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The sentimental provincialism of Thomas Hardy

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Thesis

The Sentimental Provincialism of Thomas Hardy
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Outline of Thesis.

The Sentimental Provincialism of Thomas Hardy.

A. Introduction.

I. Thomas Hardy's Sentimental Provincialism as Expressed through his Male Characters.

II. Statement of Purpose and Scope of Thesis.

1. To study the main characters of the novels and arrive at an estimate and statement of Hardy's philosophy.

B. Explanation.

I. What is a Philosophy of Life?

a. Statements from Hardy.

b. Statements from Commentators.

II. The task at hand is to determine whether by a study of the novels the philosophy of Mr. Hardy is what it is claimed to be.

a. This will be done by examining the comments of the critics of Mr. Hardy in the light of my own study.

b. By applying Mr. Hardy's remarks to the main characters.

C. Study of the Main Characters.

Henry Knight, Angel Clare, Gabriel Oak, Clym Yeobright, Giles Winterborne, Diggory Venn, John Loveday, Stephen Smith, Swinburne St. Cleeve, Jude Fawley, Edred Fitzpiers, Damon Wildeve, Alec Durberville, Michael Henchard, Francis Troy, Bob Loveday, Christian Cantle, Joseph Poorgrass, Farmer Boldwood, Melbury, Christopher Swancourt.

D. Conclusion.

What is Hardy's Philosophy in the Light of this Study?
Born in the shadow of the greenwood, the boughs of the ancient
trees sighing as he entered the world Thomas Hardy drew in, with his
first strangling breath, the brooding eternal atmosphere of Wessex.
The very present into which he was born was an anachronism, for the
peasants in the neighborhood still spoke what was basically the
language of the old Saxon conquerors, interspersed here and there
with the twisted melancholic nuance of the earlier Celts. His first
playthings were spear-heads and bits of old armor picked up in the
old Roman camp near his father's house.

Into such a world came the boy, imaginative, impressionable, to
learn the past of his beloved Wessex. He learned in the manner of
the scientist, for he walked with nature and talked with her children.
Through the leafy walks of Dorset, across the gloomy heaths, he
wandered as a boy. As he walked, he dreamed a dream. The boy became
a man and the dream became the Wessex Novels.

It is now many years since the last of those novels was written.
Indeed in that time Mr. Hardy has become one of the foremost poets
of the English speaking world, and, for that matter, one of the world's
masters of poetic form. In the course of those years much has been
written about the novels. Such well known men of letters as Lionel
Johnson and Lascelles Abercrombie have written studies of the poems
and the novels, and many of Mr. Hardy's fellow-novelists have also
thought him worthy of study.
Curiously enough Mr. Hardy has seldom made any positive statement of his attitude toward life. I think his most significant statement of his impression of life is contained in the preface to Poems Past and Present. Writing therein in August 1901 Mr. Hardy said: "... "And the road to a real philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly..."
recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced on
us by chance and change".

Chance and Change -- he harps on that phrase throughout the
entire saga of Wessex. He makes Chance and Change account for the
terrible things that befall city men when they come to the country
and country men when they go to the City. Chance and Change explains
his emphasis on incidents, on the attention he gives to the time of
day and night. Through this Chance and Change philosophy he attempts
to justify his attitude toward life and the life he makes characters
live.

It seems to me, however, that he has ignored many sources of
consolation for city men, and for country men too. He carefully
avoids writing down a happy incident for its own sake. "We must
remember", says H. S. Pancoast, "that his conclusion is based on
data... which he himself has carefully arranged". 1. "Hardy teaches",
says T. C. Selby, "that the odds are against virtue, innocence and
unselfishness" but "the law of probabilities is against this ever-
lasting run of bad luck". 2. I am inclined to agree with both of
these statements and to go still further. The mentality of man could
hardly stand what Hardy puts many of his characters through. A few
of them die violent deaths, by their own hands. Troy is shot; Eustacia
and Wildeve are drowned; Fannie dies after a terrible struggle in child-
birth. But most of them do not die at all; they live on to establish
another train of existence where, perhaps, the Gods of the Overworld
will permit them to live—if they do not struggle.

1. Intro: To Engl. Lit. p 581.
2. Theology of Fiction p 105.
"Mr. Hardy's conception of life" writes W. Sherrin, "is of
the sombre tinge that gravitates toward the facts that wring the
heart and depress the mind." 1. Mr. Hardy endows all, or most of
the characters, with some station of life at the beginning of the
book and then, at the end, strips many of them of everything—even
the consolation of religion. Even poor Swithin was denied the oppor-
tunity to sacrifice himself for his former love's sake. There is a
reason for this treatment of so many of his characters. In the study
of the men I noted that the ones who seemed to be in their own element
and perfectly satisfied with their lot suffered little or no tragedy.
Gabriel enjoyed life after he had ceased to try to become a rich man;
Farmer Boldwood was happy till he wanted Bathsheba; Swithin was happy
till he met Lady Constantine, and so on through the novels. All seem
happy till they move or attempt to move out of their sphere. Mr. Hardy
seems to insist that his characters remain in the station to which
they were born.

Mr. Hardy appears often to think that life is a failure, anyway.
In the "Young Man's Epigram" in Times Laughing Stocks he says in sub-
stance: "What's the use of learning to live? Tragedy will overcome us
in the end if we aspire to anything worth while, and death is the reward
for life".

But Mr. J. M. Barrie, himself an ardent sentimentalist, believes
that Hardy has evolved a "grand philosophy of the future" 2 for which
the world is not yet ready. He thinks that this philosophy has come
to Mr. Hardy before its time and that consequently he alone can under-
stand it.

On the other hand, Mr. H. C. Duffin says that Hardy writes from the
grim point of view that nothing shall come to pass except that which is
undesirable. "From one point of view" writes Mr. Duffin, "he idealizes
his world—he makes it almost ideally cruel".3

1: Wessex of Romance: Chapman and Hall, 1908, p 62
3: T. Hardy: Manchester Univ. Press. 1918, p 112.
When one looks at the host of characters who are born to suffer and seem to suffer all their lives, it must be admitted there is some justice to this point of view. Mr. Hardy may have something to say in reply to this but he has never said it. Even to his biographer, Ernest Brennacke, Mr. Hardy said: "Really you must not ever call me ardent about anything. I am as indifferent as I find it possible to be." 1. This statement, coming from a man whom the critics and sentimentalists have pictured weeping on the breast of his readers, seems to me to be annihilating. It has always been understood by the world of letters that Mr. Hardy is earnestly interested in the affairs of life generally. He has been pictured as a man who has taken a keen interest in the thoughts, words and deeds of his fellow-men. Now—I wonder!

What his impression of life is, Mr. Hardy has not attempted to make clear. That is his privilege; but I wonder if he does not owe his public something. His attitude does not seem to me that of a weeping philosopher.

