, you disembodied creature, you dear, sweet, tantalizing phantom - hardly flesh at all; so that when I put my arms round you I almost expect them to pass through you as through air! ³

Later on we are told that "her advent seemed ghostly - like the flitting in of a moth." ⁴ And about Mariam we are told: "Looking for her was like looking for something which did not exist. She was only his conscience, not his mate." (358).

Both Sue and Miriam lack physical passion and can yield to sex only if it becomes unavoidable. And even then both of them feel that they are making a sacrifice which they must make for the happiness of their lover. Sue tells Jude:

Very well then - if I must. Since you will have it so, I agree! ... I am not a cold-natured, sexless creature ... I do belong to you, don't I? I give in! ⁵

¹ JQ p.306

² Ibid. p. 268, italics mine

³ Ibid. p. 255

⁴ Ibid. p. 260

⁵ JQ pp. 275-6

Lawrence's heroine does not express in words that she is submitting under compulsion and necessity, but it is explicit in her movements:

Suddenly she gripped his arms round her, and clenched her body stiff.
'You shall have me', she said, through her shut teeth. (346)

And later,

she lay as if she had given herself up to sacrifice: there was her body for him: but the look at the back of her eyes, like a creature awaiting immolation, arrested him, and all his blood fell back. (353-4)

It is inevitable that Paul, whose mother is his best love, and who is looking only for a "baptism of fire in passion" (387) will find no satisfaction in such a relationship with his beloved.

But by now he has understood that he too is much to blame. Earlier, when he read her little French love-letters, he felt afraid of her love for him: "It was too good for him and he was inadequate. His own love was at fault, not hers." (255) He tells Miriam that he can give her only friendship - it is all he is capable of. He confesses that it is a flaw in his make-up and that he is deficient in something with regard to her.

And later he realises that he is deficient in something with regard not only to Miriam, but to all women. How much his mother's demands on him have crippled him, becomes clear when he fails with Clara also- Clara who is so different from Miriam - not at all spiritual - not a bit inhibited. He has some moments of perfect

happiness with her. At first he is a little worried that their intimacy might be considered sinful. "Not sinners, are we?"(382) he asks her and when she answers in the negative, he compares her to Eve cowering out of Paradise as Alec d'Urberville compares Tess to Eve and himself to the serpent come to tempt her out of Paradise.¹

With Clara Paul does not have to be ashamed of his passion and even his mother is not jealous of her, but still the spell of happiness does not last. Paul

had known the baptism of fire in passion, and it left him at rest. But it was not Clara. It was something that happened because of her, but it was not her.² They were scarcely any nearer each other. (431)

Paul dislikes it when Clara wants to possess him and to receive his whole being. He can give her only a part of himself and part of his time. Since he has only the relationship of passion with Clara, he does not like her if she hankers for his attention in the daytime. And when Clara challenges Paul "Is it me you want or is it It?", (441) then Paul feels guilty. Did he leave Clara out of count and take just the woman? To his mother he speaks of his perplexity:

You know, mother. I think there must be something the matter with me, that I can't love ... I love her better than Miriam. But why don't they hold me?..

¹ TD p. 391-2

² Italics mine

But why - why don't I want to marry her or anybody?
I feel sometimes as if I wronged my women, mother. (426)

Mrs Morel can give no answer to Paul's sorrowful 'why' but Lawrence does in his essay 'The Incest Motive and Idealism':

... a man finds it impossible to realize himself in marriage. He recognizes the fact that his emotional, even passionate, regard for his mother is deeper than it ever could be for a wife. This makes him unhappy, for he knows that passionate communion is not complete unless it be also sexual. He has a body of sexual passion which he cannot transfer to a wife. He has a profound love for his mother. Shut in between walls of tortured and increasing passion, he must find some escape or fall down the pit of insanity and death.¹

Paul becomes a tragic figure, split between his feelings for his mother and his need for some other woman. He wants to renounce all else and retain his best love - his mother. But he is impotent to retain her vigour and her health and when death knocks at her door, he is forced to hurry her death because he cannot bear to see her suffering and her struggle against so powerful an enemy. And as Louis Fraiberg says,

The act which sealed his fate and made it forever impossible to break his childhood bonds, was the mercy-killing of his mother. It was the final tragedy, worked out with the inevitability of fate which gave death the victory over love² and completed the destruction of Paul's character.

When his mother dies, Paul finds a gap in his life and feels the "lapse towards death, following in the wake of his beloved." (495)

¹ FU p.206

² DHL & SL(Tedlock ed.) p.233

Paul is not the only character to strike us as tragic. Since we know that the characters are very much in the hands of circumstances, even Mrs Morel arouses our pity when she realises how selfish she has been and how greatly she has maimed the life of her son. She tries to withdraw - "Perhaps I'm selfish. If you want her, take her, my boy." (262) This she says even though she thinks she needs Paul so much. Referring to her, Lawrence wrote: "... almost unconsciously the mother realises what is the matter and begins to die."¹

Mrs Morel is a tyrant only so long as she does not fully realise it herself. She did want her son to succeed in life for her sake. And as Lawrence says:

... When woman tries to be too much mistress of fate, particularly of other people's fates, what a tragedy!²

Mrs Morel did want to hold a great part of Paul's being for herself, but she had not planned that Paul should be so tormented, and that he should be crippled for life. Once she was angry with Paul because he had been with Miriam and as Paul reassured her of his love for her, the author observes:

Suddenly she looked at him almost as if in fear. "Perhaps I'm selfish." (262)

¹ CL p.161

² "Women are so cocksure", Ph. p. 168

This fear arises when she realises what she has been doing. Even though she wanted to hold Paul, she did not want to be the cause of the misery of her own son. Paul tells her that he cannot give himself to any woman in marriage and Mrs Morel replies:

'You haven't met the right woman.'
'And I never shall meet the right woman while you live!', he said. She was very quiet. Now she began to feel again tired, as if she were done.
'We'll see my son,' she answered.(427)

Mrs Morel might arouse our pity here if we remember that earlier in the novel once Paul told her that his plan was not to marry but to live with his mother and have a servant for her. He said to her:

'I'll never marry while I've got you'.
And she replied 'But I shouldn't like to leave you with nobody, my boy'. (300)

She does want Paul to marry and be happy. She tells Paul that she has tried her best even to like Miriam - but she just cannot.

There are many occasions in the novel when Mrs Morel is suddenly faced with difficult situations - the accidents to her husband, the illnesses of her sons and the quarrels with Walter when he comes home drunk. But she always faces the situations with dignity suited to great tragic characters. Early in the novel, Paul observes her:

Her still face, with the mouth closed tight from suffering and disillusion and self-denial,... When she was quiet, so, she looked brave and rich with life, but as if she had been done out of her rights. It hurt the boy keenly, this feeling about her that she never had her life's fulfilment.(85)

She has suffered much. We feel pity for her when she struggles against death - struggles alone and aware of the wishes of everybody else. They deny her nutrition even in the form of a cup of milk, but still she does not give in.

Walter Morel has got many good qualities - vigour, spirit, capacity for hard work and rustic simplicity. And we feel a strong sympathy towards him when we find him defeated (and, to quote Lawrence, "destroyed") by a wife who is stronger in character and more intelligent. Our sympathies are on his side when we find the children ousting him - treating him like an outcast. He appears an outsider in his own house. Since he is so full of vitality, his greatest tragedy is that he is denied the role of a mature responsible father and the master of the house. A brake seems to have been applied to his development when he cut off the locks of William, and Mrs Morel, in her anger, and disgust, cast him off from her heart. "This act of masculine clumsiness" (25) proves to him as damaging as the shearing of the locks of Samson. For Mrs Morel he loses all significance now, he becomes an insignificant alien and soon afterwards we are told that "his manhood broke" (54) and even in stature he seemed to shrink.

Another character that appears tragic is Miriam. She has sacrificed so much for Paul. She has suffered so much - and has

always believed that Paul will come back to her. But in the end Paul rejects her completely and her hopes are shattered, even though she is one to hope against hope. We are sympathetic towards her because we know - as Paul realises later - that even though she is extremely spiritual and has some shortcomings, she does not fail just because of them.. She fails because Paul cannot succeed and he cannot let her succeed. Her love is imperfect in the sense that she ignores the "flashes in his blood", (220) but she loves only Paul and loves him as best she can - with her whole soul. In return she receives Paul's brutality which is worse than even the drunken brutality of Walter to Mrs Morel. As Frieda Lawrence says, Miriam "... does make one ache"¹ Miriam has always had a strong faith that ultimately Paul will come back to her. Like a tragic figure, she comes to great suffering because of her mistaken belief in her power over Paul. Even in the end, when she is aware that he will not be satisfied and will leave her for good, she yields to him and we find the union just a tragic renunciation on her part.

If, as in a classical tragedy, we look for a gradual progression to a climax until the final resolution is reached, then we will be disappointed in Sons and Lovers. Before we are halfway through the novel, Paul's fate is sealed; and instead of

¹ Lawrence, Frieda. The Memoirs and Correspondence p.196

any progression, we find just a set of repetitions of his tragic failures.

Lawrence's use of an appropriate style imparts a tragic touch to many scenes in the novel. With the help of his poetic language and his symbolism, he has given tragic dignity to scenes like the one in which William's coffin is to be brought home:

Paul went to the bay window and looked out. The ashtree stood monstereous and black in front of the wide darkness ... Morel and Burns, in front, staggered; the great dark weight swayed ... six men struggled to climb into the room, bearing the coffin that rode like sorrow on their living flesh. (172-3)

Many passages in the last two chapters are written in a sombre tone, befitting a tragedy. Some of them are comparable to the poems that Lawrence wrote after the death of his mother. We may compare two such passages:

'Mother!' he whispered - 'mother!' She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself. He wanted her to touch him, have him alongside with her. (510)

This passage has the same elegiac vein that we find in the following lines:

And Oh, my love, as I rock for you tonight,
and have not longer any hope
To heal the suffering, or to make requite
For all your life of asking and despair,¹
I own that some of me is dead tonight.

¹ CP p.100

The novel ends on this note of deep sadness; almost of death; Paul has undergone a deep and transfiguring experience; he is almost shattered in mind and spirit. Some critics think that Lawrence tries to offer faint hope by making Paul turn "towards the faintly humming, glowing town". But then the town is never a symbol of life and vitality in Lawrence's works. And even if it were taken to mean Paul's turning towards life, it would appear to be a flaw in the technique of the novel because nothing in his previous history shows that he could do so. In a letter to his editor, Lawrence had explained that Paul "is left in the end naked of everything, with the drift towards death." This might have been Lawrence's intention and it would be a logically suitable ending. In his story "Daughters of the Vicar" Alfred Durant is also bound to his mother like Paul, and the mother is dying of cancer. Alfred also feels that he can never be free of her. "He could not escape from her, she carried him with her into an unformed, unknown chaos."² Even ten years after the publication of Sons and Lovers Lawrence said that if a parent establishes such a dynamic influence upon the child, the harm is done for his whole life. A circuit is established. "And break it if you can. Very often not even death can break it."³ And as Salgado observes,

² The Prussian Officer and other Stories p.89

³ FU p. 123

Mrs Morel's death does not give Paul freedom, "like Caesar, she is much more powerfully present in death than in life."¹ This is why Miriam's last interview with Paul proves as abortive as any of the previous ones. To Paul "the realest thing was the thick darkness at night." (499) Even in Lawrence's play The Daughter-in-Law, Joe tells his mother that she will possess him even after her death:

Tha knows tha's got me - an'll ha'e me till
ter dies - an' after that - yi.²

So we feel that even Paul will be lost because "his own hold on life was so unsure", and he was "feeling insubstantial, shadowy, as if he did not count for much in this concrete world." (495) His mother "was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone ..." (510)

Lawrence emphasised the fact that the tragedy that he presented in Sons and Lovers was universal.

It's the tragedy of thousands of young men in England - it may even be Bunny's tragedy.³ I think it was Ruskin's, and men like him.

In the "Original Foreword" to Sons and Lovers he says "the old son-lover was Oedipus. The name of the new one is legion."⁴ In the novel itself we are told:

A good many of the nicest men he knew were like himself, bound in by their own virginity, which they could not break out of. They were so sensitive to their women that they would go without them for

¹ D H Lawrence : Sons and Lovers p.56

² Comp. Plays p. 257

³ CL p. 161

⁴ G. Salgado, (ed.) Sons and Lovers p. 37

ever rather than do them a hurt, an injustice. Being the sons of mothers whose husbands had blundered rather brutally through their feminine sanctities, they were themselves too diffident and shy. They could easier deny themselves than incur any reproach from a woman; for a woman was like their mother. They preferred themselves to suffer the misery of celibacy, rather than risk the other person. (341)

So, Sons and Lovers depicts the tragedy that has been baffling many people in all ages. And the novel as a whole presents a very tragic view of life.

In this novel we do not find as obvious influences of Hardy's fiction as in The White Peacock, but still certain situations and characteristics are reminiscent of those in Hardy's novels. The fight between Baxter Dawes and Paul Morel is somewhat like the fight between Michael Henchard and Farfrae in The Mayor of Casterbridge. There is some similarity in the cause of the quarrel. Farfrae has unintentionally taken the beloved of Henchard and he has also insulted him in public. Paul goes around with Baxter's wife and insults him in a public house. Baxter, who is a smith - who works with his hands - is proud of his vigour and strength, like the hay-trusser Henchard. Paul and Farfrae are both intellectuals and weak in physique. But the ending of the fight is very different in the two novels.

Mrs Morel's third son Arthur, with his soldier's livery and his loose morality seems to be a slightly refined version of

Sergeant Troy in Far from the Madding Crowd. And Paul's inclination towards death reminds us of Jude who in his frustration had tried to take his own life by jumping into the river.

Lawrence's caricature of Will's sweetheart reminds us of Hardy's dislike of the so-called upper classes and especially of the novel The Hand of Ethelberta. Paul's questioning the orthodox creed and trying to shatter Miriam's religious belief are similar to Sue's logic and her influence in depriving Jude of his faith in religion.

On some rare occasions Lawrence uses omens and forebodings which are so profusely used by Hardy. William repeatedly speaks of his death a short while before he actually dies. Clara listens to Paul whistling to himself. "It was a sad dissatisfied tune - a tune that made her feel he would not stay with her." (428) And soon afterwards they separate. But ~~at~~ one occasion Lawrence seems to be making fun of forebodings. As Paul waits for Clara's train, his "heart felt queer and contracted. That seemed like foreboding. Then he had a foreboding she would not come!" (388) But soon the train brings Clara to him.

When Mrs Morel says "Nothing is as bad as a marriage that's a hopeless failure," (164) we are reminded of the ills of marriage in Hardy's novels, especially The Woodlanders.

In Lawrence's description of the shrieking of the huge ash tree in the darkness of the night when the frightened children hear the quarrel between their parents, we glimpse the hostile and fiercely alien aspects of nature as portrayed in The Woodlanders and Tess.

Both Hardy and Lawrence have a very keen eye for aspects of nature and they both have the power of bringing nature vividly and imaginatively before the eyes of the readers, but in the treatment of nature in relation to human beings we find a great difference in the two. In Hardy nature is either in harmony with human beings or completely indifferent to their lot. But in Lawrence's Sons and Lovers nature is not something objective and distinct from the character but is seen as part of his passionate experience. We see a character undergoing some experience with some aspect of nature - plants, flowers, birds, beasts, or the sun or the moon. And if we try to draw some meaning from these scenes, we fail because the meaning is the experience itself and not separable from it. And in these scenes, Lawrence comes a long distance from Hardy or any of his predecessors, and gives us something typically Laurentian.

CH. XI THE RAINBOW

LAWRENCE took about three years and wrote many drafts of The Rainbow before he could give the final shape to it. When he first began writing it, he named it "The Sisters". Later on, he called it "The Wedding Ring" and finally he divided his novel into two volumes. The first volume was called The Rainbow and was completed in March 1915. He devoted another year to the writing of the second volume and called it Women in Love.

Lawrence had just finished his first complete draft of The Rainbow when he thought he should read Thomas Hardy's novels and some criticism on them again. It is interesting to note that at this particular time he got so interested in Hardy's fiction that he felt the need of understanding it thoroughly and also of expressing his views on it. On 1 July 1914 Lawrence had submitted his manuscript of The Rainbow to a new publisher, Methuen, and on 15 July 1914 he wrote to Edward Marsh:

Have you got Lascelles Abercrombie's book on Thomas Hardy; and if so, could you lend it me for the space of, say, six weeks;... And if you've got any of those little pocket

edition Hardy's, will you lend me those, too?
 ... I am going to write a little book on
 Hardy's people. I think it will interest
 me. ¹

On 5 September 1914 he wrote to J.B.Pinker that he had begun his book about Thomas Hardy and on 18 November he told Amy Lowell² that he was just finishing it. Very soon after finishing his "Study of Thomas Hardy", Lawrence must have begun rewriting The Rainbow which had been returned by Methuen, for he wrote to J.B.Pinker on 5 December 1914:

I send you the first hundred or so pages
 of my novel, which I am writing over. ³

On the 18th of the same month, referring to the manuscript of The Rainbow, he informed Amy Lowell:

I am rewriting it. It will be called
The Rainbow. When it is done, I think
 really it will be a fine piece of work. ⁴

On 7 January 1915 he informed J.B.Pinker that he was going to split the book into two volumes because "it was so unwieldy. It needs to be in two volumes."⁵
 And if we trace the evolutionary process of the novel we find that Lawrence not only made some significant

¹CL p.287

²S.F.Damon: Amy Lowell, A Chronicle, p.279.

³CL p.296

⁴CL p.298

⁵CL p.306

changes in his novel, he also incorporated new chapters and episodes after his study of Thomas Hardy, which necessitated the evolution of another volume. Many of the pages that had originally been written for The Rainbow were now incorporated into the second volume called Women in Love and at least one third of the story of the present Rainbow was inspired completely by Lawrence's study of Thomas Hardy's fiction. As Mark Kinkead-Weekes remarks:

The first of its three stories, and the deepest dimension of the other two, could not have been achieved before the Study.¹

As Lawrence himself often admitted, the "Study of Thomas Hardy" is very little about Hardy and very much a sort of confessions of his own heart. But, as Kinkead-Weekes remarks, through

studying Hardy's people Lawrence had found a language in which to conceive the impersonal forces he saw operating within and between human beings; involving a new clarification of what the novel he had been trying to write was really about; and the discovery of a "structural skeleton" on which to re-found it in a new dimension.²

His study of The Return of the Native, for example,

¹Imagined Worlds, p.381 (ed. by I.Gregor and M.Mack)

²Ibid., p.380

made it clear to him that "the greater part of every life is underground, like roots in the dark in contact with the beyond." And that man and his actions are very small in the face of the power of Nature. "Egdon, the primal impulsive body, would go on producing all that was to be produced, eternally, though the will of man should destroy the blossom yet in bud, over and over again. At last he must learn what it is to be at one, in his mind and will, with the primal impulses that rise in him."¹

In the characterisation of the three generations of Brangwens Lawrence makes clear what he had understood and imbibed from Hardy's fiction. In Ursula Brangwen the search for the unknown, for the "contact with the beyond" saves her from sinking into a meaningless life, and in the history of the three generations we see how necessary it is to be at one with primal impulses if we want fulfilment in life. Even Lawrence's most memorable scenes in which the characters are presented against the background of a vast impersonal landscape, which nevertheless influences the inner being of the characters, seem to owe a great deal to Thomas Hardy.

¹Ph. p.418

He is immensely impressed by this technique of Hardy's:

This is a constant revelation in Hardy's novels: that there exists a great background, vital and vivid, which matters more than the people who move upon it. Against the background of dark, passionate Egdon, of the leafy, sappy passion and sentiment of the woodlands, of the unfathomed stars, is drawn the lesser scheme of lives: The Return of the Native, The Woodlanders, or Two on a Tower.... This is the wonder of Hardy's novels, and gives them their beauty. The vast unexplored morality of life itself, what we call the immorality of nature, surrounds us in its eternal incomprehensibility, and in its midst goes on the little human morality play....¹

Lawrence liked these qualities in Hardy's novels and we find something similar in his novels also. But this does not mean that Lawrence copied Thomas Hardy. It only proves that the study of Hardy helped Lawrence in getting a clearer understanding and a better expression of the ideas that were already germinating within him. Many points about his new novel were struggling within him to find expression. Referring to the first draft of "The Sisters" he wrote to A.W.McLeod:

I am doing a novel which I have never grasped. Damn its eyes, there I am at page 145, and I've no notion what it's about. I hate it. F. says it is good.

¹Ph. p.419

But it's like a novel in a foreign language I don't know very well - I can only just make out what it is about.¹

And to Edward Garnett he wrote: "I have written 180 pages of my newest novel The Sisters. It is a queer novel, which seems to have come by itself."² So it is clear that the ideas that were boiling within him, which he had not grasped fully, but which were clamouring for expression, forced him also to try to understand them. The novel came by itself many times, but he was never satisfied with it - not until he had again studied Hardy and, in trying to write about Hardy, had given shape and expression to the ideas and intuitions that had been lying shapeless but forceful within him for quite some time. In his "Original Preface" to Sons and Lovers he had written about some of his ideas regarding the man-woman relationship. In his "Study of Thomas Hardy" he is able to develop a sort of theology of marriage, and, getting a clearer understanding of his own ideas, he deferred showing the relationship of Ursula and Birkin and Gerald and Gudrun till the writing of Women in Love; and in its place he thought it necessary to add another story and give

¹CL p.203, italics mine.

²CL. p.200, italics mine.

the novel a different beginning. Mark Kinkead-Weekes has shown in his scholarly essay that "The Rainbow was almost certainly written backwards; the story of Tom and Lydia being the last to take shape, with the others being filled out thematically against its perspective."¹ Before his study of Thomas Hardy, he was struggling unsuccessfully to find a suitable frame for his as yet vague ideas: "I write with everything vague - plenty of fire underneath, but, like bulbs in the ground, only shadowy flowers that must be beaten and sustained, for another spring."² But an artist cannot rest unless he has found a suitable expression for his thoughts and notions:

I have begun my novel again - for about the seventh time....It was full of beautiful things, but it missed - I knew that it just missed being itself. So here I am, must sit down and write it out again. I know it is quite a lovely novel really - you know that the perfect statue is in the marble, the kernel of it. But the thing is the getting it out clean.³

Lawrence did at last succeed in bringing out the perfect statue after he had studied the technique of Hardy and after he had been able to comprehend his own ideas clearly. One of the reasons why Lawrence

¹"The Marble and The Statue", Imagined Worlds p.384

²CL p.264

³CL p.264

at this particular time turned to Hardy, is "the germ of this novel: woman becoming individual, self-responsible, taking her own initiative".¹ And Sue Bridehead was one of the first women of English fiction who combined the above mentioned traits with intellectual powers. In spite of Lawrence's predilection and bias as a critic, Walter Allen is right when he says that "the only writer on Hardy who has fully understood his achievement in creating her is D.H. Lawrence."² We have already seen in our study of Lawrence's earlier novels that many of his women characters have some similarities in common with Hardy's Sue. In The Rainbow and Women in Love we are able to see what a later incarnation of Sue could be like.

About the theme of The Rainbow, he gave some hint to Edward Garnett:

I can only write what I feel pretty strongly about: and that, at present, is the relation between men and women. After all, it is the problem of today, the establishment of a new relation, or the readjustment of the old one, between men and women.³

In The Rainbow three generations of people face this

¹CL.D. 273

²The English Novel p.257

³CL. p.200

problem, and, as we pass from one generation to the next, we find a gradual decline in their capacity to tackle the problem, and, at the end of the novel, it reaches the level of a tragic relationship. This, to some extent, is because of the changes in the environment. The novel opens with a description of the life of the Brangwens at the Marsh Farm which is reminiscent of the idyllic life of plenty and satisfaction at the dairy at Talbothays in Tess of the d'Urberville, "the valley of the Great Dairies, the valley in which milk and butter grew to rankness",¹ and where people worked from the early hours of morning till evening but lived a carefree life. Similarly,

the Brangwens came and went without fear of necessity, working hard because of the life that was in them, not for want of the money. ...Their life and interrelations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying hard and unresponsive when the crops were to be shorn away....They took the udder of the cows, the cows yielded milk and pulse against the hands of the men, the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men.(7-8)

Here the author is not only emphasising the life of plenty and satisfaction, but also the perfection of relationship between man and nature. The Brangwens

¹TD, p.122

had lived on the Marsh Farm for generations. They spent their daytime on the farm, working hard, and getting a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment through their day's work and through their contact with nature.

Then the men sat by the fire in the house where the women moved about with surety, and the limbs and the body of the men were impregnated with the day, cattle and earth and vegetation and the sky, the men sat by the fire and their brains were inert, as their blood flowed heavy with the accumulation from the living day. (8)

They were shut off from the rest of the world and did not feel any curiosity about the wonders of the world outside. But the women were different. They too were as happy as Eve in her garden of Eden, but like Eve, they brought unhappiness through their search for knowledge. They were attracted to the world beyond - they strained their ears to listen to the sounds in the distance. They were not satisfied with their secluded life in the midst of nature and plenty. They aspired for the greater, which they thought was a question of knowledge, education and experience. So we find the Brangwen mother hankering after knowledge, seeking fulfilment in her sons. She forces her sons to go to school because "her deepest desire hung on the battle that she heard, far off, being waged on the edge of the unknown. She also wanted to know, and

to be of the fighting host." (9) This is something unfortunate, because what is called the rational, conscious mind, is to Lawrence, only a source of evil, whereas the unconscious is the spring of all vital life. In the Fantasia of the Unconscious he says that

primal consciousness is pre-mental, and has nothing to do with cognition. It is the same as in animals. And this pre-mental consciousness remains as long as we live the powerful root and body of our consciousness. The mind is but the last flower, the cul de sac.¹

So, through the woman, who wishes to live more in her mind than in her body, the element of strain, conflict and unhappiness is introduced in the Brangwen family. In The Rainbow, one of the main themes is the opposition between the vital, unconscious life, which has its roots in the body and all its impulses, and the mind which seeks to know in an abstract manner.

Tom Brangwen is convinced that he is not fit for school education but he inherits from his mother an attraction to the unknown, the foreign. This is why he marries the Polish widow, Lydia Lensky - a foreigner and new comer to Cossethay. Lydia brings with her the element of mental abstraction, a sense of being not on the spot, and even though Tom has got many of the Brangwen male's characteristics, his life with

¹FU p.29

his foreign wife is not perfect. His union with his wife is the most successful one in the novel, but there are many difficulties in their relationship:

They were such strangers, they must for ever be such strangers, that his passion was a clanging torment to him. Such intimacy of embrace, and such utter foreignness of contact! It was unbearable.(49)

Besides her being a foreigner, the unhappy events of Lydia's past life prevent her from flowing out unrestrained in response to the passionate call of Tom Brangwen. First she had lost her two children and then she had lost her husband who had dominated her whole married life and to whom she had been a devoted girl-bride. It is natural that after such sorrow she too should wish for death and forgetfulness: "she thought 'Why didn't I die out there, why am I brought here?'" The author tells us that "there was a will in her to save herself from living any more." (55) At this juncture we are reminded of Tess who had similar wishes when she too had lost her child and suffered a great misfortune. She recalls having felt like the ^{man} of Uz: "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life. I loathe it; I would not live alway."¹ Both in Tess and Lydia the zest

¹TD p.147

for living revives in spite of them and in accordance with the rules of nature. Nature forces them to seek life and happiness and both Hardy and Lawrence describe the process in a poetic way. Hardy writes:

A particularly fine spring came round, and the stir of germination was almost audible in the buds; it moved her, as it moved the wild animals,...and some spirit within her rose automatically as the sap in the twigs. It was unexpended youth, surging up anew after its temporary check, and bringing with it hope, and the invincible instinct towards self-delight....Her hopes mingled with the sunshine in an ideal photosphere which surrounded her as she bounded along against the soft south wind. She heard a pleasant voice in every breeze, and in every bird's note seemed to lurk a joy....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...She tried several ballads...¹

And in the description of the process of the revival of the wish to "find sweet pleasure" in Lydia, we are only more aware of Lydia's reluctance which is easily explained by the difference of age between the two heroines:²

Summer came, the moors were tangled with harebells...the heather came rosy under the skies, setting the whole world awake. And she was uneasy. She went past the gorse bushes shrinking from their presence, she stepped into the heather as into a quickening bath that almost hurt....And she shrank away again,...for a long while remained blotted

¹TD pp.119-124, italics mine.

²Tess is only twenty, Lydia is thirty four.

safely away from living. But autumn came with the faint red glimmer of robins singing, winter darkened the moors, and almost savagely she turned ~~again~~ to life, demanding her life back again...

As she rose in the morning, the dawn was beating up white, gusts of light blown like a thin snowstorm from the east, blown stronger and fiercer, till the rose appeared, and the gold, and the sea lit up below. She was impassive and indifferent. Yet she was outside the enclosure of darkness.

...one morning there was a light from the yellow jasmine which caught her, and after that, morning and evening, the persistent singing of thrushes from the shrubbery, till her heart, beaten upon, was forced to lift up its voice in rivalry and answer. Little tunes came into her mind. She was full of trouble almost like anguish. Resistant, she knew she was beaten...

(53-54) 1

As we go through the above passages, we are aware of one great difference between the two heroines. Tess is closer to nature and makes a spontaneous response to instinct. So ~~the~~ spring can have the same influence upon her that it has on wild animals. She does not know how to resist natural instincts. But Lydia has something in her that makes her resist and put up a fight against the call of the sunshine, the flowers and the thrushes. But ~~in~~ in the end both find the ~~allurements~~ allurements of nature too fascinating to resist and end up singing ballads or humming tunes. And when

¹Italics mine.

the two heroines meet their lovers, they both try their best to resist them. In Tess, the "struggle was so fearful; her own heart was so strongly on the side of his - two ardent hearts against one poor little conscience - that she tried to fortify her resolution by every means in her power."¹ Lydia has a different reason for not wishing to begin life anew but in her too we find a similar struggle: "She wanted it, this new life from him, with him, yet she must defend herself against it, for it was a destruction." (40)

Later on both the women realise that human resistance is very weak against the contrivance of nature. Tess comes to understand that the "'appetite for joy' which pervades all creation, that tremendous force which sways humanity to its purpose, as the tide sways the helpless weed, was not to be controlled by vague lucubrations over the social rubric."² And after Lydia had been with Tom Brangwen in the Marsh kitchen, "the voice of her body had risen strong and insistent. Soon, she wanted him....one blind instinct led her, to take him, to have him, and then to relinquish herself to him....The warmth flowed through her, she

¹TD p.202

²TD pp.218-219

felt herself opening, unfolding, asking, as a flower opens in full request under the sun, as the beaks of tiny birds open flat, to receive, to receive."(55-56)

Tom is driven to Lydia by "a desire bigger than himself"(56). He receives great happiness through her, but their union remains short of perfection for many reasons. In the beginning Tom felt that she was not really his and that their marriage was not real: "he could never quite reach her, he could never quite be satisfied, never be at peace, because she might go away."(60) Later he is often tormented because she lapses back into the memory of her past life. Or when he finds no response in her, "his heart seemed under the millstone...she became herself like the upper millstone lying on him, crushing him."(64) As in The Trespasser Siegmund finds the moon nearer to him than his beloved Helena, Tom feels that the "strange leaves beating in the wind on the wood had come nearer than she", his wife.(65) Dissatisfied with his own woman, Tom is filled with admiration for his brother's mistress, Mrs Forbes - a woman who stands for higher society, refinement and learning. Such a feeling can only bring further dissatisfaction in his own life. We find that Lydia too finds something lacking in Tom. She asks him : "'Why do you want to deny me?' Suddenly,

in a flash, he saw she might be lonely, isolated, unsure....Could she need anything?(93) Lydia opens his eyes to his own shortcomings:

Why aren't you satisfied with me? - I'm not satisfied with you...You only leave me alone or take me like your cattle, quickly, to forget me again - ...I want you to know there is somebody there besides yourself.... To you I am nothing - it is like cattle - or nothing-(93-4)

But after this they reach a sort of understanding - "The new world was discovered."(95) Lydia's little daughter Anna can see that they are established at last. "Her father and her mother now met to the span of the heaven, and she, the child, was free to play in the spave beneath, between."(97)

Even though the seeds of dissatisfaction, strangeness and separateness are sown in the relationship of Tom and Lydia, they are not allowed to grow. Tom is saved because he has still got the old Brangwen characteristics - he is not divorced from nature - from the roots of the Marsh life and "blood-intimacy" is able to sustain his life. Lydia too has some saving grace. She "had some fundamental religion. It was as if she worshipped God as a mystery, never seeking in the least to define what He was."(103) We come to understand that life becomes a complete tragedy if we make knowledge the only end of life - if the mind, as opposed to "blood-intimacy", rules our life. So

Tom and Lydia are saved. Tom has known "the long marital embrace with his wife! Curious, that this was what his life amounted to! At any rate, it was something, it was eternal."(129)

When we come to the history of the next generation, we find them a long way from this something eternal. In Anna and Will "the relation between men and women" has become a greater problem. There is a conflict which they themselves do not understand and the conflict develops very quickly. Temperamentally they are unlike each other; and, in their life, instead of complementing, they oppose each other. In both of them there is the tendency to dominate which keeps them from attaining "singleness of being". Will wants to be the master of Anna and the house. He forces his will on Anna. Anna not only laughs at his audacity, she does not recognise the fact that Will can have any existence outside his relationship with her. Will is an artist and a religious man seeking order, unity and harmony. Anna, on the other hand, feels religion confining and restricting her, "as if never, never could she stretch her length and stride her stride."(106) Will becomes very ecstatic in his intercourse with the cathedral and Anna finds it suffocating and like a bird she wants to escape from its confines into the open sky. As R.P.Draper says, the Lincoln Cathedral episode "is a central symbol

for the whole novel."¹ So Lawrence's debt to Hardy appears really immense when we compare the scene with a similar scene in Jude the Obscure. The scene from The Rainbow is more elaborate and has got typical Laurentian touches, but the germ of the idea must have definitely been derived from Jude. Jude and Will are both religious minded and full of respect and love for and interest in the church. Sue and Anna, on the other hand, have both found church and Christianity unsatisfying. At Christminster both Sue and Jude see "an itinerant exhibition, in the shape of a model of Jerusalem".² Sue remarks:

I fancy we have had enough of Jerusalem,... considering we are not descended from the Jews. There was nothing first-rate about the place, or people, after all - as there was about Athens, Rome, Alexandria, and other old cities.