An early critic of Hardy, Miss Anna M. Sholl is of the opinion that Hardy's view of life is that: "the law which governs human events is rendered just beyond calculation by an admixture of luck". 2. She goes on to say that Hardy is "Calvinistic in his portrayal of men and women as predestined to misfortune or failure; as pulled about or tossed about at the ... pleasure of ... Circumstance". 3. Influenced by Hardy, no doubt, Miss Sholl characterizes Circumstance as a God. "Chance" says Miss Sholl "takes the form of a woman in Hardy's novels". In Jude the Obscure it was Arabella, a country girl. In The Return of the Native

4: Ibid.
it was Eustacia, a rebel. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* it was an old woman selling liquor in a tent.

Dr. F. A. Hedgcock believes that Mr. Hardy's impression is a sort of pantheism, akin to Goethe's. He endows Hardy's philosophy with the personality of an "Immanente Volonté". He feels that Hardy's idea of the world is a concentration of this spirit in all the living things of the world. He is sure that Hardy believes that this spirit is unseeing and unfeeling. It is "not ardent about anything"; "it is as indifferent as it finds it possible to be".

Mr. Hedgcock also publishes a letter to himself from Mr. Edmund Gosse, on the subject of Mr. Hardy's philosophy. Mr. Gosse denies that Hardy is influenced by Schopenhauer. He states his belief that Hardy had not heard of Schopenhauer when he was writing the novels. He says that Hardy's philosophy is more modern than that of the German pessimist. And he declares that the Wessex novels, if studied with some care, will show "remarkable freedom of thought".

"It is my conviction (concludes Mr. Gosse) that the trend of his thought has been modified by neither Schopenhauer nor anyone else."

As far as I can summarize the remarks of the several critics they seem to be agreed that Hardy is a pessimist. Many of them believe that he was influenced by Schopenhauer, and all allude to the struggle between the individual and the Universe that Hardy stresses so strongly. Lascelles Abercrombie says: "... it is an invasion into human consciousness of the 'general tragedy of existence' which thereby puts itself forth into living symbols".

2: Ibid.
3: Letter from Edmund Gosse to Hedgcock July 28, 1909, p 499 (see Note 1)
The purpose of this thesis is to discover by a study of the men characters in the Wessex Novels the real attitude, or philosophy, of Thomas Hardy. These men will have to looked at from the point of view of the other critics as well as from my own. The judgments of the more eminent critics will have to be looked on with respect and their statements will be considered, in many cases, as authoritative.

In the first place, I remarked in my study of the novels that the country characters are treated with much more sympathy than are the city characters. This might be attributed to several reasons. It might be said that Mr. Hardy was not acquainted with city life; it might be shown that Mr. Hardy does not care for city life; and it might be said— I think with a good deal of truth—that Hardy is a sentimental provincialist.

By a sentimental provincialist I mean a man who is blind to the faults of his own country or locality; who resents any intrusion by anyone into his country; who resents even the interference of the authorities who control the Universe. For this reason, I believe, the men from the city or, those who have the taint of the city about them, are purposely maligned. They are not given a real chance to develop. They are made distasteful to the reader for a definite purpose: sentimental provincialism.

All through the novels we find disparaging references to the city characters as compared to the rustic or Wessex characters. Indeed, Mr. Hardy seems to idealize his peasantry. In his article on the Dorsetshire Laborer he defends the countryman against stupidity, placing the onus of the matter on the city man, with a clever turn. He draws his country characters with a "certain studied refinement which denoted the habit of reading".1.

1: Technique of T. Hardy: J. W. Beach, p 55.
Apparently Mr. Hardy has a distasteful remembrance of the city. He shows to disadvantage all the city characters almost without exception. Damon Wildeve, an unsuccessful engineer, Francis Troy, a soldier, Edred Fitzpiers, a doctor from the city, and Angel Clare; all are made less moral and kind, in comparison with such men as Clym Yeobright, Gabriel Oak, Giles Winterborne and Michael Henchard.

On the other hand, notice how Mr. Hardy sentimentalizes over his soil-born characters. Diggory Vern, Giles Winterborne, Gabriel Oak, and Farmer Boldwood have, all of them, a generous helpfulness of nature. They love their fellow-beings. Though they are not Christians in the real sense of the word, they have a faith in something that they consider larger than any church.

It should be noted, however, that none of the men, regardless of whether they come from country or city, seem to get anywhere. If they remain passive they may not be destroyed. But if they attempt to better their condition or change from the position in which the gods have placed them, they are destroyed. There is no guarantee at any time that they will be safe from the wrath of the Immortals. Curiously enough, too, they seem to be in the same position in life at the end of the book as they are in the beginning. This, according to Mr. Hardy, is an ideal situation. The only other alternative is destruction.

T. G. Selby says: "His characters are bound to be to the end what they were in the beginning..."1. This is not always exactly so; but it is true in the majority of cases. "They have some weakness, some inherited instinct (Jude), or perhaps some error in the assertion of their strength which inevitably becomes the chance for the power of the world finally to assert itself against them".2.

But this is Mr. Hardy's fault. He had his chance to improve human nature, and he deliberately debased it.

He is the philosopher of Man as opposed to Nature and the Universe, maintain the critics; he weeps for the wrongs done the world, cry the doctors of philosophy. Says another commentator: "The mood that permeates the novels seems to be that there is much wrong in the world and no on cares".1

Why does he draw his men in such a manner? Surely, he has a reason. Many of the critics think that Mr. Hardy did not deem his city characters worthy of much attention because of their sophisticated lives. They screen their emotions and reactions with the conventions of a man-made civilization. Therefore Mr. Hardy goes to Wessex "where a perfect insight into the conditions of existence will be longest postponed."2

He does not think the city characters worthy of deep interpretation because they do not belong to his county. He suffers from sentimental provincialism. He considers the presence of city people in his beloved Wessex an interference from the outside, an encroachment of the powers-that-be. In other words, he has taken the bodies and speech of the Wessex peasants and has fashioned them into a vulgar hierarchy. To create his tragedies he has placed city characters among them to cause Chance and Change so that the wrath of the Gods will fall on them and prove his point. He has made the city man odious to us that his provincials will seem the more interesting, attractive, and what is more important- worthy of pity.

The city man is very often the villain and the country character the victim. Ultimately the city man suffers; but Mr. Hardy attributes the suffering to the unfeelingness of the Immortals. Or perhaps he thinks that the city man who has been sent to the country like trouble

out of Pandora's box has done the wrong thing and displeased his master, the God of the Universe. Perhaps the God wanted more than the city man could accomplish and has destroyed him for his failure. At any rate, the city men are pilloried throughout the book to the greater glory of the country characters. In the article already quoted J. M. Barrie, prince of sentimentalists, says: "Mr. Hardy's passionate love of nature is sunk into him; he has felt its moods; they have been communicated to him until he has shared Nature's joy and struggles...". 1. He attributes to Mr. Hardy the powers of a Mosaic seer but forgets that the majority of the seers lived in cities.

IV

STUDY OF THE MEN.

The men characters have been treated but scantily hitherto, except by Mr. H. C. Duffin. Mr. Lionel Johnson has treated them rather hastily and Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie seems to be more concerned with problems of artistry than character. I shall try to evolve Mr. Hardy's impression of life through the men. I have selected those who seem to me eminently fitted to bring out that impression.

HENRY KNIGHT AND ANGEL CLARE.

I chose these men to study in an early stage of my study because they show better than any of the others, the Hardy conception of the city man. From the standpoint of the general reader, Angel Clare and Henry Knight are the most despicable men in all the novels. Of course there are individual likes and dislikes. Men are, as a rule, more likely to despise these two than women; but I think if a general vote could be taken they would be overwhelmingly chosen as the most disliked.

Of Henry Knight Mr. H. C. Duffin says: "To him life appeals only in so far as it provides food for thought". 2. Mr. Hardy does not

like that. He feels that he should make all the contemplation of life himself. He makes Knight appear ridiculous in the eyes of the reader. Here is a great book reviewer, a man of letters, who falls in love with a simple little girl of the country. That shows how much artificiality there is in the city man. Where is his boasted superiority to the countryman when a simple country girl can bring him to his knees, as Elfride ultimately does? In spite of his tremendous intellect, which gradually fades before what Mr. Hardy fondly believes to be Elfride's charming naturalness, Knight finds himself capitulating. He struggles against surrender. He goes to Ireland to escape what he considers a silly feeling, but he returns and creates tragedy for Elfride and himself, too.

Before Elfride met Henry she was happy in the love of Stephen—or she thought she was. Mr. Hardy makes her fall in love with the superficial things of the city that Henry represents. She admires him because he is a man of letters; he attracts her with the conventional things of the city until she believes herself in love with him. In spite of his cruel notes about the various things she does, set down like results of a chemical experiment, she likes him. Here is Mr. Hardy working over the intellectual trouble, sent by an Overworld Pandora, to bring about tragedy in his beloved Wessex.

Then we see how Henry is contrasted with Stephen Smith. Stephen, a loving, impulsive, vivacious youth, runs to his friend, Henry, and tells him of his love in the country. Henry reads platitudes to him about women and rushes off to the country only to be absorbed by the same love. Mr. Hardy recites his fall with unction.

1: Pr. Blue Eyes, p 197.
Mr. Hardy pays him an unconscious tribute, however, when he hangs him over the cliff. He should be beside himself with terror, from the sentimentalist's point of view. But Henry contemplates the eternity of things as he gazes into the petrified eye of the trilobite. I should call that a magnificent example of self-control. Mr. Hardy apparently wanted the reader to say: "Has this man no flesh and blood at all?".

Henry Knight was created to bring tragedy to Elfrida and Stephen. He is the city man, the tool of the Lord of the Universe, the Overworld, the Pandora of the Immortals—or what you will. Certainly, he is a terrible arraignment of the man of the city. How far Mr. Hardy succeeded in prejudicing all of us against Henry Knight may be seen by two quotations. Mr. Barrie calls Henry "the most insufferable prig in fiction"; while Mr. Hardy says of him on page 223 of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* "it must be said that Knight loved philosophically rather than with romance". Then, at the final scene at the tomb of Elfrida, Mr. Hardy makes him despicable when he says carelessly to Stephen "We have no right to be there. Another stands before us".

Mr. Hardy has built up a terrible case against the city man in this study of the *Irony of Fate, A Pair of Blue Eyes*. He has made Knight even more unpopular, with many, than Angel Clare, whom Mr. Abercrombie declares "the only one of Hardy's characters who is genuinely odious". He is deliberately unfair. He makes a conscious attempt to blacken the character of the man of the town to the betterment of the sentimental country characters woven out of his own brain.

2: Pr. Blue Eyes, p 453.
3: T. Hardy, p 148.
ANGEL CLARE

Angel Clare was created to show the city man's respect for the conventions, for the man-made laws of civilization. It is well known that country people are more likely to overlook a fall from grace like Tess Durbeyfield's than are city people. Angel shows that very well. He represents the city man's prejudice against naturalism.

City people have intellectual ideals about almost everything. County people do not have the time for that sort of thing; they are too busy working. Mr. Hardy attempts to show the city man with these ideals in the environment of the country—where he never should have gone. Among his other revolutionary ideals, Angel conceived the idea of a life outside the clerical profession. This made trouble. Here again is—chance and change.

But how does this concern the city man? In just this way! Angel has broken one law of Mr. Hardy's universe by aspiring to a different life than that which he is fitted for. Then he goes into the rural paradise of Mr. Hardy's Wessex characters and creates tragedy for them. He meets Tess and falls in love with her. But his feeling is not Mr. Hardy's conception of love; it is an idealization of Tess in the form of his dream-girl. He has dreamed of such a girl; propinquity and Tess' beauty bring about the ultimate result. He readily admits that he has had irregularities in his life. He accepts Tess' forgiveness with patronage. He is the typical city man with man-made, not woman-made, conventions. The man confesses and is pardoned. The woman sins and is damned forever.

No compromise: the laws do not make any. Angel is the most conventional creature in the world; the irony of the whole situation is that he believes he is getting away from the moss-bound conventions of his ancestors and family. Mr. Abercrombie says of him, "his
"squeamish, fastidious nature, conscious of his own purity and unconscious of his deep insincerity, mixing with farm-hands as an equal and always feeling his superiority... broadminded and mean... is analyzed with considerable care." 1. Miss Sholl calls him "half-prig and half seraph." 2.

All this abuse of Angel is prompted by Mr. Hardy's treatment of him. He is the city man being torn to pieces because Mr. Hardy is sentimental about his country characters. His conception of the outside world is amorphous and impressionable. He looks on the city as a part of the Universe created to worry his little county and its inhabitants—not the real inhabitants—but the people whom Hardy creates to inhabit his county. His only way to strike back at the city-dwellers is to wreak vengeance on them when they come into his realm.

It is not that Mr. Hardy feels sorry for the people who live in Dorset; he does not. He feels for the elfin mythology that he has created in the image of his neighbors. As to his attitude: "Thomas Hardy is of that rare fellowship... who are actuated in their portrayal of life by a spirit as disinterested and... unsympathetic as the spirit of Nature itself." 3.

Angel is made to be the condoner of Alec's villainies. By his attitude toward Tess he stands with Society and Alec against her. He refuses to accept her as his wife when he learns the truth. He goes to Brazil where, as Mr. Hardy subtly suggests, he is made to realize his shortcomings. He returns to find that Tess has gone back to Alec. He goes to find her, and as a result she murders Alec. Mr. Hardy blames it all on Angel.