Then she spies Jude and exclaims:

'Jude - how seriously you are going into it!' Jude started up from his reverie, and saw her. 'O - Sue!' he said, with a glad flush of embarrassment. '...I saw that schools were admitted in the afternoons, and thought you might come; but I got so deeply interested that I didn't remember where I was. How it carries one back, doesn't it! I could examine it for hours, but I have only a few minutes, unfortunately;...'³

¹ D.H. Lawrence p.65 (1964).

² JO p.113

³ JO. pp.114-115

Later on, when Jude meets Sue at Melchester, he suggests that they go and sit in the Cathedral. Again Sue's reply shows that she finds nothing satisfying there:

Cathedral? Yes. Though I think I'd rather sit in the railway station....That's the centre of the town life now. The Cathedral has had its day!...The Cathedral was a very good place four or five centuries ago; but it is played out now...¹

Another time Jude takes Sue to Warder Castle to see the pictures. He lingers in front of the devotional pictures and Sue is just amused by his fervour:

Sue paused patiently beside him, and stole critical looks into his face as, regarding the Virgins, Holy Families, and Saints, it grew reverent and abstracted. When she had thoroughly estimated him at this, she would move on and wait for him before a Lely or Reynolds. It was evident that her cousin deeply interested her, as one might be interested in a man puzzling out his way along a labyrinth from which one had one's self escaped.²

Hardy here just hints that Sue too had turned to religion for something, and, dissatisfied, had to give it up as useless later on. Lawrence devotes some passages to describe how Anna turned to the church and religion in order to "gather suggestions" "to fulfil some mysterious ideal", (157) but "became hostile to the ostensible church, she hated it for not fulfilling

¹J0 p.141

²J0 p.144

anything in her". "Everything seemed to be merely a matter of social duty, and never of her self. They talked about her soul, but somehow never managed to rouse or to implicate her soul." (157) Anna's relationship with Will is closer than that of Sue with Jude up to this point. So Anna openly opposes Will's feelings for the church. Sue, on the other hand, shakes Jude's faith through her sweet and mild insinuations. But in a later scene, Sue expresses her views as openly and almost as vehemently as Lawrence makes Anna express them. Jude tells Sue that he hopes to be "a useful minister some day"¹ and wishes her to join him in his evening prayers. Sue refuses because she would seem such a hypocrite, for, she tells Jude:

I have no respect for Christminster whatever, except, in a qualified degree, on its intellectual side...The mediaevalism of Christminster must go, be sloughed off, or Christminster itself will have to go. To be sure, at times one couldn't help having a sneaking liking for the traditions of the old faith, as preserved by a section of the thinkers there in touching and simple sincerity; but when I was in my saddest, rightest mind I always felt,

"O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!"...

Jude feels a sense of sacrilege:

Sue, you are not a good friend of mine to talk like that!...I still think Christminster

¹ Jo p.157

has much that is glorious...

But Sue is not to be daunted:

'It is an ignorant place, except as to the townspeople, artizans, drunkards, and paupers,' she said, perverse still at his differing from her. 'They see life as it is, of course; but few of the peple in the colleges do...'

Jude tells her that he cares for "something higher".

'And I for something broader, truer', she insisted. 'At present intellect in Christminster is pushing one way, and religion the other; and so they stand stock-still, like two rams.... It is a place full of fetichists and ghost-seers!'¹

The Epistles and Gospels and the pages of Solomon's song also are the subject of Sue's raillery:

It seems the drollest thing to think of the four-and-twenty elders, or bishops, or whatever number they were, sitting² with long faces and writing down such stuff.

Anna mocks at the church and at Christianity because "in the gloom and the mystery of the Church his [Will's] soul lived and ran free...and, in this church spirit, in conceiving himself as a soul, he seemed to escape and run free of her." (159) Will, like Jude, gets absorbed and lost in books and paintings about the churches. Anna also looks at some pictures with Will:

¹JO p.158

²JO pp.157-159

It was when she came to pictures of the Pietà that she burst out.

'I do think they're loathsome', she cried.

'What?' he said, surprised, abstracted.

'Those bodies with slits in them, posing to be worshipped.'

'You see, it means the Sacraments, the Bread,' he said, slowly.

'Does it!' she cried. 'Then it's worse. I don't want to see your chest slit, not to eat your dead body, even if you offer it me. Can't you see it's horrible?'

'It isn't me, it's Christ.'

'What if it is, it's you! And it's horrible...'
They lapped into silence. His soul grew angry and aloof. 'And I think that Lamb in Church', she said, 'is the biggest joke in the parish -' She burst into a 'Pouf' of ridiculing laughter....

'It's because you don't know anything', he said violently, harshly. 'Laugh at what you know, not at what you don't know.' (161)

Many pages of similar discussions follow these lines.

Like Jude, Will feels that Anna is jeering at his soul and he is terribly disturbed and pained. Like Jude, he has been clutching at religion because he needs some support and some belief in life. Jude tells Sue:

Well, dear; I suppose one must take some things on trust. Life isn't long enough to work out everything in Euclid problems before you believe it. I take Christianity.¹

Similarly Will uses only his heart and soul in his communion with the church. He does not let his mind disturb his faith with its questionings. But when Anna compels him to reason whether the water could have turned to wine at Cana, for

¹JO p.160

an instant, he saw with the clear eyes of the mind and said no, his clear mind, answering her for a moment, rejected the idea. And immediately his whole soul was crying in a mad, inchoate hatred against his violation of himself. It was true for him...Ah no, he knew it was wrong...the water had not become wine. The miracle was not a real fact. She seemed to be destroying him. He went out, dark and destroyed, his soul running its blood. And he tasted of death. Because his life was formed in these unquestioned concepts. (171-2)

Jude and Will have got many similarities so far as their relationship with religion and with the woman of their heart is concerned. At some juncture in their life, they both undertake the work of the restoration and repair of some church building and they both get immense peace and happiness in this job. They both try to fight reason and believe blindly and emotionally what their women are making them see to be false, and in the end both alike fall into disbelief in what was previously life to them. The most shattering blow for Will is dealt by Anna in the chapter called "The Cathedral".

Will takes Anna to visit the Lincoln Cathedral. With anger and irritation Anna notices Will's excitement as they draw near the church.

When he saw the cathedral in the distance, dark blue lifted watchful in the sky, his heart leapt. It was the sign in heaven, it was the Spirit hovering like a dove, like an eagle over the earth. He turned his

glowing, ecstatic face to her, his mouth opened with a strange, ecstatic grin. 'There she is', he said.

The 'she' irritated her. Why 'she'? It was 'it'. What was the cathedral, a big building, a thing of the past, obsolete, to excite him to such a pitch?... (200-1)

Inside the cathedral, like Jude at the Wardeur Castle, Will gets absorbed in the devotional pictures and carvings. And just as Sue, in reaction against the saints and the Church-text scrolls, ("anything is better than these everlasting church fallals!")¹, gets fascinated by the statues of pagan gods and goddesses - Venus, Diana, Apollo, Bacchus, Mars and the winged Cupid, so also Anna, in reaction against the devotional carvings, "caught sight of the wicked, odd little faces carved in stone, and she stood before them arrested."

These sly little faces peeped out of the grand tide of the cathedral like something that knew better. They knew quite well, these little imps that retorted on man's own illusion, that the cathedral was not absolute. They winked and leered, giving suggestion of the many things that had been left out of the great concept of the church... (204)

Anna forces Will to ponder over them telling him that they are adorable. Will feels that this is the voice of the serpent in his Eden. But there is such vehemence in her mockery and jeering that his passionate intercourse with the cathedral is spoilt forever.

¹J6 p.101

Strive as he would, he could not keep the cathedral wonderful to him. He was disillusioned. That which had been his absolute, containing all heaven and earth, was become to him as to her, a shapely heap of dead matter - but dead, dead.

His mouth was full of ash, his soul was furious. He hated her for having destroyed another of his vital illusions. Soon he would be stark, stark, without one place wherein to stand, without belief in which to rest. (205)

This feeling of being bereft of everything is experienced by both Will and Jude, and we get an explanation of why their women shatter the faith of their lovers in everything outside themselves in the rumination of Jude:

Strange that his first aspiration - towards academical proficiency - had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration - towards apostleship - had also been checked by a woman. 'Is it', he said, 'that the women are to blame, or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?¹

It is certain that the heroines of both Hardy and Lawrence have destroyed something vital in their men. For all these years Jude had taken great pains to collect books on theology and ethics. He valued them, but now Sue had left him devoid of all his wealth:

¹JO p.226 , italics mine

At dusk that evening he went into the garden and dug a shallow hole, to which he brought out all the theological and ethical works that he possessed, and had stored here.... Lighting some loose pamphlets to begin with, he cut the volumes into pieces as well as he could, and with a three pronged fork shook them over the flames....It was nearly one O'clock in the morning before the leaves, covers, and binding ...had gone to ashes; but the night was quiet, and...he turned and turned the paper shreds with the fork...¹

A parallel to this scene is Will's burning of his wood-carving of Adam and Eve. For a long time he had wanted to carve the creation of Eve. At last, "with trembling passion, fine as a breath of air," (120) he started giving shape to his poetic imagination with the help of his chisel. He gave his whole heart to the creation of the "new, sharp body of his Eve".(121) But Anna only jeered at his beautiful delicate Eve:

She is like a little marionette. Why is she so small? You've made Adam as big as God, and Eve like a doll. - It is impudence to say that Woman was made out of Man's body ...when every man is born of woman.(174)

The author tells us that as Anna continued to strike at his belief and imagination, in

a rage one day, after trying to work on the board, and failing, so that his belly was a flame of nausea, he chopped up the whole panel and put it on the fire....He

¹Jopp.226-7

went about for some days very quiet and subdued after it.(174)

By destroying Will's faith in formal religion - represented by the cathedral and by church art, sculpture and engraving - Anna appears to triumph over him, but we soon learn that they have both been defeated in life because of their incapacity to form a healthy and enriching man-woman relationship. Neither of them has achieved fulfilment in marriage. Even when they think they are completely happy with each other, there is something amiss. We get a sense of the imperfection of their relationship by the peculiar and powerful images and similes used to describe even their ecstasy in love making. In everything about Anna, Will finds some "sinister, terrifying beauty". (237)

But in the revelations of her body through contact with his body, was the ultimate beauty, to know which was almost death in itself,... This was what their love had become, a sensuality violent and extreme as deathmaddening intoxication of the senses, a passion of death.(237)¹

Earlier Will and Anna feel again and again that their relationship is a "battle"(165), a fight(170) and a contest(168). Anna wanted to rend (160) him and he "harried her and wanted to destroy her".(183)

¹Italics mine.

Anna knew that "he had so many weapons, he might strike from so many sides".(166) From "his body...came the bitter-corrosive shock of his passion upon her, destroying her in blossom."(182) So in turn, Anna dances "to annul him" - self absorbed, she dances "his non-existence", (184), but still she feels that she is "being borne down by him,...he was pulling her down as a leopard clings to a wild cow and exhausts her and pulls her down." He is "a blade of destruction" for Anna. (177)¹

Anna reflects on her married life and finds that she has not been satisfied in her yearning for "a fullness of peace and blessedness"(181) and she knows that Will also has not been satisfied. There is something tragic in Will when we find him subsiding into a meaningless day-to-day life and work.

His life was shifting its centre, becoming more superficial. He had failed to become really articulate, failed to find real expression. He had to continue in the old form. But in spirit, he was uncreated.(206)²

Anna has also failed. She has not been fulfilled. She has always wanted to grasp something for which she needs to come out in the wide world and to try her wings in the vast blue sky. But she lapses into "vague content" and relinquishes the "adventure to

¹Italics mine.

²Ibid.

the unknown".(196) Postponing "all adventure into unknown realities"(206) she lapses into motherhood, and as Dr.Leavis says,

The problem is here - it is here now in Anna and in Will - and to bring into the world another life that will be faced with it is not to solve it.¹

In the third generation, the conflicts of life, the difficulties of the man-woman relationship, the ravages of a new era - all these are at their highest point. Ursula gets a fuller opportunity of experiencing "the unknown"(9) - of acquiring knowledge and education than any of her predecessors. But, undergoing a wide range of experience, she is exposed to the destructive forces of modern civilisation. All her illusions are shattered one by one - she finds education and knowledge boring and fruitless. Through her we see the emptiness of modern life. But it is the destructive quality of her relation with the male that strikes us as most tragic.

Ursula Brangwen is a complex character who is close to nature like Hardy's Tess, who is so much in revolt against the common, that her very likes and dislikes are uncommon like those of Eustacia Vye, and who surpasses Sue by far in her will for "complete

¹F.R.Leavis; D.H.Lawrence: Novelist p.132

social independence, complete independence from any personal authority".(334) When Tess thought that she had done wrong, she sought companionship in nature. "Out in the woods...she seemed least solitary ... She had no fear of the shadows; her sole idea seemed to be to shun mankind..." And Hardy adds ^{his} comment that she was perfectly in harmony with "the sleeping birds in the hedges,...the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren .../and the/ pheasant-laden boughs"¹ of trees even though, unlike Ursula, she is a simple God-fearing village maid and she thinks she is not in harmony with these things. About Ursula also we are told at one stage that she "was not afraid nor ashamed before trees, and birds, and the sky. But she shrank violently from people, ashamed she was not as they were".(335)²

About Eustacia, Hardy tells us:

Her high gods were William the Conqueror, Strafford, and Napoleon Buonaparte, ... Had she been a mother she would have christened her boys such names as Saul or Sisera in preference to Jacob or David, neither of whom she admired. At school she had used to side with the Philistines in several battles, and had wondered if Pontius Pilate were as handsome as he was frank and fair.³

¹TD pp.103-4, italics mine.

²RN p.78

³Italics mine.