1: T. Hardy: p 149. L. Abercrombie.
2: Vol. 12 World's Best Lit. Library.
3: Ibid.
Angel is made responsible for Tess' second unhappiness; for her return to Alec, and for Alec's murder. These crimes against the country by the city are made possible first by Angel's defiance of the laws of his family to enter the church and second by Angel's invasion into a strange country—Hardy's Dorset. Here he creates change and brings ruin. His punishment is that he does not get Tess. Mr. Hardy shows his contempt for the city man by hanging his country girl before he will let the city man have her. So our author disposes of the city man and his conventions and civilization, which frown on natural events.

All this is palpably unfair. Angel does not, by any stretching of the imagination, represent the true feeling of the city man. He represents a feverish creation of Mr. Hardy's imagination, born to torment the sentimental creatures of Mr. Hardy's little province. He represents the invasion of the outside world into the life of Mr. Hardy's country characters.

**ALEC D'URBERVILLE**

Alec D'Urberville in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* represents Mr. Hardy's impression of the treatment that the country receives when it goes to the city for help. He is the rock on which the life of Tess is wrecked. He is represented as sensual, good-for-nothing, superficially civilized—all attributes of the hated city. Hedgecock calls him a male Arabella, requiring a religious ecstasy when he is not experiencing a sensual emotion. If Alec had been born in the country he would have been a hero as attractive as Michael Henchard. But old D'Urberville is aroused to a feeling of kinship with the D'Urbervilles and Tess is sacrificed to the lust of Alec. Here again is chance and change working to the disadvantage of the innocent.
Alec sees the beautiful peasant girl and persuades his mother to take her on as a servant at the home. At the first opportunity he takes advantage of her. Here certainly is the old story of the wicked city taking advantage of the innocent country. Alec is decked out in the conventional wicked villain's dress; even the illustrations, accompanying the book in some of the cheaper editions, strengthen the city look. Mr. Hardy is railing against the city for wrecking his characters. And behind the destruction of Tess is the more fundamental city characteristic of making social distinctions. Old D'Urberville is informed that he is a descendant of the ancient family of that name. The man who informs him of the fact is a product of the city, or at least of the University, which is inimical to the life of the country.

Mr. Hardy permits Alec to reform from his ways so that he may show the vacillating character of the city man as compared with the steadfast morale of the country man and woman. Then Tess, aroused by Alec's taunting of her, kills him and has to pay the penalty.

But Mr. Hardy makes her crime result from exasperation. He makes her death seem unfair; but he attributes the unfairness not to man but to the "President of the Immortals", who sent Alec into Wessex and who put the suggestion about the connection with the ancient family in the mind of Tess' drunken father. The change brought disaster to Tess, to Alec and, to Angel. The fault is difficult to place, but it really belongs on all three; although Mr. Hardy makes it appear that both Alec and Angel are culpable while Tess is the victim.

This is another example of Mr. Hardy's unfairness to the man from the city. It shows too his insistent method of connecting the city man with evil and the controlling Gods of the Universe.
EDRED FITZPIERS

In *The Woodlanders* Mr. Hardy draws perhaps his greatest contrast in character with Fitzpiers and Giles Winterborne. He takes his great opportunity to show the city man at every disadvantage with the country man. He shows Fitzpiers playing fast and loose with Sukey, he shows him visiting Mrs. Charmond, he portrays his mysterious habits and then proves that it is his superficial city manner that has attracted Grace. It certainly is the thing that attracted Melbury.

Not only is the city manner satirized, for it really is, but the urge toward social betterment of the country man is made to stand out as provoked by the professional status of the doctor in the community. Chance and change again.

Mr. J. W. Beach says that Fitzpiers is a person of weak character and voluptuous disposition. Like Jude he is forever suffering himself or causing someone else suffering. This is Mr. Hardy's way of saying that he is in the wrong place; he is an invader of Wessex and should go away. He is the city man in the country, a dangerous phenomenon, according to Mr. Hardy. Only tragedy can result from it.

And the tragedy is, of course, the marriage of Grace and Fitzpiers. This marriage, Mr. Hardy makes us believe, is the direct result of Fitzpiers' vulgar planning. Country people, according to the belief of the Wessex sentimentalist, do that sort of thing. They act according to nature, unless they are interfered with from the outside. In this case, the outside is the upper world of God, and the City. The direct agent is Fitzpiers; his means are his education and his standing in the community as a doctor. These things are both qualities more thought of in the city than in the country and Fitzpiers must then be a villain. The City fares hard with our author.

1: Technique of T. Hardy, p 164.
The professional occupation, too, is dealt with unfairly. Mr. Hardy attempts to make us believe that Fitzpiers is furthering his love affairs through his profession. He makes him appear cold and intellectual when he goes and visits Giles on his deathbed. But what is a man who is seeing death in every form, every day for years and years, expected to do? If we reflect in our cooler selves we will agree that most doctors show no emotion at a sick-bed. Besides, Fitzpiers had little reason to show any deference for Giles. This man had evoked from his wife more respect and kindliness than she had ever shown him, her husband.

Mr. Hardy made Fitzpiers despicable for the same reason he made Angel Clare and Henry Knight unworthy of sympathy; because, in the opinion of Mr. Hardy, he represents all that is inherent in the city: lack of faith, immorality, immorality and unnaturalness.

**DAMON WILDEVE**

Damon Wildeve is another one of the city victims of Mr. Hardy's terrific feeling against the man from the outside world, and against his God. Wildeve has failed to make a success in his chosen profession in the city and has come to Wessex to try to live his disgrace down. But Mr. Hardy cannot let him do that. He is from the city and he has inherent weaknesses that will not permit him to assimilate the clean, natural character of the country people. The first of those characteristic urban weaknesses is vacillation. That weakness brings Thomasin to grief; for Wildeve married her in a pique against Eustacia. That marriage causes untold misery for several people. First of all Wildeve himself, then Thomasin; then Diggory Venn, Mrs. Yeobright and Eustacia and Clym in succession. Then the period of vacillation sets
in. There are secret meetings between Wildeve and Eustacia of which Thomasin is aware. Wildeve realizes that he never loved Thomasin; that he has always loved Eustacia. But the matter is beyond any conventional solution. The only way out is death or flight. He and Eustacia choose the latter.

That is Mr. Hardy's way of showing the cowardice of the city man. In contrast, he shows the patience and resignedness of Diggory, sitting by, waiting for events to shape themselves to the will of the Gods. Wildeve, impatient of restraint, another characteristic of the man born of the crowds, throws off Thomasin and elopes with Eustacia—only to be drowned.

Wildeve shows Mr. Hardy's sentiment about the attempt of the urban dweller to change his spots; to live in harmony with the country man, in the latter's confines. It is useless, thinks Mr. Hardy, and can only bring disaster. The country man must move along in his own way; he does not understand the ways of the outside world.

Thomasin's marriage is a mistake, not because Wildeve did not love her but because he is a city man. Wildeve is pictured as a vacillating, weak character; he has no moral sense; he has no conception of the rights of others. He pursues his own will. He loves only himself. He has none of the natural kindliness of nature, with which Mr. Hardy endows the country characters. Mr. Hardy sends him to his death as he is escaping from the country which he has changed by chance. His death is a warning to urban dwellers to stay out of Wessex.
Francis Troy is the gayest and finest of all the Hardy villains. He is the most sentimental and charming and, certainly, the best fellow at heart. But why is he made so charming and sentimental? Because he is half a country man. He was born of a country mother, and for this reason, Mr. Hardy is more gentle with him. He permits him to have moments of passion and sentiment such as the Fanny Robin grave scene and the scene at the church.

He is a soldier, the tool of the city man. He is the natural son of the aristocracy, the bulwark of the city man. Mr. Duffin calls him Mr. Hardy's meanest figure: "a mere monkey capering at the end of the chain of modern convention". Selby calls him "...a compound of mercurial baseness and criminality without moral or mainspring or balance... who lives in the moment without thinking of past or future".

I am sure that this definition can be placed on all Mr. Hardy's city men, with qualifications. Alec and Wildeve certainly fill these qualifications, and the others, if not criminal, are base and live in themselves for the moment.

If Troy is base and criminal, it is because Mr. Hardy made him so to warn the country man that it is not good to mix with his more sophisticated neighbor of the town. Only the blood of the soil can be happy; it must be unadulterated and free from the taint of the town. When the city dweller walks into the fields and woodlands of Wessex the spirit of the outer world and tragedy is stalking by his side.

I think that Troy is malign as the representative of the approaching democracy of the world. Mr. Hardy is reactionary; he does not want his people to mix with the outside world. It will 1:F.F.M.C. p 367. 2:T.H., p 151. 3: Theology of Fiction, p 121-122.
mean the passing of his quiet. Progress will result and Mr. Hardy
does not want progress. He wishes to dream quietly in his moss-
grown Greenwood, and ponder pessimistically on life and his brain-
born Wessex men and women, conceived in the image and likeness of
his humbler neighbors, but having nothing in common with them. I
mean that Mr. Hardy is not sympathetic with the real dwellers of
Wessex but with the children of his brain; the men and women of
the novels who speak the language of Wessex and wear the clothes
of its people.

THE RUSTICS

Thomas Hardy's rustics are too clever to be real. They are
like the comedian of the musical comedy stage; they are the mouth-
piece of a worker in words. Mr. Barrie, an admirer of Mr. Hardy,
says: "they are too smart". 1. Mr. Duffin thinks they are idealized;
that a glamour of poetry is thrown over them. 2. They are too
redolent of the past, of ancient Wessex, of Roman Britain, of the
Heath before the Saxons came to drive the Celts into the hills of
Wales and Cornwall. They are closer to the Irish peasantry of Maria
Edgeworth than any other set of people in fiction. They do, however,
have a deeper feeling of Nature than their brothers across the sea
and express their thoughts in a deeper sense. They represent the
sentiment of Mr. Hardy crystallized into a philosophy of Provincialism.

The group of peasants in Under the Greenwood Trees is the pride
of Mr. Hardy's provincial soul. In them he indulges his passion for
Wessex antiquity. But their brothers in Far from the Madding Crowd
are more characteristic of Mr. Hardy's people as he wants them under-
stood. I mean that the rustics of Far From the Madding Crowd and
The Return of the Native are Mr. Hardy's expression of the vulgar
theology of nature that he has evolved in his own brain. They
are really a group of Wessex gnomes, and not Dorset peasants at all. They are hardly human in their utterances. They are made to talk like children, not for the sake of reality but to make us exclaim that they are real children of the soil, most characteristic of the soil.

Christian on the Heath, making possible the great gambling scene between Wildeve and Diggory. Venn is little more than a country deity wooed to danger by Wildeve. In turn he is saved from Wildeve by Diggory, the guardian angel of the Heath. This attitude of the struggle, of the antagonism that exists between the city and the country, is depicted there with sharp clearness.

"Dear, dear—how the faces of nations alter and what great revolutions we live to see nowadays," says the old Malter after Gabriel has told him about the changes that have taken place at Norcombe.1. This is an example of pure sentimental provincialism. It is unconscious, of course, from the point of view of the Malter. But with Thomas Hardy it is conscious sentimental provincialism. The peasants are made to look on their own country as the entire world. They are wrapped up in it. The outside world is like another planet. Professor William Lyons Phelps says of Mr. Hardy: "He writes as though he lived on another planet and were able to see earth's inhabitants life—size and regard them...himself entirely remote from their concerns."2. That is exactly the attitude the peasants assume. It might be called an unconscious feeling of superiority. They reflect the attitude of their creator toward the rest of creation.

Thomas Hardy has made his peasants nobler than any real men could be. They do not laugh at each others' mistakes, as witness poor Christian's confession at the fire on the heath.3. The peasants are concerned with their own lives and that of their neighbors, but their interest stops at the boundaries of Wessex. They are essentially provincial, the embodiment of Thomas Hardy's sentimental provincialism.

With Gabriel Oak we come to the first of the great country heroes. Notice how the attitude of Mr. Hardy changes as he turns to his brain children, the country dwellers. No longer is the man an intellectual, nor is he weak vacillating and worthy of death. He is rather a strong, sturdy man, standing with his face to the wind. He does not advance but stands and faces the storm. When trouble comes — as it always does with the arrival of a woman (Bathsheba) on the scene Gabriel takes the matter philosophically. He does not tear his hair about it. It is almost a matter of course with him. How delightful the author shows him to be in comparison with the city man, Troy or Wildeve or Alec — or any of the others.

Here, says Mr. Hardy in effect, is a real man. Even the Gods envy him. Nothing disturbs him. His sheep are destroyed by an accident; he goes away. His love suit has not prospered; he does not race away with a woman whom he flouted because of a silly quarrel. Nor does he take advantage of poor Fanny Robin when he meets her on the dark road at night. Nor does he visit women in the dark of the night, though the majority of the housemaids are in love with him. None of these things are in the understanding of Thomas Hardy's idealized country hero! He simply does not do them! He is what Sir James Barrie calls the "prominent yeoman of realistic fiction." 1 He is represented as the real man of the soil. He can do all things well that country men do. He never forgets himself as the rollicking Troy does; he never loses his temper as Boldwood does. He never vacillates as Jude Fawley does. He rises from his mother earth stronger with every fall. Gabriel is Thomas Hardy's ideal country man. He is the beginning of what was to be consummated in Giles Winterborne.