In Ursula's trend of thought we get a distinct echo of that of Eustacia:

Ursula could not help dreaming of Moloch. Her god was not mild and gentle, neither Lamb nor Dove. He was the lion and the eagle. Not because the lion and the eagle had power, but because they were proud and strong; they were themselves, they were not passive subjects of some shepherd, or pets of some loving woman, or sacrifices of some priest. ...If the lamb might lie down with the lion, it would be a great honour to the lamb, but the lion's powerful heart would suffer no diminishing. She loved the dignity and self possession of lions.(342)

Ursula also reminds us of Sue in the way she shrinks from marriage. After continued entreaties, Sue starts living like Jude's wife, but she cannot bear to get society's sanction for it. She is also afraid that marriage might bring difference in their affection. Ursula has got different reasons for refusing to marry Skrebensky: "I don't want to be with people, I want to be like this. I'll tell you if ever I want to marry you."(453) But so far as her relations with Skrebensky are concerned, her attitude to society, and her attitude to marriage are similar to Sue's:

If she were his social wife, if she were part of that complication of dead reality, then what had his under-life to do with her? One's social wife was almost a material symbol. Whereas now she was something more vivid to him than anything in conventional life could be. (453)

For the tragic quality of the Ursula-Skrebensky relationship, we find many factors responsible. There is something lacking in Skrebensky: "Why could ~~not~~ he himself desire a woman so? Why did he never worship, only just physically want her?(316) He thinks he represents civilisation but it is this civilisation that has crippled his capacity for love. He cannot want a woman with his soul because his soul has been ignored so much that it is now non-existent. But he wants Ursula as best he can. He needs her physically and mentally. He has come to depend on her; without her he is surrounded by "cold, stark, ashen sterility" and "feels ash-like and extinct".(457) Ursula also exults in his physical beauty. But this can hold her only for a short while. After she "knew him all round, not on any side did he lead into the unknown".(473-4) So she refuses to marry him. We feel pity for him when he weeps helplessly at her refusal. "His drawn, strangled face...his face twisted like insanity, and he was crying, crying blind and twisted as if something were broken which kept him in control."(467) Our pity is aroused ~~at~~ at his helpless state and we are horrified ~~by~~ by what civilisation has done to people.

Skrebensky believes that a man does not matter

personally. He thinks that he belongs to the nation and so perhaps he should live just to do his duty by the nation. So naturally Ursula says: "It seems to me, as if you weren't anybody - as if there weren't anybody there, where you are. Are you anybody really? You seem like nothing to me." (311) Skrebensky's own feelings are not very different. He thinks that he is just a brick in the whole social structure - that man's only purpose is to fill his place in "the Whole, the great scheme of man's elaborate civilization". (328) He believes that he will bring civilisation to India but Ursula tells him: "What do you govern for, but to make things there as dead and mean as they are here?" (462) The author presents to us a glimpse of the tragedy of modern life:

To his own intrinsic life, he was dead. And he could not rise again from the dead.... He had his five senses too. They were to be gratified. Apart from this, he represented the great, established, extant Idea of life, and as this he was important....

No highest good of the community, however could give him the vital fulfilment of his soul. He knew this. But he did not consider the soul of the individual sufficiently important.....

He could not see, it was not born in him to see, that the highest good of the community as it stands is no longer the highest good of even the average individual. (328-9)

Ursula too possesses certain characteristics of

the modern woman - in order to be independent and self sufficient she devotes herself to dreary work - to tasks that give her neither satisfaction nor fulfilment. She has come a long way from the early Brangwens. They found "heaven and earth teeming around them"(7) and their life was closely linked with nature. Ursula not only dislikes her mother's incessant child-bearing, in her soul she mocks at multiplication as something merely vulgar. "Multiplying and replenishing the earth bored her."(325)

She is attracted to Anthony but her ambitious nature compels her to refuse his proposal of marriage:

She liked Anthony, though. All her life, at intervals, she returned to the thought of him and of that which he offered. But she was a traveller on the face of the earth, and he was an isolated creature living in the fulfilment of his senses. (417)

Ursula has moved far away indeed from Lydia Lensky! In refusing Anthony she seems to make the same mistake that Lettie made in The White Peacock by not heeding her instinct and healthy attraction for George. She goes in the wide world to seek adventure but meets only frustration. Her Lesbian relationship with Miss Inger leaves her with only "the void reality of dark space"(341) within her.

The relationship of Ursula and Miss Inger reminds us of a similar relationship in Hardy's first published

novel, Desperate Remedies. When Miss Aldclyffe discovers that Cytherea loves some man, she is "as jealous as any man could have been."¹ She tells Cytherea, "I love you more sincerely than any man can. ...I - an old fool - have been sipping at your mouth as if it were honey, because I fancied no wasting lover knew the spot..."² She makes Cytherea fling "the twining tresses of her long rich hair" over her shoulders and goes to sleep with "a luxurious sense of content and quiet".³ But Cytherea finds her affection "too rank and capricious for endurance."⁴ When Lawrence takes up the same theme at a more mature stage of his novel writing, we find a great difference in his treatment of it. We get very subtle details of the development of the attachment between the mistress and the pupil and we get a psychological insight into the attraction and repulsion that Ursula feels towards Miss Winifred. Instead of young Hardy's bald statement of Miss Aldclyffe's passion for the young girl, Lawrence puts before us the maddening attraction and the ugliness of the relationship very artistically and boldly:

...the elder held the younger close against her, close, ...Ursula lay still in her mistress's arms, her forehead against the beloved, maddening breast....

In the morning,...the love was there again, burning,...and she wanted more,

¹DR p.99

²DR pp.97-8

³DR p.101

⁴DR p.98

always more...The two women became intimate
...inseparable.(340-1)

But after a while, the good in Ursula gains the upper hand and she is strongly repelled by her mistress. "She still adhered to Winifred Inger. But a sort of nausea was coming over her. She loved her mistress. But a heavy, clogged sense of deadness began to gather upon her, from the other woman's contact." (343-4)

For the failure of the male-female relationship of the third generation, we find the woman as much responsible as the modern, civilised man. About the Ursula-Skrebensky relationship we are told that "they were enemies come together in a truce,"(442)¹ "it all contained a developing germ of death".(463)² Ursula accuses Skrebensky of not being man enough to satisfy one woman and he feels "a mad dependence on her"(463) deepening with each contact with her. She makes him feel as though a horrible sickness gripped him and left him a crippled trunk(462)³ without his legs. Sometimes he feels he would kill her and very often she leaves him no better than

¹ Italics mine.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

dead. The man- woman relationship, as presented in the third part of The Rainbow, sets before us a very bleak tragedy for there is no hope of betterment for these people. Ursula seems to be very sure of herself when she tells Skrebensky: "I'm against you, and all your old, dead things", (462) but when we try to find out what live things she has to boast of, we find nothing very substantial. In the author's description of her making love to Skrebensky, we find a Dracula-like figure kissing away the life of her man:

...She was there fierce, corrosive, seething with his destruction, seething like some cruel, corrosive salt around the last substance of his being, destroying him, destroying him in the kiss. And her soul crystallized with triumph, and his soul was dissolved with agony and annihilation. So she held him there, the victim, consumed, annihilated. She had triumphed: he was not any more. (322)

Ursula herself is filled with horror at this burning corrosive self of hers that makes the male her victim and that exults in his annihilation. She tries to bring him from the dead:

...She restored the whole shell of him. She restored the whole form and figure of him. But the core was gone....But there was no core to him: as a distinct male he had no core. His...heart of the intrinsic male would never beat again...she had broken him. (323)

This perverted power of destroying her partner, never leaves her. Later Skrebensky feels "as if she wanted to destroy him. She had gripped him and was

trying to break him...At least he would fight for his existence with her."(461) But this sort of relationship cannot give happiness to either of the partners. Ursula finds that she has inflicted a wound on her own self too: "she had hurt herself, as if she had bruised herself in annihilating him."(324)

Ursula does not want Skrebensky with her whole being. Her will rejoices when she hears from him. She wants to love him. When they meet for the last time in the moonlit night, their union seems to have killed them both:

...she clinched hold of him, hard, as if suddenly she had the strength of destruction, ...he gave way as if dead,...He felt as if the knife were being pushed into his already dead body.....

She broke from her tense cramp of agony gradually, though each movement was a goad of heavy pain. Gradually, she lifted her dead body from the sands,... She trailed her dead body to the house,...Morning brought her a new access of superficial life. But all within her was cold, dead, inert. Skrebensky ...was white and obliterated...They were like two dead people who dare not recognise,dare not see each other.(480-1)

The tragic quality of the life of these people is highlighted by words like "death", "destruction"and "ashes" that occur again and again in the course of the narrative. The novel also gives an idea of the emptiness and misery of people in general. Miss Inger exemplifies the hollowness of the independence

which the modern girl has in society. Tom Brangwen, Ursula's uncle, who marries Miss Inger, is a worshipper of the machine, and he feels a disintegrated lifelessness of soul. The colliery, which Tom is managing, has

the strange desolation of ruin. Colliers ...seemed not like living people, but like spectres. The rigidity of the blank streets, the homogeneous amorphous sterility of the whole suggested death rather than life. There was no meeting place, no centre, no artery, no organic formation. There it lay, like the new foundations of a red-brick confusion rapidly spreading, like a skin-disease.
(345)¹

In this place, which is "like some gruesome dream, some ugly, dead, amorphous mood become concrete", (346) the colliers live like creatures who have no hope in life. They have been so much demoralised that they "believe they must alter themselves to fit the pits and the place, rather than alter the pits and the place to fit themselves." (347) The pit owns every man. In fact in modern times every man is sold to his job:

It is the office, or the shop, or the business that gets the man, the woman gets the bit the shop can't digest. What is he at home, a man? He is a meaningless lump - a standing machine, a machine out of work. (349)

To Ursula it all seems "grey, dry ash, cold and dead and ugly". (351) She is aware of the corruption, the ptrescence and the foetid air. She escapes from

¹ Italics mine.

the colliery but of course the atmosphere is nowhere healthy and sprightly to satisfy her. Life was easier and happier and human relations were less complex and more enriching when the Brangwens were not in contact with modern culture which came to them slowly in the shape of a canal, a colliery and a railway, and education and wider knowledge.

In the end, we find the lives of all - Ursula, Skrebensky, Tom and Miss Inger - tragic, because they cannot attain what Lawrence implies by "fulness of being". They strive for it, but the destructive culture that they belong to, is too strong an enemy to overcome. In the grip of a mechanical, ashy, dry and sterile civilisation, they are living in a real "Waste Land" where

He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying

and where there

...is no water but only rock
...dry sterile thunder without rain.¹

In the last two pages of The Rainbow we find Lawrence presenting hope in the same unconvincing way as in Sons and Lovers when he makes Paul Morel turn towards the "humming, glowing town".² In spite

¹T.S.Eliot: The Waste Land V

²SL p.511

of the "terrible corruption spreading over the face of the land", Ursula sees "a rainbow forming itself"; "the sordid people ...were living still ...the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to life in their spirit...clean, naked bodies would issue to a new germination...the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world built up in a living fabric of Truth."(495-6) And as in the earlier novel, the hope seems to be a personal expression of Lawrence's own feeling or his wishes; it does not seem to arise in a convincing and logical way from all that has gone before in the novel itself. In the following quotation from Lawrence's letter, we find that he himself found The Rainbow a destructive work and he did see life as tragic and hopeless in those days:

I knew I was writing a destructive work, otherwise I couldn't have called it The Rainbow - in reference to the Flood....And I knew, as I revised the book, that it was a kind of working up to the dark sensual or Dionysic or Aphrodisic ecstasy, which does actually burst the world, burst the world-consciousness in every individual. What I did through individuals, the world has done through the war. But alas, in the world of Europe I see no Rainbow. I believe the deluge of iron rain will destroy the world here, utterly; no Ararat will rise above the subsiding iron waters...¹

¹CL p.519

CH. XII

WOMEN IN LOVE

ONE of the most striking points about Women in Love is that throughout it offers us very bitter observations about mankind, England and life. In no other novel of Lawrence do we get such a tragic and hopeless picture of life in general as we get in this novel. All the characters that we meet here are either empty and barren or destructive and deathly. Even the most harmless of them - the Brangwen parents - are presented as curious creatures. Will Brangwen is "uncreated" (288) even at the age of fifty and so is to be considered incapable of any creative activity. Birkin finds it curious that this creature should be a human being:

Birkin could see only a strange, inexplicable, almost patternless collection of passions and desires and suppressions and traditions and mechanical ideas, all cast unfused and disunited into this slender, bright-faced man(288)

The rest of the characters - almost all of them - are terrifying specimens as human beings. We do not even get a momentary glimpse of what Lawrence would call a pure and natural human being, like Annable in The White Peacock or the man on the barge called "Annabel" in The Rainbow. Birkin and Ursula may at times seem different from the rest, but one is always aware of the strong resemblances. In the end they are presented as isolated from the rest but we cannot forget how deeply fused they were with the reductive process in the past. Birkin says that the whole of

humanity is rotten. He himself feels humiliated because he is aware that "one's life isn't really right, at the source."(139)

I can't get any flower to blossom anyhow. Either it is blighted in the bud, or has got the smother-fly, or it isn't nourished. Curse it, it isn't even a bud. It is a contravened knot.(140)

Ursula wonders why there can be no flowering and no dignity of life now, but Birkin's reply makes it clear that since the tree of humanity is rotten at the core, not a single individual-flower can be free from the disease of corruptions:

There are myriads of human beings hanging on the bush - and they look very nice and rosy, your healthy young men and women. But they are apples of Sodom, as a matter of fact, Dead Sea Fruit, gall-apples ... their insides are full of bitter, corrupt ash ... mankind is a dead tree, covered with fine brilliant galls of people.(140)

When we glance at Lawrence's other writings of the same period, we get a clue to his bitterness against the whole of mankind. On 21 September, 1914, he wrote to Gordon Campbell:

The war makes me depressed, the talk about the war makes me sick, and I have never come so near to hating mankind as I am now. They are fools, and vulgar fools, and cowards who will always make a noise because they are afraid of the silence. I don't even mind if they're killed. But I do mind those who, being sensitive, will receive such a blow from the ghastliness and mechanical, obsolete hideous stupidity of war, that they will be crippled beings further burdening our sick society. Those that die, let them die. But those that live afterwards - the thought of them makes me sick.¹

¹ CL p.290-1 (italics mine)

Lawrence was a sensitive artist and the war had a great effect on his thoughts, emotions and actions. He wrote to Garnett that the war put a damper on his own personal movement and made him feel very abstract, "as if I and what I am did not matter very much."¹ Later he wrote to David Garnett that he felt "gassed by the war"² and that he wished he could do something. His long essay, "The Crown", was written in 1915 as an effort to do something. In his "Note" to "The Crown" he writes that he wrote these pieces on Murry's suggestion to do something about the war. But he believes that in a great issue like the war nothing can be done. He sees no way of changing things even later on:

There is still nothing to be "done". Probably not for many, many years will men start to "do" something... It is no use trying merely to modify present forms. The whole great form of our era will have to go.³

Since the war had convinced Lawrence of the hopelessness of everything, and especially of the uselessness of mankind, in "The Crown" we already find him giving vent to his bitter thoughts that appear with greater vehemence in Women in Love:

It is absurd to talk about all men being immortal, all having souls. Very few men have being at all. They perish utterly, as individuals..... Most men are just transitory natural phenomena. Whether

¹ Ibid. p.292

² Ibid. p.348

³ Ph.II p.364

they live or die does not matter.... Their death is of no more matter than the cutting of a cabbage in the garden, an act utterly apart from grace They are innumerable cabbages in the regulated cabbage plot.¹

In the novel Birkin is portrayed as holding similar views. "His dislike of mankind, of the mass of mankind, amounted almost to an illness.(66) He tells Gerald that people give him a very bad feeling,

if mankind is destroyed, if our race is destroyed like Sodom, and there is this beautiful evening with the luminous land and trees, I am satisfied.. Let mankind pass away - time it did ... Humanity is a dead letter ... Let humanity disappear as quick as possible.(65)

In his "Foreword to Women in Love" (1920) Lawrence tells us that the war contributed a lot to the final shaping of this novel, which was first written in 1913 and then altogether rewritten and finished in 1917:

... it is a novel which took its final shape in the midst of the period of war, though it does not concern the war itself. I should wish the time to remain unfixed, so that the bitterness of the war may² be taken for granted in the characters.

Lawrence finds Women in Love "wonderful and terrifying, even to me who have written it." He calls it "purely destructive, not like The Rainbow, destructive-consummating, for this novel "actually does contain the results in one's soul of the war."³

¹ Ibid. p.384

² Ph.II p.275

³ CL p.519 italics mine.

To me the adjectives terrifying and purely destructive appear very appropriate for Women in Love even though some critics claim that the novel shows us the way to health and happiness. The author does seem at times to be undecided as to how he should react to the evils that he is displaying in the novel. Birkin, the Laurentian hero, sometimes wants to curse the evil and at other times wishes for the annihilation of mankind. For himself he seeks a solution in escape but receives only a partial and not very convincing fulfilment. So we can say that almost the whole of the novel is concerned with the portrayal of terrifying evil of the world. In a negative way it does tell us what not to do but it does not convincingly portray what ought to be done. For a true appreciation of Women in Love we need to forget the faulty didactic bits and to study the sensitiveness and the imaginative artistry of the author in portraying the emptiness and the destructive quality of modern life.

In Women in Love Lawrence presents the tragedy of individuals, and society and of the whole of mankind. We get a glimpse of the destructive effects of our mechanical civilisation and we see people undergoing the deepest sufferings and utter annihilation because of their failure in the closest possible relationship - the relationship between men and women.

In industrial civilisation, man is reduced as an individual to an inorganic unit of a vast machine. And Lawrence traces the

tragic result of this mechanical stress upon human life - upon the response of man to nature, upon the institutions of the home and the family and upon personal relationships. He sharpens our awareness of the tragedy by presenting it in a coherent, dramatic manner. The movement is chiefly in terms of significant action and dialogue, imagery and symbolic enactment. In the opening chapter, we get the great theme of the novel - marriage. Ursula and Gudrun are opposed to marriage in the conventional sense of the term; they do not want a husband, a home and children. At the same time in "their hearts they were frightened"(8) at their inability to react, in what was up to now considered the natural way, to proposals of marriage. They are also bored and dissatisfied and they express their fear at the turn life seems to be taking: "Nothing materialises. Everything withers in the bud... It does frighten one." (9) They are seen next at a church where a wedding is taking place. The author has, thus, highlighted the theme by contrast - the old sanctities will be abandoned; life is withering away in the bud; will these people ever find life and flower?

The tragic disintegration of human life is examined in different situations and different surroundings. - in London's Bohemia we find sensuality, meaningless lust and violence and an air of dissolution. When Minette appeals to Gerald, she does not rouse the tenderness of love in him. He feels an awful power over her, a feeling very near to cruelty. She appears to him as

a victim and he contemplates how he will destroy her. She has the "look of a violated slave, whose fulfilment lies in her further and further violation".(88) So Gerald cannot tolerate her even for a week. He finds a sickening smell in her and despairs of getting any real satisfaction through her. She cannot satisfy men, though she can deal with "half-men": "Gerald was what she called a man, and these others, Halliday, Libidnikov, Birkin, the whole Bohemian set, they were only half men." (96)

From the dissolute half-men and stinking women of London's Bohemia, the author takes us to Breadalby, Beldover and the Austrian Tyrol and nowhere do we meet people very different from these. In Beldover the coal-miners seem to bring the horror of a dark underworld to the surface - their hearts have become incapable of healthy feelings and emotions. To Gudrun they appear as sinister creatures and their only reaction to her charms consists of obscene remarks. In Breadalby, we meet the intellectuals whose minds have become corrosive and destructive. For Hermione knowledge is not only a source of pleasure, it is the greatest thing in her life. For this she has ignored many vital things and cannot act and feel like a natural, living woman. She is no more than a useless vessel of knowledge. Birkin and Hermione have formed a spiritual and intellectual attachment. But this fills them both with the desire and power of destruction of each other. She lays "violent hands on him, to extract his secrets

from him. She must know. It was a dreadful tyranny, an obsession in her, to know all he knew." (99) But when he conveys his knowledge to her,

(w)ith another strange sick convulsion, she turned away, as if she were sick, could feel dissolution setting in in her body. For with her mind she was unable to attend to his words; he caught her, as it were, beneath all her defences, and destroyed her with some insidious occult potency ... She suffered the ghastliness of dissolution, broken and gone in a horrible corruption.... She strayed out, pallid and preyed-upon like a ghost, like one attacked by the tomb-influences which dog us. And she was gone like a corpse, that has no presence, no¹ convexion. He remained hard and vindictive.¹(99)

After sometime Hermione recovers and "full of sepulchral darkness (100) and terrible, ghastly strength, tries to destroy Birkin. Now he is "like a flask that is smashed to atoms, he seemed to himself that he was all fragments, smashed to bits", (118) but he is saved because he does not have the will to be destroyed.

Another couple of similar destructive mentality and power tries its strength on each other in the Austrian Tyrol. There the male is completely destroyed and he freezes to death in the snow because he unknowingly wishes to be killed - he does not have the will to live. Gerald's tragedy has a great effect on us because he possesses many admirable and heroic qualities. He has great potentialities, is handsome and efficient, wields power and has

¹ Italics mine

a high standing in society; but his great flaw lies in the fact that he has become totally alienated from nature and therefore, cold and heartless like the machines that are used in his coal-mines. Even while describing his beauty. Lawrence uses symbols and allusions that establish his essential coldness. He has "something northern about him" and in "his clear northern flesh and his fair hair", there is "a glisten like sunshine refracted through crystals of ice". He looks new, pure and unbroached "as an arctic thing." ¹(15) Gudrun too has affinities with him in her coldness of heart and her relationship with nature , so when she sees him the first time, she feels violently attracted towards him, His northernness "magnetized her".(15) "A strange transport took possession of her, all her veins were in a paroxysm of violent sensation"(16) because she could at once understand him - understand that his "totem is the wolf".(16) She is seized with the desire to make certain whether she is "really singled out for him in some way, is there really some pale gold arctic light that envelopes only us two?"(16) She gets the proof in the mare scene when Gerald is seen seeking power over nature instead of trying to live in harmony with it. In her art of modelling small animals, we see the same will-to-power. So naturally the sight of Gerald "bearing down into the living

¹ Italics mine

body of the horse: ... enclosing and encompassing the mare heavily into unutterable subordination", ____ this sight brings Gudrun closer to Gerald. Later, when they both join in the domination of the rabbit, a diabolic freemasonry is formed between them and the violation of living things is its basis: "He felt the mutual hellish recognition She looked at him and was him, and knew that he was initiate as she was initiate". (272-3) But in spite of their mutual attraction and league, there is bound to be a struggle between them. They form a pact not from love but because of some obscene recognition of each other and intuitively they know that they are going to fight each other to the death. They give expression to the sense of friction in the scene where Ursula dances in front of Gerald's cattle. This scene reminds me by contrast, of the scene in The Mayor of Casterbridge in which Lucetta and Elizabeth Jane are being chased by a bull. The two young women are frightened of the savage beast and in spite of their efforts to outwit him, their life is in danger. Suddenly a "large-framed and unhesitating"¹ man appears and brings the wild creature under control. The two frightened females are saved by the courage and strength of the male. But when we come to the world of Women in Love, we find that things have undergone a radical change. The two young women, Ursula and Gudrun, do not

¹ MC p.207

run for life when they encounter a herd of cattle. Instead of Hardy's vigorous bull we are faced with Gerald's bullocks who instead of chasing the women, are chased by Gudrun and when Gerald, like Henchard, tries to save them from the "nasty" beasts Gudrun is not filled with thankfulness like Lucetta, instead, she mocks him "You think I'm afraid of you and your cattle, don't you?"(190) And she gives him a blow on the face. We are told that in her soul she felt "an unconquerable desire for deep violence against him". The blow makes Gerald deathly pale and fills him with a great gush of some ungovernable black emotion. He says to Gudrun:

'You have struck the first blow'....
'And I shall strike the last", she retorted involuntarily, with confident assurance. He was silent, he did not contradict her.(191)

Similar authorial comments give us a feeling that the fates of Gerald and Gudrun have been decided by some mysterious power, and, even though they are instinctively aware of it, they cannot do anything about it, at the most they can unconsciously help in the fulfilment of their dark destiny. Gerald's tragedy is pre-planned and inevitable. Of course no furies in the Greek sense are driving him to his destruction and death. But ultimately nature resides in the form of instinct and natural feeling within man; and these became the furies which seek vengeance upon Gerald's inner self. Gerald's instincts have some flaw: as a child he had

accidentally killed his brother, and, later, he had longed to join the soldiers when they shot at the striking workers. When his sister is drowned, Gerald thinks he is responsible for her death. More than once we are given a hint that Cain is Gerald's prototype. His perversity of nature is seen also in his behaviour towards living creatures. In the symbolical scene with the mare, we find Gerald seeking to reduce his sensitive living mare to a mere thing of use. We are reminded of the scene in Anna Karenina in which, Vronsky kills his mare at the races. In his selfish wish for victory he becomes unmindful of the living creature. Gerald believes that he must break the natural impulses of his mare because she should be of use to him. Raymond Williams rightly observes that the "future of Gerald and Gudrun is revealed in it, as surely as was the future of Vronsky and Anna, in Tolstoy's scene".¹

Like most modern tragic characters, Gerald suffers from disintegration. When Birkin asks him wherein life centres for him, he says:

As far as I can make out, it doesn't centre at all. It is artificially held together by the social mechanism.(63-4)

He believes that man's only purpose in life is work, and work for him means mechanical development and efficiency in industry. The

¹ Modern Tragedy p.132

introduction of machinery by Donald Farfrae for efficiency and ease, in The Mayor of Casterbridge, has become a vicious circle by the time we reach the world of Gerald Crich. The machines that he owns have the power of turning human beings into mechanical creatures. But unfortunately even Gerald can see no purpose in life except in using and, indirectly, in serving the machines.

Ursula tells Gudrun:

'... I don't think the Criches fit the period. I know Gerald is putting in a private electric plant, for lighting the house, and is making all kinds of latest improvements... He is several generations of youngness at one go... He'll have to die soon, when he's made every possible improvement, and there will be nothing more to improve. He's got go, anyhow.'

'Certainly, he's got go,' said Gudrun. In fact I've never seen a man that showed signs of so much. The unfortunate thing is, where does his go go to, what becomes of it?'

... 'It goes in applying the latest appliances!'(52-3)

The truth of Ursula's prophecy is proved soon afterwards. Gerald "had conceived the pure instrumentality of mankind ... As a man as of a knife: does it cut well? Nothing else mattered."(250-1) So when Gerald finds that he has brought about all the possible innovations and has converted the industry into a pure organism of perfect efficiency, he is filled with a sense of emptiness in life:

The whole system was now so perfect that Gerald was hardly necessary any more.

It was so perfect that sometimes a strange fear came over him, ... And once or twice lately, when he was alone in the evening and had nothing to do,

he had suddenly stood up in terror, not knowing what he was ... He was afraid, in mortal dry fear, but he knew not what of. He looked at his own face ... somehow, it was not real, it was a mask. He dared not touch it, for fear it should prove to be only a composition mask. His eyes were blue and keen as ever, ... Yet he was not sure that they were not blue false bubbles that would burst in a moment and leave clear annihilation... He was afraid that one day he would break down and be a purely meaningless babble lapping round a darkness. (260-1)

The shock of his father's death hastens the breakdown. He seems to be compelled by some force to do something - to go somewhere. He is driven by the emptiness of his soul and house. His will "seizes upon Gudrun - just the proper object - as both the enemy it must subdue and the Magna Mater in whom it must smother itself."¹ He tries to find relief by making love to Gudrun; but, symbolically, he has on his shoes the mud from the graveyard, where his father is buried, when he goes to her bedroom. His love is just a clinging dependence upon her; and for her it is an irritating affair which does not give her any peace. She thinks about Gerald's attachment to her and comes to the conclusion that he had come to her as to his mother. He was an infant crying in the night and she was supposed to nurse this child who was also her lover. But she is filled with hatred for him. This recurrent theme of Lawrence's novels, of a lover going to his woman as to the Magna Mater reminds us of Strindberg's The Father. When the Captain

¹ M.Krieger: "The Tragic Vision" p.41

cries in misery, Laura says:

Weep, my child. Your mother is here to comfort you. Do you remember, it was as your second mother that I first entered into your life? Your big, strong body was afraid....¹

But a woman does not want a child in her lover and she takes her revenge. The Captain speaks the truth when he accuses her:

...You, my wife, you were my mortal enemy, for you didn't let go of me until you had throttled the life out of me.²

Gudrun does the same to Gerald even though here there is one difference - the desire to throttle the life out is mutual in Gerald and Gudrun. When Gudrun realises that she is supposed to nurse Gerald like his mother, she is filled with the hard-heartedness of Lady Macbeth when she says that she would pluck her nipple from the boneless gums of the babe and dash his brains out.

Gudrun too reflects:

Ooh, but how she hated the infant crying in the night. She would murder it gladly. She would stifle it and bury it... (524)

Gudrun does not get any satisfaction from Gerald's lovemaking because he goes to her only to take something from her. The thought of giving her something does not occur to him. "Blind

¹ Plays I (TK.MEYER) p.68

² Ibid. p.84

to her, thinking only of himself", he pours into her "all his pent-up darkness and corrosive death" and becomes whole again. He gets immense relief for he can take a "bath of life" in her. For him she is "(m)other and substance of all life", but she has to receive him "as a vessel filled with bitter potion of death... (388-9) But soon Gudrun finds Gerald's passion crushing her, and fears that it might kill her. The author tells us that both Gerald and Gudrun feel that each is destroying the other - killing the other: "always it was this eternal see-saw, one destroyed that the other might exist, one ratified because the other was nulled." (500) From the very beginning there has been something obscene and destructive in their relationship. Looking at Gerald, Gudrun does not feel the strings of romantic passion. She rather thinks of him as a water-plant arising out of the mud with its festering chill. Instead of the mutual gift of warmth, life and tenderness, they take away each other's peace and the wholeness of being. Their tragic resolution takes place when they go to the Austrian Tyrol for a holiday. The cold ice seems to fill them with fierce destructive energy. Gudrun is filled with a strange rapture in this cold grey place and she feels that "she had reached her place." (450) Gerald, who is "one of those strange white demons from the north, fulfilled in the destructive post mystery", feels at home in the midst of the (287) cold

mountains. Destructive as their relationship is, they battle against each other. When they make love, it is just a battle of wills between them. Gudrun tells Gerald:

Well you don't think you love, do you?...
 You don't think you can love me, do you?....
 You know you never have loved me, don't you? (497)

Gudrun is the destructive, pitiless female that appears again and again in the novels of Lawrence. When she has tortured Gerald, she shows some pity, but even "her pity for him was as cold as stone, its deepest motive was hate of him, and fear of his power over her which she must always counterfoil. (498) So, even though Gerald clings to her, his instinct tells him that he can be free and safe from her only if he can kill her. Each of them must destroy the other or be destroyed. Gudrun feels that Gerald breaks her and wastes her. But the author tells us that even though this vital conflict frightened both of them, Gerald was more in danger because he was alone, whilst "she had begun to cast round for external resources." (496) Even though Gudrun was afraid of Gerald, she was sure of her own footing. Being both the Magna Mater and the beloved, she had the upper hand and if "death was the only severing of this Gordian knot", then the weaker must die. Gudrun has also found a mate in Loerke who appears no better than a mouse, bat, gnome, or an insect to Birkin and Gerald, but who can give her the "subtle

thrills of extreme sensation in reduction."(508) After she had taken what Gerald could give her, she hankered for something that "only creatures, little, ultimate creatures like Loerke could give, "the mystic frictional activities of diabolic reducing down, disintegrating the vital organic body of life."(508) Gudrun has enough interest in the process of reduction to wish to live in order that she may experience more and more of it. But Gerald, after having fulfilled his purpose as the industrial magnate, has nothing to live for and dies. His tragic failure in love as well as in the act of living, is an outcome of his whole self being committed to the principles of industrialism. Gudrun too thinks of herself as a clock - as a mechanical thing and Krieger rightly observes that "her failure to create herself, to overcome her mechanical passivity leads her into defiance and to the violent exercise of wilfulness."¹ When man becomes the slave of the machine, his deeper soul becomes empty and full of fear and terror. Thus, Gerald's tragedy is not only the tragedy of an individual - it symbolises the tragedy of the society he belongs to. His incapacity to be and to feel in a normal, healthy and spontaneous way, his inability to find meaning in life and happiness in love is characteristic of his society. The way his lust turns into violence is symbolic of the repressed forces of violence in society - which find their expression in war.