1: Cont. Review, July 1889.
Gabriel is all that is strong and sturdy in the country man. He represents the men of England, the descendants of the men who stood with Harold at Senlac; the men who plough the soil and reap the fields. He has all the rustic virtues; but his particular qualities are steadfastness and dependability. He is ready when Fanny comes in the dark; he saves Bathsheba's hay rick, he cures the poisoned sheep, he rushes after Bathsheba when she flees in the night to Troy. All things depend on him in his little world. Even Boldwood looks to him for sympathy and advice. And finally, when Bathsheba has lost her husband, Gabriel stands ready to go and do further good; to be dependable somewhere else.

Mr. Hardy's provincialism leads him to give Gabriel all virtues and no vices. Such men are rarely born. At any rate, they do not live close to nature and her processes.

Giles represents the goodness of nature in the country man and in the woodlander. He loves and understands the woods and all their dwellers. He is represented as having the patience of Job and the forgiveness of Christ. For years he waited for Grace to come home and marry him. When she does come home she marries another man, Fitzpiers. Giles does not throw himself into an ecstasy of pain and tears. He suffers with the fortitude of an oak tree being eaten away by some insect. He is silent.

He worships Grace from afar. He retains his friendship for both her and her father. When Grace flees from her husband, Giles, though wracked by fever, gives up his house to save her the embarrassment of his presence, since she is a married woman. She permits him to go to a lean-to nearby where he contracts more cold and dies. Throughout the whole affair his attitude is noble and uplifting. Mr. Hardy is drawing the comparison between Fitzpiers, the city man, and Giles, the country
dweller. Mr. Hardy makes Fitzpiers all that is unpleasant and odious. He makes Giles all that is highly moral and attractive from the point of view of life.

Giles is the moral man of the country but has all the virtues of Gabriel and Diggory Venn, and Clym, too. Mr. Hardy's sentimental provincialism has made a prude of one who should have been a fine character. Giles is too good to be true. He does not ring true to life. He is one of the little folk who belong to the brain theocracy with which Mr. Hardy has peopled his native heath. Mr. Duffin calls him a "woodland sprite, half disappearing among the moving tree stems, half indistinguishable from the motion and sound of breeze-lifted leaves and elfish interweaving of the shadows." 1. He is the god of good deeds and sprite of the woodland of Wessex. He is Gabriel with some of the bluffness gone and more of the sentiment added. Giles is the master of the Woodland mythology and stands out over his lesser naiads and satyrs having all their virtues and none of their faults or vices.

Giles Winterborne is Thomas Hardy's great contribution to the sentiment of provincialism.

1: T. Hardy, p 130.

**CLYM YEORBRIGHT**

Clym is in a rather anomalous position in comparison with the other men of the stories. He belongs more with Jude Fawley and Swithin St. Cleeve than with Giles and Gabriel; but he stands for more than they do. He stands for the country man's (Thomas Hardy's) active contempt of the outside world; the hollowness of human progress. He is, however, youthful enough to want to reform the world and for that Mr. Hardy makes him suffer.

Curiously enough, Clym is the innocent victim of his mother's aspiration. Mrs. Yeobright married beneath her station and was determined that her son should not sink to the level to which his mother had
fallen. She sent him to the city where he with his country birth saw the mockery of all human endeavor. Feeling the futility of life he returns to his native heath, fired with the zeal of reform. This is the fatal weakness that all the country-born characters have inherent in them.

This weakness causes him to attempt to lead his people out of the outer darkness. He sets to work to educate the peasantry but ruins his eyes through study. With the doggedness of Gabriel and the moral faith of Giles he keeps on in his mission. He marries Eustacia in the throes of an emotional experience—his first mistake. He has turned aside from his ideal.

The Gods interfere. Wildeve, the city man, takes his wife away from him; the peasants are neglected. Clym has reverted to their level and has caused his mother’s death. Everything sets up against him. He has defied the Gods of chance and change. His mother defied them when she sent him forth into the city to conquer and become famous. Now he comes back and attempts, with the acquired education of the superficial city, to lead his people to knowledge and rend them from their simple lives to bring them to ruin.

This ruin will come when they assume education. Therefore Mr. Hardy destroys Clym’s eyesight, drowns his wife, and kills his mother. Clym is paying a great price for his aspiration. It is the God of the Province beating down the city-made product. Mr. Hardy does not favor change; it is disastrous. It will lead his people into temptation and death.

Clym is the city reformer, and Mr. Hardy wants none of him in the country. He is defeated at every turn and is permitted to live only that he shall suffer for bringing back to the country the desire to change the people. Provincialism is too much for Clym; he becomes a watcher on the outskirts of life, as much an outcast as Wildeve or Tess or Angel.
These three are miniatures of the larger Gabriel, Giles and Diggory. Diggory is a horne-handed Ariel flitting like Giles through the woods, watching over Thomasin to see that no harm befalls her. Stephen commits the sin of aspiration. John, like Gabriel, stands by and watches life stream by.

These three are reproaches to the city man who invades the country and destroys the happiness of Mr. Hardy's Wessex theology. They are minor chords in Mr. Hardy's symphonic poem of sentimental provincialism. Diggory defeats Wildeve, the city man, in his effort to destroy the happiness of Thomasin. He defeats the God of the outer world who has sent Wildeve to harass Mr. Hardy's little world of fancy in Wessex.

Stephen is not so fortunate. He never realizes his ambition to marry Elfride but Mr. Hardy shows how much more worthy he is than the intellectual, cold-blooded Henry Knight of the city. He makes Stephen loving, impulsive, loyal. He makes Henry the opposite of these things, a real waspish trouble, sent to destroy not only Elfride's happiness but Stephen's as well. In the agony of love at the discovery that Henry is in love with Elfride, Stephen does not hesitate a moment but remembers his loyalty to both parties and remains silent. Like Giles he is a silent sufferer, a victim of the city's selfishness. John, like Gabriel and Diggory, is a lesser virtue, Faithfulness. He stands in the same relationship to his brother Robert and to Ann Garland as Stephen stands to Henry Knight and Elfride. He never forgets his loyalty and steadfastness. When he marches off at the end he has some of the sadness of Stephen, standing at the grave of Elfride and some of the sang-froid of Gabriel when Bathsheba marries Troy. Faithfulness in a minor role, John is one of Mr. Hardy's most loving characters.

All three, then, are reproaches to the city. They exhibit the
loyalty and faith of the dwellers of the distant places; they hate
the nobility of open spaces and eternal things. They have the gener­
ousness of nature. They are real Wessex folk, whom Mr. Hardy loves.
three
They are exponents of Mr. Hardy's sentimental provincialism drawn
with loving care and meticulous unfairness to the outside world which
they reprove.