¹ M. Krieger: The Tragic Vision p.41

The image of Gerald, stiff in death, "strange, congealed, icy substance - no more" (539) supports the view of the author that something "mysterious" works out the fate of human beings. From the very beginning of the novel, there is a touch of fatalism so far as Gerald is concerned. Not only does death fascinate him, he speaks of the characteristics of his family in the same fatalistic way as do Hardy's Jude or Sue. Jude believes that the "Fawleys were not made for wedlock, it never seemed to sit well upon us"¹. Both Jude and Sue think that their marriage would mean "two bitters in one dish".² Similarly Gerald says to Birkin:

There's one thing about our family, you know...
Once anything goes wrong, it can never be put
right again - not with us (206)

So it is not surprising that in the fatal friction he should be the one to be completely destroyed and not Gudrun. Looking at Gerald cold in death Birkin is filled with grief and remorse, but he sees it as something inevitable and unavoidable. Nothing that man can do can change his fate. Gerald could have left the cold, icy Tyrol and gone to the South, but, "Was it a way out? It was only a way in again." (538) Some hard ruthless force seems to be working against people like Gerald - people who have denied

¹ JQ p.77

² JQ p.176

nature: - "Whatever the mystery which has brought forth man and the Universe, it is a non-human mystery, it has its own great ends..."(538). With Bernard Shaw, Birkin believes that God could do without the ichthyosauri and the mastodon. These monsters failed creatively to develop, so God, the creative mystery, dispensed with them. In the same way the mystery could dispense with man, should he too fail creatively to change and develop.(538) This quality of doing things creatively is lacking in most of the people of the modern world - the people with whom Women in Love is concerned. So a doom seems to hang over them. According to Gudrun the tragedy of people like Gerald may be called a "barren tragedy" (535), but it is nevertheless a tragedy.

Birkin, the Laurentian hero tries to find a way of avoiding the impending doom and the tragedy. But he is aware of the difficulty of the task and is undecided as to how he should act. In the beginning we mostly find him railing at the worthlessness of mankind but at times we also get an idea that he genuinely wishes to save mankind - he tries to change the ways of people by preaching to them. More often he is aware that the only thing he can do is just to save himself. He feels that England is a sick place and his problems can be solved by just leaving England, but finally he decides that the whole world has gone bad, so he should make a new world. At least he can make a

world of aloofness. He separates himself from society but he does not believe in forming a paradise alone. He needs two more persons - one woman and one man who should form a special kind of relationship with him. But in the end we find that he cannot fulfil even this meagre requirement of his, so in spite of his very few and random statements of a possible beautiful future, we are convinced of the hopelessness of everything.

Birkin feels that the silver river of life that quickens the world with beauty and brightness is no longer a reality for us. The "real reality" today in the world is the river of dissolution - the black river of corruption that rolls in us now.(193)

He tells Ursula that people are now born in the process of destructive creation - people like Gerald and Gudrun. About himself and Ursula he is not very sure - in part they too are certainly the lilies of the river of dissolution. "Whether we are that in toto, I don't yet know ... Some people are pure flowers of dark corruption - lilies. But there ought to be some roses, warm and flaming." (193) But he goes on to speak about the power of dissolution which will bring about "universal nothing - the end of the world." (193) Life has become so bitter that even Ursula and Birkin speak of their preference for death. Birkin says:

One is tired of the life that belongs to death - our kind of life ... I want love that is like sleep ... So that it is like death - I do want to die from this life ...(208)

Only a few pages later we find Ursula contemplating the same thing.

... better die than live mechanically a life that is a repetition of repetition. To die is to move on with the invisible ... Life indeed may be ignominious, shameful to the soul. But death is never a shame. Death itself, like the illimitable space, is beyond our sullyng.(216)

But of course death is no solution. It is only a cowardly escape. Birkin has to reject it because we are told that he has the "Salvatar Mundi touch", in spite of himself, he would have to be trying to save the world."(143) So he preaches to people what they lack and what they ought to do:

You've got to lapse out before you can know what sensual reality is, lapse into unknowingness, and give up your volition. You've got to do it. You've got to learn not-to-be, before you can come into being.(48)

In spite of the great wisdom of his speech Birkin is not able to alter people or to gain their confidence or even respect. He speaks too much about what is wrong with people and so people are infuriated and jeer at him. To Julius he writes:

There is a phase in every race when the desire for destruction overcomes every other desire. In the individual, this desire is ultimately a desire for destruction in the self ... It is a desire for the reduction-process in oneself,... And in the great retrogression, the reducing back of the created body of life, we get knowledge, and beyond knowledge, the phosphorescent ecstasy of acute sensation. And if, Julius, you want this ecstasy of reduction with Minette, you must go on till it is fulfilled. But surely there is in you also, somewhere, the living desire for positive creation..(433)

Birkin fails as a preacher because instead of appealing to the good and hopeful in people he takes a delight in exposing their evil and talking of destruction. Ursula thinks him to be a "Sunday-school teacher, a prig of the stiffest type"(144) and Julius comments "It's perfectly wonderful, Birkin harrowing Hell - harrowing the Pompadour".(433) His Russian friend calls him a "megalomaniac", for, "it is a form of religious mania. He thinks he is the Saviour of man." (433)

Like any preacher Birkin gets infuriated when people do not respond to him as to a Saviour. For he "can't hear what anybody else has to say - he simply cannot hear. His own voice is so loud... He cannot allow that there is any other mind than his own."(297) So his bitterness against people grows more and more till at times he explodes with Swiftian invectives against mankind. In fact we are aware that Birkin is just voicing Lawrence's firm opinions, for even other characters in the novel express similar beliefs at times. Gudrun describes how she had seen boys darting in filth and awful mud when some ha'pennies were thrown for them, "no vulture or jackal could dream of approaching them, for foulness." (180). Even when Birkin seemed to "pour out his soul for the world, there was in him a capacity to jeer at all his own righteousness and spirituality, justly and sincerely to make a mock of it all. And the mocking was so true, it bit to the

very core of his righteousness, and showed it rotten, shining with phosphorescence."¹ So, instead of trying to save the world, we find him taking steps to save himself. He feels that England is sick and he should go away somewhere else. But things are very much the same all over the world. Then he should leave this world and go to another world. Ursula is more practical and she tells him that there is no other world. Birkin then decides to make a new world. In this new world there need not be people, but he must have a woman at his side and a man who is willing to let Birkin save him. In woman he has great hopes. He believes that since there is no God, the only hope for man lies in a woman:

It seems to me there remains only this perfect union with a woman - sort of ultimate marriage - and there isn't anything else.(64)

Birkin wants a special sort of union with some special woman, but he is himself rather vague about it, so "to Gerald it sounded as if he were insistent rather than confident."(63) He likes some things in Ursula but he cannot accept her as she is - he must convert her to his own opinions - she must come to him on his own terms. As he tries to convince her, we again encounter a friction of ideas which comes quite close to the battle of wills in the case of Gerald and Gudrun. Birkin wants Ursula but he does not love her,

¹ Ph II p.103

at least he would not say he loves her. He does not believe in love because "it gives out in the last issues." (161) He wants and he offers Ursula "something much more impersonal and harder - and rarer ", (161) but he cannot tell us what it is. With Ursula we also feel that Birkin does not so much object to the emotion of love as to the word itself:

'The point about love is that we hate the word because we have vulgarised it. It ought to be proscribed, tabooed from utterance, for many years, till we get a new, better idea.'
 ... 'But it always means the same thing' she said.
 'Ah, God, no, let it not mean that any more,'
 he cried 'Let the old meanings go.'
 But still it is love', she persisted. (145)

Birkin believes that love is just a process, it is not an end in itself. Ursula, like most human beings, believes in the importance of love. For her, life is not fulfilled unless she knows that somebody really loves her and she forces Birkin to confess to her as well as to himself that he loves her.

Even though for Birkin marriage is a solution at least to the biggest part of his problem, he has some similarly strange and vague ideas about marriage. There is much truth in Gudrun's remark:

Instead of wanting a woman for herself, he wants his ideas fulfilled. Which, when it comes to actual practice, is not good enough. (326)

Gudrun and Ursula, being typical modern women, have no respect for marriage. They are in the same line with Hardy's Sue Bridehead who

openly denounces marriage in vehement terms. To her, marriage is "a sordid contract"¹ and a "hopelessly vulgar institution"² (280). To Ursula marriage is "the end of experience"(7), and to Gudrun it is a social arrangement, that has nothing to do with love. But Birkin has great faith in marriage. He wants a "binding contract"(325) because "he believes that a man and wife can go further than any other two beings".(327) Gudrun says that Birkin thinks that "if you marry you can get through marriage into a third heaven, or something - all very vague"(327). This accusation of vagueness and not knowing his own mind is repeated by many characters against Birkin. He denounces Ursula's notion of love as something leading to chaos and nihilism, and the dialogue that follows is a supreme example of Lawrence's artistry. He knows the weaknesses of his own characters and their philosophy and exposes them to the full before the reader has time to denounce them. Birkin tells Ursula:

'.... if you enter into a pure unison, it is irrevocable, and it is never pure till it is irrevocable. And when it is irrevocable, it is one way, like the path of a star'.

'Ha!' she cried bitterly. 'It is the old dead morality'.

'No', he said, 'it is the law of creation. One is committed. One must commit oneself to a conjunction with the other - for ever. But it is not selfless - it is a maintaining of the self in mystic balance and integrity - like a star balanced with another star'.

¹ JO p.218

² Ibid. p.280

'I don't trust you when you drag in the stars', she said. 'If you were quite true, it wouldn't be necessary to be so far-fetched'.

'Don't trust me then', he said, angry. 'It is enough that I trust myself'.

'And that is where you make another mistake', she replied. You don't trust yourself. You don't fully believe yourself what you are saying. You don't really want this conjunction, otherwise you wouldn't talk so much about it, you'd get it'. (169-70)

Birkin feels that love should involve not fusion but a polarisation of pure male and female individuality. The basis is to be some mystical ultra-phallic experience - but Lawrence fails to realise this in concrete terms in the novel. In the Mino incident, in which the kingly male and the far from queenly female cat are supposed to be in a state of pure equilibrium, we believe with Ursula that Birkin wants just "bossiness" (166). She accuses him of possessing a lust for bullying like Gerald Crich and wishing the male-female relationship to be like that of Mars and its satellite. In a later scene we find that Birkin has won Ursula over to his side and at the inn, when Ursula caresses Birkin's loins and thighs with her fingers, she is supposed to have a mystical experience which "flooded them both with rich peace, satisfaction" (353). But even though Ursula understands Birkin, the scene itself fails to realise what is, for him a new relation that is like a conjunction of stars constellated together - "star-equilibrium" (360) - something that is neither love nor passion but beyond both. In this scene Lawrence gives us mere statement. With the help of a cluster of

fine words he seems to bully us into believing something that he is not clear about himself. But, unfortunately, even in this scene, where we are told that Birkin and Ursula achieve supreme ecstasy, we are also told that Birkin is not completely satisfied: "Yet something was tight and unfree in him."⁽³⁵³⁾ So it really seems a very sad thing that even after such efforts it should not be possible for a person to get complete fulfilment sometimes. Birkin and Ursula have both suffered from some of the evils that Birkin sees corrupting the world. In Birkin's relationship with Hermione we have seen them going ahead in the process of destruction. In the "Prologue to Women in Love" Lawrence writes:

He ran from death to death. Work was terrible, horrible ... the whole process to his soul was pure futility ... purposeless ... entirely rootless.. In his private life the same horror of futility and wrongness dogged him. Leaving alone all ideas, religious or philosophic, all of which are mere sounds what remained in a man's life?.... There was his love for Hermione, a love based entirely on ecstasy and on pain, and ultimate death. He knew he did¹ not love her with any living creative love.

At this point we find Birkin no better than Gerald. He has himself suffered this death, emptiness and horror which he is never tired of seeing in others.

And Gerald at least believed in his work - in the betterment of his industry. But Birkin has no interest or faith in his job

¹ Ph. II p.99

as an inspector of schools, he finds it a process of mechanical and purposeless activity. He believes that one should get rid of his job if one wants to be happy; but anybody can see how very impractical this suggestion is for a man in the world. In his rejection of Hermione of course we see his drive for life and true being. He wants his body and soul to become one in his love for some complete woman. He turns to Ursula with some hope, but we find that, before he realises even part of his ambition, he and Ursula both need to undergo some major changes. When Ursula meets Birkin and Hermione together at Birkin's place, she feels that an inviolable intimacy exists between them. They are both people of some old world in which Ursula is a foreigner. They belong to some deadened and withered culture in which Ursula is just an outsider, so Ursula leaves them together bidding them a hasty good-bye. Later when she meets Birkin she says that he belongs to that old, deathly way of living which Hermione represents and he cannot help returning to it "like a dog to his vomit"(345). Jealousy and anger do incite Ursula but her accusations are not unfounded:

It stinks, your truth and your purity. It stinks of the offal you feed on, you scavenger dog, you eater of corpses. You are foul, foul,... obscene and perverse. You may well say you don't want love. No, you want yourself, and dirt and death - that's what you want. You are so perverse, so death-eating(346)

Birkin does not refute her charges because he believes that she is right. "He knew that his spirituality was concomitant of a process of depravity, a sort of pleasure in self-destruction." (348)

But then he asks: "was she herself any better? Was anybody any better?" (347) He thinks that Ursula's way of emotional and physical intimacy and her desire for the fusion of two beings in love is as nauseous and horrible as Hermione's spiritual intimacy. When he suggests marriage to Gerald as a way of bringing wholeness to oneself, Gerald says: "That is your panacea. But you haven't even tried it on yourself yet, and you are sick enough". (109)

Birkin replies that he is sick but he would come right. When he goes from Hermione to Ursula, he finds that it is not so easy to cure his sickness. Quite early in the novel, through the symbol of the moon, Lawrence conveys to us the hopelessness of the man-woman relationship. Birkin thinks that woman has "a lust for possession, a greed of self-importance in love." (224) He hates the Magna Mater but he thinks that Ursula, too, is such a figure. When he curses Cybele and tries to banish the image of the moon from the pond, he succeeds only momentarily. He has been able to escape the perversely intellectual Hermione, but Ursula too is not less demanding, though in another direction; she too possesses some of the same characteristics. Towards the end of the novel she asserts her right of possessing and monopolising her husband: "Why aren't I enough?" (541)

Ursula has some affinity with Gudrun also. She admires Gudrun and is easily influenced by her. She joins with Gudrun in denouncing Birkin as a possible husband. In ~~the~~ Tyrol she shares Gudrun's attraction to Loerke, the mud child who is "the very stuff of the underworld of life... But there were moments when to Ursula he seemed indescribably inferior, false, a vulgarity." (480) It is this keener power of perception that saves Ursula from destruction. She is able to discriminate between good and evil in time and she rejects evil for good. So in the end, even when Birkin shows dissatisfaction, she seems completely fulfilled. Why Birkin cannot be fulfilled with Ursula, or with any woman, becomes clear in the pages of the "Prologue to Women in Love". There is something wrong with Birkin that makes him incapable of accepting or giving complete love to any woman:

... although he was always drawn to women, feeling more at home with a woman than with a man, yet it was for men that he felt the hot, flushing, roused attraction which a man is supposed to feel for the other sex.... the male physique had a fascination for him ... Whenever it was a case of a woman, there entered in too much spiritual, sisterly love; or else in reaction, there was only a brutal, callous sort of lust.¹

This entanglement has remained in Birkin all through the novel; the best proof of it is this extract from the last page of Women in Love. Birkin tells Ursula:

¹ Ph. II p. 104

'Having you, I can live all my life without anybody else, any other sheer intimacy. But to make it complete, really happy, I wanted eternal union with a man, too, another kind of love'.

Ursula replies:

'... It's an obstinacy, a theory, a perversity ... You can't have two kinds of love. Why should you!' 'It seems as if I can't' he said. 'Yet I wanted it'. (541) ¹

He seems to be doomed to live suppressing something of him, for a man cannot make his feelings come and go at his command:

How can a man create his own feelings? He cannot. It is only in his power to suppress them, to bind them in the chain of the will. And what is suppression but a mere negation of life, and of living. ²

So Birkin is unfulfilled in the end. The life and observations of all the characters in the novel show that the world is heading towards dissolution and there is no way of saving it:

... mankind ... is going through a process of decay and decomposition ... when winter has set in, when the frosts are struggling the leaves off the trees and the birds are silent knots of darkness, how can there be a unanimous movement towards a whole summer of florescence? There can be none of this, only submission to the death of this nature, in the winter that has come upon mankind, and a cherishing of the unknown that is unknown for many a day yet, ... ³

Even the solutions that Birkin offers to individuals are unacceptable in the world for many reasons. Moreover, the

¹ Italics mine

² Ph. II p. 104

³ Ph. II p. 98

relationship of Ursula and Birkin is not shown to be very different from that of Gerald and Gudrun. They do have more understanding, respect and care between themselves, but as Raymond Williams says, "they share with Gudrun and Gerald the separation of their personal relationship from 'the desire for creation and productive happiness'."¹ All four of the main characters of the novel reject society - they are not average people and the novel has no real society as its setting. The author has created individuals who reject most of the human and accepted relationships and their ways can be no solution to our problems. "Dismissing the ethics of productivity as evil is well enough for himself and his wife" - says Vivas about Birkin - "But ... how we are going to keep body and soul together after quitting jobs. Who is going to man the boats and railroads that are going to take us on our wanderings?..."² There are many other questions that one could ask; they have rejected their parents, do they reject children as well? Can there be any creativity in their relationship?....

But an artist's job is not to give us solutions to problems or to teach philosophy, even though he may try to do so at times. His main task is to give us a picture of life and nobody can

¹ Modern Tragedy p.134

² E. Vivas: D.H. Lawrence: The failure and the triumph of art. p.270

deny that Lawrence has given us a tragic but true picture of modern life. If we asked what Lawrence was trying to do in this novel, Birkin's words to Ursula would be a very appropriate answer:

I only want us to know what we are.(194)

"OURS IS essentially a tragic age" - Lawrence begins Lady Chatterley's Lover with these words, and all through the novel he offers us glimpses of the tragic nature of our age. There are the effects of war and of industrialisation; then as a result of these things, there is the coldness of society, the money-mindedness of people, the dehumanised nature of human beings and, finally, there is the tragic quality of the man-woman relationship as it exists today. But in spite of all these things, or perhaps because we are living in a tragic age, Lawrence wants us to "refuse to take it tragically". His main message is that "we've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen,"(5) In the course of the novel he shows how we can still live in the proper sense of the term, but as his later observations show, he is not certain of the possibility of hope either for his characters or for humanity in general, and the novel as a whole simply presents a very convincing picture of our tragic age.

War gives death in life to our young men. It

paralyses them forever and in every way. It leaves them utterly incapable of being alive in the body and, therefore, of being truly alive. Apparently Clifford seems to have recovered from the shock of the war and only the lower part of his body seems to have got damaged, but Connie perceives that he

seemed alert in the foreground, but the background was like the Midlands atmosphere, haze, smoky mist. And the haze seemed to be creeping forward.... she felt all the background of his mind filling up with mist, with nothingness. And it frightened her. (51)

The author tells us that a shock to the emotional soul is always fatal; even though the body may recover, the capacity of feeling and acting like a living natural being is killed. And the war has given such a wounding shock to the emotional soul of Clifford. The inevitable happens. The body recovers, but

slowly the wound to the soul begins to make itself felt, like a bruise, which only slowly deepens its terrible ache, till it fills all the psyche.... And as it spread in him, Connie felt it spread in her. An inward dread, an emptiness, an indifference to everything gradually spread in her soul. (51-2)

So we see that even those who are not directly hit by the war cannot escape its deadening effects.

Connie feels "a sense of injustice, of being defrauded", and she feels a cold indignation against Clifford

and his sort. But at the same time she knows that the cause of the ailment lies somewhere else.

Poor Clifford, he was not to blame. His was the greater misfortune. It was all part of the general catastrophe. (74)

Even in the life of the common people Connie can see the effects of war. Only the healing power of long years can bring back some health to humanity. When the colliers talk of a strike,

it seemed to Connie there again it was not a manifestation of energy, it was the bruise of the war that had been in abeyance, slowly rising to the surface and creating the great ache of unrest, and stupor of discontent. (52)

Only long years and "a new hope" can counteract the effects of war, but then there are also other menaces to happy and natural living, and it is not surprising that Lawrence's protagonist is not very hopeful of success in his battle against them.

Industrialisation has affected the life of people. Man is withdrawing himself from nature and the ever-increasing use of machines is turning man into a mechanical being - incapable of natural, human feeling, behaviour and thought. He is capable only of using words. Connie feels herself "ravished by dead words become obscene, and dead ideas become obsessions". (97) She finds words "sucking all the

life-sap out of living things". (96) At this point we are reminded of Addie in William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying. Dissatisfied with her life, she too feels that she has been "tricked by words"¹ and that a "word was ... just a shape to fill a lack".² Both Connie and Addie feel that instead of happiness and the joy of living they have been given empty words. But, ironically enough, even though Connie finds her life overpowered by words, she has been denied the significance of just a few words; and this makes her unhappy:

All the great words, it seemed to Connie, were cancelled for her generation: love, joy, happiness, home, mother, father, husband, all these great dynamic words were half dead now, and dying from day to day. (64)

The death of these few words has caused the insignificance and meaninglessness of the rest of the words and utterances. Even though Clifford can talk brilliantly, "all the brilliant words seemed like dead leaves, crumpling up and turning to powder, meaning really nothing". (52) The main cause of this emptiness lies in the mechanisation of life. People have lost touch with nature and with their fellowmen. Clifford tells Connie that feelings and

¹W.Faulkner, As I Lay Dying, p.137

²Ibid. p.136

emotions do not matter, "so long as they keep the form of life intact, and the apparatus". To Connie it "sounds like saying an egg may go as addled as it likes, so long as it keeps its shell on whole. But addled eggs do break of themselves." (187)

Connie smells the rottenness of the life of the industrial masses and her heart is filled with fear and despair:

Something that men should have was bred and killed out of them... they were only half, only the grey half of a human being. (166)

The miners present the most appalling picture of life. For the sake of money they draw out coal from the mines, but, in turn, the mines suck out of them all the human qualities and leave them no better than its elements:

Perhaps they were only weird fauna of the coal-seams. Creatures of another reality, they were elementals, serving the elements of coal, as the metal-workers were elementals, serving the element of iron.... They belonged to the coal, the iron, the clay, as fish belong to the sea and worms to dead wood. The anima of mineral disintegration!

Unfortunately Connie has neither sympathy nor any positive solutions to offer to these "creatures". She can only resent that these representatives of "incarnate ugliness" should be alive. She can only hope that they will die out in course of time -

when the coal is finished in the mines. But the end of the coal and the miners will not restore beauty to life, for all the people that we meet in the novel are touched by the ugliness of modern civilisation. Tommy sums up the nature of the intellectuals:

We're not men, and the women aren't women. We're only cerebrating make-shifts, mechanical and intellectual experiments. (77)

In "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover", Lawrence makes it clear that the coldness of Clifford's nature is not something unique:

the lameness of Clifford was symbolic of the paralysis, the deeper emotional or passional paralysis, of most men of his sort and class today. ¹

Mellors seems to be least affected by the cold and debilitating civilisation, but he too is not really sound:

Even in him there was no fellowship left. It was dead. The fellowship was dead. There was only apartness and hopelessness ... (159)

Mellors is also afraid that whatever good is left in him and in the world may soon be destroyed by the powerful enemy, mechanisation:

The fault lay there ... in those evil electric lights and diabolical rattlings of engines. There, in the world of the

¹ A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.124

mechanical greedy, greedy mechanism and mechanized greed,... there lay the vast evil thing, ready to destroy whatever did not conform. Soon it would destroy the wood, and the bluebells would spring no more. All vulnerable things must perish under the rolling and running of iron. (123)

Another evil thing of today's world is money.

"The care about money was like a great cancer, eating away the individuals of all classes." (148) "Money poisons you when you've got it, and starves you when you haven't." (315) Mellors puts the blame on the money-mindedness of people for the ugliness of places and the emptiness of life. Tevershall is sordid because it was built when people were working for money. Men and women cannot love and be loved because they devote their energy to money. And even at the end of the novel, Mellors can see no way of eradicating this evil:

I'm frightened, really. I feel the devil in the air, and he'll try to get us.... I feel great grasping white hands in the air, wanting to get hold of the throat of anybody who tries to live, to live beyond money, and squeeze the life out. (315)

People have ceased to live in the body and feel in the heart and are dominated by their sterile mind. Only mental friction links them to one another. Mental life is flourishing with its roots in spite and envy. It has no connection with organic life, it is "a

plucked apple" and "it's a natural necessity for a plucked apple to go bad." (39) This is why the society in which Connie lives is devoid of "warm human contacts" (74) and is looking forward to the time "when babies would be bred in bottles, and women would be 'immunized' ". (76) It thinks that "the moment you begin to be aware of your body, you are wretched. So, if civilization is any good, it has to help us to forget our bodies..." (76-77)

This attitude towards our body and towards one another is the cause of the destructive nature of the closest possible relationship between men and women. Since man is aloof and inconsiderate of humanity as a whole, he cannot feel any closeness, consideration and warmth towards his partner in sex. The "blood-warmth has collapsed, and every man is really aware of himself in apartness."¹ So he is not capable of a healthy sexual relationship which requires one to sacrifice the "'spiritual' knowledge in apartness". As Lawrence says, in "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover", sex is the "great unifier. In its big, slower vibration it is the warmth of heart which makes people happy together, in togetherness."² Clifford, Michaelis and the rest of the men Connie meets are all

¹ A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.123

² Ibid. p.122

incapable of such togetherness. In Clifford's case we can trace the cause to war and modern civilisation which cripple people for life and leave them alive only in the mind. Incapable of a healthy and natural sexual relationship, they take recourse to a perverted sort of sexuality which helps them to become, like Clifford, "a real business-man", "a fallen beast" and a "squirming monster". (306)

In association with such a pervert, even a Mrs Bolton, who has known a truly natural sexual relationship in the past, becomes a perverted woman. Then there are certain selfish types who bring dissatisfaction and unhappiness to their partners, because their blind will makes them inconsiderate and utterly selfish. Unfortunately, they are not rare. Mellors meets the type in Bertha:

She sort of kept her will ready against me, ... her ghastly female will... somehow she always ripped me up.... It was a doom, that was. And she was a doomed woman.... When a woman gets absolutely possessed by her own will, her own will set against everything, then it's fearful, and she should be shot at last.... I could wish the Cliffords and Berthas all dead. (292-3)

But Mellors's wishes do not kill the Cliffords and Berthas. On the contrary, Mellors seems to despair in his fight against them.

Connie, too, has had a tragic sexual relationship. Michaelis, "like so many modern men ... was finished almost before he had begun." (56) He resents even a "passive sort of giving himself". (50) Lawrence tells us that Connie had been feeling full of love for him and she wanted to marry him. But men like Michaelis do not really want to be married. Since they are born slaves to unnatural life, they instinctively run away from such health-giving unions. In "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover" Lawrence tells us what a true marriage offers to individuals:

Marriage, making one complete body out of two incomplete ones, and providing for the complex development of the man's soul in unison, throughout a life-time. ¹

The Michaelises of the modern world have never received any nourishment for their soul, and they do not know its value. When Connie is ready to accept Michaelis's proposal of marriage, he instinctively guesses the situation and acts as an enemy to his own soul. But at the same time he injures Connie also. "Her whole sexual feeling for him, or for any man, collapsed that night." (57) After this

¹ A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.107

shattering experience Connie's situation is truly tragic. Her days are dreary and she has nothing but the "empty treadmill of what Clifford called the integrated life." (50) She cannot have any connection with Clifford because he "was not in actual touch with anybody".(16), he was "just part of things, like the pit-bank and Wragby itself". (16) Even in the bustle of other people's lives, Connie only finds something tragic:

...you just lived on and there was nothing to it. She understood perfectly well why people had cocktail parties, and jazzed, and Charlestoned till they were ready to drop. You had to take it out some way or other, your youth, or it ate you up. But what a ghastly thing, this youth! You felt as old as Methuselah, and yet the thing fizzed somehow, and didn't let you be comfortable. A mean sort of life! And no prospect! (60)

Among Clifford's friends, Connie likes Tommy Dukes and she would have turned to him for finding some prospect of happiness, but, in spite of the wisdom of his talk, when it comes to action, he finds himself as worthless as the rest of his friends:

I just simply can't vibrate in unison with a woman.... I can be quite happy talking to women; but it's all pure, hopelessly pure. Hopelessly pure! (42)

Connie feels that she is living inside an enclosure - she is being suffocated for lack of true and natural

life. Lawrence is fully aware of the hopelessness of the situation:

The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. (5)

In the above lines from the opening paragraph of the novel we get an idea of Lawrence's attitude to life. We are not to lose heart - we are not to submit to the difficulties in our path; but we are also not to close our eyes to them and go about as though everything was perfect. He believes in putting up a fight - in overcoming obstacles even though one may succeed but partly. In "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover" he tells us that the novel is "necessary for us today".⁽⁸⁷⁾ Very early in his career he had made it clear that he wrote because he wanted "folk - English folk - to alter, and have more sense".¹ In September, 1926, he wrote to Rolf Gardiner:

I was at my sister's in September, and we drove round - I saw the miners - and pickets - and policemen - it was like a spear through one's heart. I tell you, we'd better buck up and do something for the England to come, for they've pushed the spear through the side of my England.²

Lady Chatterley was perhaps his effort at doing

¹CL p.204

²CL p.952

something for England and for humanity, for he started writing it in October of the same year.

In Chapter IX of the novel he tells us

... here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. (104)

In "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover", which was written two years after the novel, he explains why he thinks this book "necessary" for us today:

I want men and women to be able to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and clearly. ¹

He believes sex to be "the balance of male and female in the universe"², but he finds that people are now capable of only counterfeit sex and counterfeit love. He believes that hatred, misunderstanding and unhappiness among people can be counteracted by learning to have a proper reverence for sex and the human body:

...I stick to my book and to my position: life is only bearable when the mind and the body are in harmony, and there is a natural balance between them, and each has a natural respect for the other. ³

¹A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.89

²Ibid.p.109

³Ibid. p.92

In the novel Lawrence has tried to make our sympathies recoil away from dead and deadening things and advance towards healthy and spontaneous life. This world is full of Michaelises, Berthas and Cliffords, but we can also find a Mellors who is said to stand "for the touch of bodily awareness between human beings, and the touch of tenderness".(292) He is near to nature, loves to work with his hands and has the gift of warm, human feeling. In the relationship of Connie and Mellors Lawrence sees a remedy for the tragic aspects of modern life. Mellors is presented as a contrast to Clifford, but he too has his weaknesses. In the beginning he is presented as an escapist - he withdraws from society and people and lives in isolation like a hermit. This act may be defended by Lawrence's observation in a letter dated 24 January 1922:

I think one must for the moment withdraw from the world, away towards the inner realities that are real: and return, maybe, to the world later, when one is quiet and sure.¹

Mellors does return to the world later on, but it is still a world of only two people, so

¹CL p.687

he remains lacking in fellowship to the end.

We feel that Mellors shares his author's regret at being isolated and perhaps he too is aware that his own nature is one of the causes of his feeling of seclusion; Lawrence writes in a letter to Rolf Gardiner in 1926:

I should love to be connected with something, with some few people, in something. As far as anything matters, I have always been very much alone, and regretted it. But I can't belong to clubs, or societies, Freemasons, or any other damn thing. So if there is, with you, an activity I can belong to, I shall thank my stars. But, of course, I shall be wary beyond words, of committing myself.

...and I shall be very glad to abandon my rather meaningless isolation, and join in with some few other men, if I can. ¹

Mellors also is very cautious and mistrustful of people and, had not the feeling of pity and sympathy compelled him, he would not have opened his heart even to Connie. When Connie accepts him, she also accepts his solitude. I find Yeats's remark very apt:

These two lovers, the gamekeeper and his employer's wife, each separated from their class by their love and by fate are poignant in their loneliness... ²

¹CL p.928

²The Letters of W.B.Yeats, p.810, (Ed. Allan Wade).
(Letter postmarked May 22, 1933.)