JUDE FAWLEY and SWITHIN ST. CLEAVE.

With these two young men we have a different treatment by Mr.
Hardy of his beloved country characters. But what is the subtle
difference? It is again the chance and change disturbance. These
two young men were born in the country but inclined by tastes and
aptitude toward the city. Swithin wants to be a great astronomer, and
Jude thirsts to go to Oxford (Christminster).

Each has a great ambition. This is sacrilege to the Gods of
Wessex. Wessex is the ideal existence. It is foolish to depart there­
from and insulting to those who overlook the deeds of men. Jude is made
to have a weakness; Swithin's ambition is anticipated by another man.

Curiously enough both disasters center around a woman. In Jude's
case the situation is the reverse of Tess Durbeyfield: Arabella is
the seducer of the youth who would go to the city. A city woman thwarts
Swithin's attempt to become famous by helping him along in his studies.
It is dangerous for the country to mix with the city even when the latter
is in a philanthropic mood. For there is always a secret motive. The
secret motive is love, and by love both Swithin and Jude are destroyed.

Jude is destroyed by profane love; Swithin by sacred love. But
the result is the same. Jude is thwarted by the city, he is repulsed
by the authorities of Christminster and takes to drink. He meets his
cousin Sue. Then his moral disintegration sets in. The weakness of
the Fawleys is in both of them. The city brought it out. If Jude had
not aspired to be what he was not he would never have met Arabella; if he had not persisted in his efforts he would never have met Sue. And Sue, the woman of refinement, the product of the city, is the woman who really destroys him.

Jude is Mr. Hardy's warning to keep within the limits of Wessex. Those born of Wessex, Mr. Hardy preaches, will suffer if they leave it. If they remain they will live on in a futile manner, senseless perhaps but not suffering. If they revolt against their life they will go down to defeat. Keep away from the city. No good can come of it. Behold Jude Fawley! Behold Tess Durbeyfield!

Swithin's case is somewhat similar. When he gave up science for love, he fell by the wayside. Lady Constantine, the woman of the merciless city, desires him and comes into Wessex to take him. Before he met her he aspired but did not change. The chance came and trouble resulted. All because a curious woman wanted to see what was in an old tower on her husband's estate Swithin's work is held up. An American anticipates his work by a few days. Despair follows; then love comes to him - or he thinks it does. Natural consequences follow and Swithin's life is blasted. If Swithin had not gone to the tower all would have been well. If Lady Constantine had not been consumed with curiosity as to what was in the tower all might have been well. The two incidents are too much for even fate. Swithin sacrificed his career for Lady Constantine. In other words he sacrificed his career for the whim of the city. But Mr. Hardy blames Swithin quite as much as the city here, for Swithin dared aspire, as Jude did, to leave Wessex and study outside, in the south. To leave Wessex is to descend from Olympus.

Here again we have sentimental provincialism. Swithin has no right to aspire to anything beyond his narrow Wessex birthplace. To do so is to chance and change. The city is an evil, sore place and
he will only find heart-ache there. He does, for in the city he sees his dream topple. In the end he is deprived of even the hollow love of his aged Viviette. He makes a great effort to recall her love but the city has changed him. He desires a younger woman and she leaves him with the feeling that he has done her a wrong when really he is the innocent victim of her idle curiosity. The city has again wrecked the country. The Gods of Wessex have taken their toll for revolt.

MICHAEL HENCHARD

Henchard is the most complex character in all the Wessex novels. He is the innocent victim of the Gods of the world. We do not know what he did to displease them or arouse their wrath but he is pursued as violently as Oedipus. The Gods cannot be appeased. They endow him with a riotous nature so that he will appear to be to blame for the trouble himself. He is not responsible for any of it. When he walks into the old woman's tent (Chance is most often represented in Thomas Hardy's novels by a woman, says Miss Anna Sholl) he gets drunk and sells his wife to a sailor, sent, no doubt, by the Gods from outside. When Mrs. Henchard has disappeared he takes the pledge, goes to Casterbridge and becomes the mayor of the town.

But he is elevated only to be ruined that the contrast may be greater. Farfrae, an outlander, comes and the whole weave of Henchard's life is turned. From that time he goes down the ladder. Farfrae becomes his rival in business and love. Business worries come; failure and the accompanying humiliation of having to go to work for the man he made a success are added to Henchard's punishment. Truly the Gods are vindictive! They are senseless, according to Mr. Hardy, or they would not act in this manner. They seem to be tormenting Henchard with the gad fly of defeat and humiliation.
Henchard is Hardy's contribution to the emotional literature of the nineteenth century. He is the innocent victim of the Gods of the world who are all-powerful. They torment him because they choose to do so. The reason is unimportant. The only thing to do is submit. And this Henchard will not do.

Surrender is not in the category of his life. He fights on and writes the famous will at the end. He dies defeated but fighting. The Gods conquer but they have destroyed this man needlessly. They are unseen and cruel. They are careless of the cares of Wessex. They carry their persecution to the ultimate and Henchard perishes. Their immortal conceit is satisfied. Their senseless concerns have been completed. Henchard has paid the penalty for his revolution.

Mr. Hardy is sick of the outside world and the Gods that rule it. Henchard as the innocent victim storms his way through life. He dies triumphant at the end as all great revolutionaries do. But he dies, and that is unfair.

BOLDWOOD, MELBURY and SWANCOURT.

These three are a strange group. They stand for the conventions of the town in the country. Boldwood has the virtues of the country but the feeling of a city man. He feels for Bathsheba; he loves her as a country man but proceeds to woo her as a city man. He is a passionate old man when he faces Troy and charges him with the persecution of Bathsheba; he is the country man, militant when he shoots down Troy at the stairs of his home. He is tormented by Troy in two ways; concerning not only his love of Bathsheba but Fanny Robin as well. He is the dignified Wessex lesser deity persecuted by Troy, the monkey out of Pandora's box. Boldwood is the old Tom Jones of Fielding grown to middle-age. He has the passions and pride of his youth but he has acquired what Mr. Duffin calls his predominating
quality—dignity. Boldwood is the man of the country who, beset by
the man from the city and succumbing to his teasing, loses his
temper and kills. The Gods are satisfied. They have destroyed
another of the Wessex folk. They are senseless or else callous.

Melbury has revolted from Wessex and her Gods later in life
by sending Grace away for an education. He is somewhat of a mas-
culine Mrs. Yeobright. But he endures more, for he lives to see all
his child's suffering. He is the innocent agent of the marriage
between Grace and Fitzpiers, another agent of the outside world.
Two such agents, Fitzpiers and Grace's education, prove too much
for the old man and he promotes the marriage himself, ignoring
the patient Giles who has stood by and waited for Grace to come
back and marry him. Surely he has paid for his folly in woeing
the things of the city and neglecting the things of his native Wessex.
He has ignored Giles, the greatest of all the lesser deities of Wessex,
and has given his daughter to a city man, devoid of honor and sen-
timent. The Gods look on sneeringly. There is no need for them to
interfere here. The city will do their work for them. Fitzpiers
is an excellent emissary.