Mellors believes that people "are always horrid" (287), so he thinks that he could be happy if "there weren't so many other people in the world". (122) He is mostly full of contempt for people and exults in his own superiority. Like Birkin, he sounds like a misanthrope when he contemplates the end of humanity. Connie also shares his pleasure in talking of the end of people. They are both more resentful that people are not completely dead than concerned with helping them. At the most Mellors can think of preaching to them:

Look! look at yourselves! one shoulder higher than t'other, legs twisted, feet all lumps! What have you done ter yerselves, wi' the blasted work? Spoilt yerselves. No need to work that much. Take yer clothes off an' look at yourselves.
(228-29)

Mellors tells Connie that if men started to wear close bright red trousers and white jackets, they would be changed in a month - they would begin to be real men. But we are told that Connie was only half listening to this talk, and Mellors himself has no faith in his proposition, for he soon tells Connie that he prefers to have no real concern for the betterment of people because neither he nor anybody else can do anything about it. And so, "I'd better hold my peace, an' try an' live my own life." (230)

But still we find no justification for his hatred of people:

... when I feel the human world is doomed, has doomed itself by its own mingy beastliness, then I feel the Colonies aren't far enough. The moon wouldn't be far enough, because even there you could look back and see the earth, dirty, beastly, unsavoury among all the stars: made foul by men. Then I feel I've swallowed gall, and it's eating my inside out, and nowhere's far enough to get away. (229-30)

Even though it is true that one or two individuals can do nothing better than "get away" from the miseries of the people, the following dialogue between Mellors and Connie only proves them to be callous misanthropes:

'But won't it ever come to an end?' she said.

'Ay, it will. It'll achieve its own salvation. When the last real man is killed, and they're all tame... Then they'll all be insane, and they'll make their grand auto da fe... they'll make their own grand little act of faith. They'll offer one another up.'

'You mean kill one another?'

'I do, duckie! If we go on at our present rate then in a hundred years' time there won't be ten thousand people in this island; there may not be ten. They'll have lovingly wiped each other out.'...

'How nice!' she said.

'Quite nice! To contemplate the extermination of the human species and the long pause that follows before some other species crops up, it calms you more than anything else....' (227)

After this, when they talk of Mellors's so-called "tenderness" - the thing that he is supposed to have

and that no other man has - they seem very ridiculous. Mellors eagerly accepts Connie's comment that he possesses the courage of his own tenderness. He also says that he has been in touch with men, has been physically aware of them and has been tender to them. (290) But I cannot place him much higher than Clifford in tenderness towards people in general, even though Lawrence would have us believe that Mellors has "the warmth of a man"¹, whereas Clifford is "the death of the great humanity of the world"², has "no warm human contacts" (74), has "no soul" (144) or has only a "celluloid soul" (202), has a "sterile want of common sympathy" (201) and is "not in actual touch with anybody" (16). Of course, in sex relations Clifford is nowhere near Mellors, but then part of the blame must be laid on the author or the war or fate which has made him paralysed in the lower part of his body. Mellors is sound in body and does show some tenderness to Connie but he is neither an ideal mate nor a perfect lover. His attitude towards Connie is mostly that of a bullying primitive male. Keith Sagar has given a very correct judgment of the shortcomings of Mellors as a lover:

¹ A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.123
² Ibid. p.123

Neither her readiness at the beginning of love-making, nor her satisfaction at the end seem to interest him. He enters her with almost brutal haste and absence of preliminary love-play. He seldom kisses her, or shows any interest in parts of her body other than her genitals; still less in her non-physical attributes.¹

Lawrence himself quotes one of his woman critics, though he does not seem to agree with her:

Well, one of them was a brainy vamp, and the other was a sexual moron, so I'm afraid Connie had a poor choice - as usual!²

Mellors never seems to care for any quality of a woman, except her willingness to suit the ways of her lover. When he gives Connie an account of his failures with other women, it is, as Gregor and Nicholas put it, "in terms simply of sexual 'timing'". That this might have been the result of a failure at other levels of personality, a failure of trust, generosity, patience, seems to be deliberately excluded."³ His attitude towards women as well as men seems to imply that there can be no relationship between people unless it is physical and there can be no feeling or love for each other unless it is sexual. Instead of showing us the way to hope and happiness,

¹ Sagar, K.: The Art of D.H. Lawrence, p.195

² A Proposal of Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.126

³ The Moral and the Story, p.245

he can only fill us with the greatest despair. He himself despairs many times and he often expresses his fear for the future:

"I've such a terrible mistrust of the future." (288)

"I've a dread of puttin' children i' th' world, I've such a dread o' th' future for 'em." (291)

Mellors can only hope to try and save himself and his woman for a short while, afterwards he can only expect doom:

he would protect her with his heart for a little while.... before the insentient iron world and the Mammon of mechanized greed did them both in, her as well as him. (124)

They can be safe and happy for a short period if they form a world of their own, but Mellors knows that "man could no longer be private and withdrawn. The world allows no hermit." (123) Two years after the completion of the novel, Lawrence sees no real hope for them, for society is such that Mellors

is being hunted down, destroyed. Even it is a question if the woman who turns to him will really stand by him and his vital meaning.¹

At the end of the novel we feel that Connie is going to stick to Mellors, but since her creator has

¹ A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, p.123

expressed doubt in her, we cannot ignore the evidence of disbelief, disrespect and lack of sympathy that she is sometimes capable of. At the end of the novel, they are separated from each other for months. Earlier, when she was away from him for just a few weeks, she

felt angry with him for not having got clear of a Bertha Coutts: nay, for ever having married her. Perhaps he had a certain hankering after lowness... He had known all that sensuality even with a Bertha Coutts! It was really disgusting. It would be well to be rid of him, clear of him altogether. He was perhaps really common, really low.

She had a revulsion against the whole affair, ...She ...felt a craving for utter respectability. (276) ¹

Connie also gets irritated at his dialect, though on one occasion she tries to answer ~~to~~ him in the dialect. And, like Lawrence, she also is ashamed of Mellors's belonging to the lower classes. Lawrence gives him some education and experience which put him above the lower class and when Connie tells Hilda that he is a gamekeeper, she hastens to inform her of his other qualities, for she is ashamed of him. Lawrence was very sensitive about social gradations. In his "Autobiographical Sketch", which was written at the time of the composition of

¹Italics mine.

Lady Chatterley's Lover, he says that class makes "a gulf, across which all the best human flow is lost".¹ Connie often reflects on Mellors's low position in society:

A hireling! One of Clifford's hirelings!
'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our
stars, but in ourselves, that we are
underlings.' (168)

She finds him indecent, compared with Michaelis, who at least knows the ways of high society and can behave properly in front of a lady:

This man was so assured in himself, he
didn't know what a clown other people
found him, a half-bred fellow. (180)²

So Hilda may not prove totally wrong when she warns Connie:

But you'll be through with him in a while,
and then you'll be ashamed of having
been connected with him. One can't mix
up with the working people. (251)

This class consciousness, and the difficulty cropping up in the life of lovers because they do not belong to the same class, reminds us of Thomas Hardy who never tired of confronting his characters with this problem. Two on a Tower, especially, has got some points of similarity with Lady Chatterley's

¹Phoenix II p.595

²Italics mine.

Lover. Constance's name might have been suggested by Hardy's Lady Constantin. Both the heroines are real ladies, possess material comforts and are respected in society. Both are dissatisfied in their married life and fall in love with a person far beneath them in social strata. Both Swithin and Mellors, though they are born in a lower class, are above their class and closer to the class of their ladies in many ways - especially in education. The two ladies conceive by their poor but educated lovers and both are in a position to pass off their child as their husband's. Lady Constantin is forced by a mischance to marry the high and mighty Bishop and pretend that the child was his. So Hardy is able to ridicule the people of the higher class without making any of his characters preach like Mellors. Lady Chatterley is not affected by any mischance though Sir Chatterley would have been glad enough to own his wife's child as his own and so expose the ridiculousness of class snobbery. Lady Chatterley decides to marry her lover but the laws of society come in her way. From the very beginning Mellors had a "foreboding" that society would oppose their union:

he was quite consciously afraid of society,

which he knew by instinct to be a
malevolent, partly-insane beast. (124)

It is a remarkable point that though Lawrence the critic accuses Thomas Hardy and Leo Tolstoy of being weak enough to allow their protagonists to cower before society, Lawrence the sensitive artist realises the power of society's opposition. Society is no place for "free individuals" to flourish; so his protagonists fight against society - they fight as much as they can. They even ignore its condemnation, but they have to stand and wait its pleasure before they can really be united. Like Birkin and Ursula, they too are tempted to withdraw into a world of fantasy and they wish the cold world would disappear, leaving the two of them together and happy. But by the time Lawrence was writing his last novel, he had become more mature and a bit more realistic. Compared with Women in Love, Lady Chatterley's Lover offers better propositions although some of them are simply impracticable. Withdrawing from the whole industrial system and going back to folk culture is only a pleasant dream in the world of today. One may hate money as much as one wishes but one has to earn some if one wants to live and have a family.

Mellors is more than a fictional character because even though, like Birkin, he too gets an annual sum, he decides to work and earn money. Moreover, the relationship of Mellors and Connie does not end with just their two selves. They are busy preparing for a new arrival. Even though Lawrence is very much against tragedy brought on by society, and very much for individuals free from society, he makes Mellors and Connie remain in society. Mellors prepares himself for "a battle against the money, and the machine, and the insentient ideal monkeyishness of the world", but he does not have much hope. (292) Even though we may conclude that Connie and Mellors have been able to avoid a tragedy to themselves, till the end of the novel the author is drawing our attention to the tragic nature of life and things. At the end, the protagonist expresses pessimistic views that could remind one of Thomas Hardy:

If things go on as they are, there's nothing lies in the future but death and destruction.... (315)

It is sad that Lawrence, who believed he could lead people to happiness and health, has almost no optimism to offer in his last and most mature novel.

CONCLUSION

BOTH Hardy and Lawrence admired tragedies. Hardy's admiration was also accompanied by what is called his pessimistic philosophy of life. He frankly believed and proclaimed that we live on a "blighted star" and that it is natural for things to go wrong, for hopes to be frustrated, for brave rebels to be defeated and for his protagonists to spend their life in an unfruitful quest of fulfilment. Hardy was also aware of some affinities in the angle of perception and the vision as presented in the works of some of the past tragedians and his own. Perhaps this made him sometimes contrive to present a parallel in scene, incident or character to the tragedies of the past. As our consideration of The Return of the Native shows, there is even some evidence of imitation; but on the whole we feel that there is an affinity between Hardy's vision of life, nature and the universe and that of many authors of tragedies, and this similarity of perception and vision results in some inevitable and involuntary similarity of presentation. Hardy mostly presents drama on a smaller scale - as enacted in the lives of ordinary people, in small places and comprising the stuff of our everyday

life. So they have more capacity to win our sympathies than the tales of the great heroes of past ages. Sometimes Hardy's tales seem too simple and common; even the suffering of people and their reaction seem paltry. Yet Hardy often invests his works with richness of poetic presentation and grandeur of conception comparable to authors like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Shakespeare.

Lawrence admired Hardy's art, but not his philosophy. Lawrence appreciated tragedies but believed that an artist's work should be a "kick at misery." But the beliefs of Lawrence the man have very little to do with Lawrence the artist. His philosophy of life as presented in his letters and dogmatic essays have very little in common with the vision of life and the plight of man as presented in his works of art. His artistic experiences were similar to Hardy's. His perception of life was not very different from Hardy's. So, in spite of all the obvious differences, there is a fundamental similarity in the vision of life as presented by the two writers. To a casual reader Lawrence's works may seem to affirm optimism and to present a happy vision of life, but to a careful reader Lawrence's very dogmatic optimism shows that he protests too much. Lawrence the artist

could not but see that we live in a blighted world and that there is no other world for us to escape to, but Lawrence the prophet refused to accept the authenticity of his vision and proclaimed ways of escape. But on careful analysis the ways prove to be impracticable -- and Lawrence the artist was aware of this and was always in conflict with Lawrence the philosopher.

As we have seen, Lawrence's novels owe a great debt to Hardy in their ideas, characterisation, and certain subtleties of technique. Albert J. LaValley rightly observes that Lawrence is "Hardy's disciple in his portrayal of the larger forces of nature surrounding the individual, in his picture of the rhythms of nature and of the startling and frequently neurotic manifestations of sexuality in a personality, and even in his moments of vision, those symbolic scenes that leap from the normal rhythm of the book."¹ Both Hardy and Lawrence dislike city life and find beauty and happiness for man in the quiet country side. Hardy recommends life in the midst of nature because this makes people "credulous of vague mysteries"; the "Unknown comes within so short a radius"² from the country dwellers.

¹A.J.LaValley (ed.) *Twentieth Century Interpretation of Tess of the d'Urbervilles* p.12

²Life p.202

A city like London, on the other hand, is for Hardy, "that hot-plate of humanity, on which we first sing, then simmer, then boil, then dry away to dust and ashes!"¹ Both Hardy and Lawrence reject modern mechanised life. They believe that the relationship between men and women would be happier if the artificial standards of civilised society did not hamper free living. Though Hardy does not present this artificial system as the only cause of tragedy, he does show the unhappiness of men and women under this system. Lawrence goes one step further -- he tries to show the happiness of people when freed from the bondage of this system. And here he differs from Hardy.

Lawrence often recommends free and spontaneous living for the happiness and well-being of individuals, but, as far back as August 1893, Hardy had written to the editors of the Parisian paper L'Érmitage,

I consider a social system based on individual spontaneity to promise better for happiness than a curbed and uniform one under which all temperaments are bound to shape themselves to a single pattern of living. To this end I would have society divided into groups of temperaments, with a different code of observance for each group.²

¹Life pp.246-7

²Ibid. p.258

Lawrence wrote in a letter on 21 September 1914:
"the talk about the war makes me sick, and I have
never come so near to hating mankind as I am now."¹
Hardy too disliked many things about people and the
world but he spoke of them as sad, not hateful.
But the horrors of war prompted him to express a
Laurentian hatred: "I do not think a world in which
such fiendishness is possible to be worth the saving.
Better let Western "civilization" perish,..."²
But in the same letter, he writes: "However, as
a meliorist (not a pessimist as they say) I think
better of the world."³ It is interesting to note
that Lawrence too, in the same letter to Gordon
Campbell, writes: "But at the back of it all, we
are sane and healthy and original."⁴ Lawrence strongly
believes this, and so, instead of just showing the
difficulties of life -- depicting the problems, conflicts
and struggles that bring misery to people, he tries
to find new hopes and new possibilities of happiness.
This is what Graham Hough perhaps means when he
says that Lawrence's "vision of the destiny of man,
for all the conflicts and destruction by the way,

¹CL p.290

²Life p. 387

³Ibid. p.387

⁴CL p.291

reaches its consummation not in the tragic but in the idyllic mode - in the vision of some quasi-pastoral perfection in the past or in the future, with the really terrifying conflicts all vanished away."¹ But we cannot agree that Lawrence makes the terrifying conflicts vanish away. He would certainly have liked them to vanish away -- so would all of us -- but he knows that man is not a magician to achieve such wonders. Even at the end of his last novel, the hero is fully conscious of the presence of innumerable conflicts. Instead of the problems vanishing away, we find the Laurentian protagonist preparing to fight them -- to struggle on.

Unlike Hardy's, Lawrence's main concern was not the presentation of the tragic vision of life, but the search for solutions to the problems of life. But his novels give us the actual process of the search -- and that in itself is full of tragic qualities. The fact that Paul Morel turns towards the town does not nullify all the years of suffering and struggle portrayed in the novel. Ursula's hope

¹The Dark Sun p.258

in the rainbow cannot make us forget her tragic relations with Skrebensky. Studying the lives of all these people and considering the modern age, we find ourselves echoing Lawrence: "Ours is essentially a tragic age."¹ And we value him for the poetic sensitivity and the artistic integrity with which he has been able to portray his vision of this age.

¹LCL_p.5

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