Poor Melbury is the victim of the city and its properties. Mr.
Hardy has painted a picture of sternness to show that the man of the
provinces is good enough for Grace and that she should never have
left her native Wessex to acquire the education which would remove
her from the feelings of her people.

The Rev. Mr. Swancourt is the last of the city men who wreck Mr.
Hardy's country characters. Mr. Swancourt is the production of the
university, the institution which thrust Jude away from its doors.
He worships blood and education. Education he worships, not for what
it is, but for what it represents. He thrusts Stephen Smith out of
the running because Stephen is not of good blood. Mr. Duffin refers
to him as "a jolly old gentleman slipped accidentally into a black coat and carrying it with more grace than godliness." I. Swancourt is the conventional English clergyman. He represents the man of education as Mr. Hardy thinks of him. He is more like the American Babbitt than any other character I can think of. He has all the urban ideals but they are trained along different lines from the American Babbitts.

In Swancourt Mr. Hardy draws the city's unfairness to the country man who has dared aspire. Mr. Hardy is arguing with himself here, for he is as reactionary as Walter Scott himself. Swancourt becomes a city devil pursuing the gentle Wessex Sprite, Stephen out of his home with all the vehemence of an old house-wife chasing dust. The city is unfair and makes no secret of the matter. Swancourt is in the country because he cannot afford to be in the city. And since he is in the country the Gods of the world set him at mischief. Stephen is defeated. He has done his work. The Gods grin and are satisfied.
CONCLUSION

What does all this lead us to? It leads to but one conclusion. Thomas Hardy has created in the image and speech of the Dorset peasantry a vulgar mythology of a legendary Wessex. In that Wessex he is quite happy. There he wishes to be left alone, even by the Gods that rule the world. And consequently when anyone interferes with him in his little province he is angered and becomes a rater against all outside.

I have called his attitude Sentimental Provincialism. I mean by Thomas Hardy's sentimental provincialism that unless one is born within the confines of the legendary Wessex he is an interloper and has no right to exist within the limits of Mr. Hardy's little province.

These interlopers: Henry Knight, Angel Clare, Damon Wildeve, Alec D'Urberville, and all the others, Mr. Hardy believes, are creatures of the Gods that preside over the destinies of the world. Mr. Hardy is not sure that the Gods are aware that they do preside, he is not sure that they have any sense of anything; but he is sure that they have no sympathy with the dwellers of the earth.

Of these earth dwellers he cares nothing except for the ones who inhabit his dream-kingdom of Wessex. I think too he believes that only his brain characters of the country count. All others do not exist for him. He is as indifferent as he finds it possible to be. The children of his brain, however, have a claim on him.

How has Thomas Hardy shown the outsiders that they are not wanted in the country? He spoiled Henry Knight's love affair after making Henry steal Stephen's sweetheart. He blames all Tess Durbeyfield's trouble on Alec and Angel. He makes Damon Wildeve responsible for Clym Yeobright's misfortune and Fitzpiers he draws as the ruiner of Giles's chances with Grace.
How does he equip these men with their qualities? He makes Henry Knight an intellectual snob. Fitzpiers and D'Urberville are sensualists, while Damon Wildeve and Angel Clare are represented as vacillating now and then and firm at other times. The city man is maligned to make an attractive picture of the country man.

Consider the more favorable pictures of the country heroes. Look at Gabriel with his faith, Giles with his patient suffering, Diggory Venn and his Guardian-Angel character. These men are all represented as ideal. They have virtually no vices but manifold good qualities. They are sympathetic; they are sentimental and kind; they honor and protect womanhood. They are Mr. Hardy's men of the country and represent in its highest form his Sentimental Provincialism.

On the other hand take such men as Jude Fawley, Swithin St. Clare, Clym Yeobright and Michael Henchard. They are represented as creatures who seem to be living a Hell on earth. They are tormented from town to town. Swithin aspired to be an astronomer; Jude wanted to go to Christminster; Clym had an ideal, to lead his people from ignorance into the light of education. Michael Henchard, poor fellow, seemed to have no greater ambition than to be left alone. He was thwarted even in that. They are all thwarted in some way or another. They are thwarted because they have revolted, because they have brought about change; and change is the mortal sin in the Essex paradise.

The Gods, thinks Mr. Hardy, do not desire ambition. This, too, they thwart at every turn. That, indeed, is why by the agency of the city men the country men fail when they aspire. Mr. Hardy does not think that ambition is necessary anyway. His most attractive characters, Gabriel and Giles and Diggory Venn, have no ambitions to build castles or create great things. They are content to move along in the even tenor of life as it is. To live is sufficient.
In thus much Mr. Hardy is in accord with the Gods. But what he loses his temper about is the apparent interference of the Gods in his native territory; his sentimental province. He wants that particular spot in the Universe left severely alone by the Gods; and their tools, the men of the city, and, for this reason, he strikes out at them savagely and draws them unfairly.

So he deals with Henry Knight. Nor does he give Wildeve a square deal, nor Alec, nor Angel, nor Francis Troy. The city man infuriates Mr. Hardy. He hates him. He distrusts his influence in his sentimental province and he wants him to remain out of his country.

And the way to keep that city man out is to keep the Gods pacified. The only way to do that seems to be to live along passively and listlessly, enjoying life only when the Gods seem not to be looking. Once one seems to live and the Gods observe it, then ruin follows. Henchard went that way as did Stephen Smith, Melbury, Boldwood and John Loveday, in spite of the fact that they were all good fellows and quite harmless.

Harmless as they were they stirred. The Gods, shocked by a sudden movement, flashed out and churned the puddle in which the little chips of existence were floating. The chips tossed about, suffered their various tragedies until the Gods were satisfied.

It could be only a sentimental man who could evolve so elaborate an hypothesis of life for a group of characters. And Thomas Hardy is an artist in sentiment. There can be no question of that. Any one who reads the final page of The Woodlanders can hardly deny this. That bit with Marty South weeping over the grave of Giles is almost pure bathos, but we feel the sentiment and think nothing of the closeness to melodrama that Mr. Hardy approaches in that book.
If he were not in love with one set of characters the good men would not all be of the country. Human virtue and vice would be common to both groups. To Mr. Hardy only? To Mr. Hardy, however, only city men are scoundrels.

Thomas Hardy is ardent about something. That something is his sentimental feeling for the creatures of his brain, men fashioned in the image and likeness of his Dorsetshire Peasant. He has a passionate desire for local autonomy in word and deed, free from interference by mortal or immortal hands. That is his philosophy. I prefer to call it Sentimental Provincialism.

( END )
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