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Dorsoduro 3246
30123 Venezia

Hellenism, paganism and
aestheticism: Arnold's influences
on Hardy's later novels

Relatore

Ch. Prof.ssa Enrica Villari

Correlatore

Ch. Prof.ssa Emma Sdegno

Laureanda

Stefania Grosso
Matricola 839952

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Introduction

The Nineteenth century, the long century as it is now called, was characterized by important changes in society following the Industrial revolution, and, of course, the aftermath of uncountable debates and reform bills. It was a period of dissolving creeds and clashing theories¹ and, as a matter of fact, in this transformation era great personalities arose from the midst. Among these great Victorian sages, as now many scholars call them², this dissertation will consider one of the most prominent novelist and poet, Thomas Hardy, and the influences exercised by Matthew Arnold, especially on Hardy's celebrated and controversial later novels, namely *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Well-Beloved*.

Firstly, the dissertation will explore the Victorian frame of mind as Houghton defined it, in the light of some of the themes which both Arnold and Hardy dealt with, i.e. the Religious doubts, Culture and especially Hellenism and Neo-Paganism. Perplexities and anxieties dominated the Victorian era, from fear of the Revolution to the emergence of new religious movements; and all tended to shape a new nation transforming, as Houghton stated, old dogmas and new ideas into a fresh pattern of thought³. At the height of the English colonial power, essayists and thinkers wrote extensively on the analysis of society and contemporary events. Among these stood out John Henry Newman, a Catholic, the founder of the Oxford movement, the adversary of Thomas Arnold but a great influence on his son Matthew. According to David J. DeLaura, what Matthew Arnold admired in Newman was his style and his extraordinary openness [] to the diversity and unpredictability of human experience⁴. Moreover Newman's teachings influenced Arnold's views, as far as the existence of a privileged *élite*, the interplay between moral and intellectual faculties and the function of culture are concerned.

Another great writer and thinker of the end of the century was Walter Pater, more of a humanist than Newman, but strongly influenced both by the Cardinal and by Arnold. His major work was *The Renaissance*, and his conception of art and his veneration for the Greek artists certainly impressed Thomas Hardy, who undoubtedly referred to Pater in his last novel *The Well-Beloved*. In Pater's view the work of Art had to be a source of pure pleasure, an emanation of the Beautiful dissociated from morality. Art became a form of reaction to the industrial Victorian world and to the

¹ W. E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957, p. 20.

² Cf. J. Holloway, *The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument*, (1953) Hamden, Archon Books, 1962.

³ W.E. Houghton, *op cit.*, p. 20.

⁴ D. J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1969, p. xii.

hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie, and new features and purposes were assigned to it, art being, as Pater wrote, *not the fruit of experience*, but experience itself is the end⁵.

To investigate the values which gave shape to the Victorian frame of mind a few influential essayist and intellectuals will be discussed in the first chapter. Firstly, this dissertation will deal with the great man of letters who influenced the thought of the epoch, Thomas Carlyle, discussing particularly his essay, *The Signs of the Times*, which was one of the first essays on modern culture. In addition, also the works by John Stuart Mill, especially *On Liberty*, and the works by Thomas Henry Huxley, *Science and Culture* and *Evolution and Ethics* will be analysed.

They deeply influenced Hardy and along with Arnold's writings, are useful to understand why Angel in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is defined as a *sample product of the last five-and-twenty years*⁶ and why his sin is, according to DeLaura, his *imperfect modernism*⁷.

Throughout three chapters this work will discuss the last novels of Thomas Hardy, focusing on their relation with Matthew Arnold and his major works, *Culture and Anarchy*, his critical essays *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, *Wordsworth*, *The Study of Poetry* and *On the Modern Element in Literature*, and his long poem, *The Scholar-Gypsy*.

Notwithstanding polemical debates and unfavourable critiques, Arnold's innovations in the cultural frame of mind and his classification of society as delineated in *Culture and Anarchy*, i.e. Barbarians, Philistines and Populace, impressively affected Victorian intellectuals for the accurate description of the lack of ideals in modern society and of a vile dominant class dedicated only to luxury and leisure.

However, it is impossible to forget that Arnold was also the author of celebrated poems with which actually started his career as a writer. In his poetry Arnold reflected on faith, religion and the influence of classical art and he also meditated on the limits of contemporary standard culture, as in *The Scholar-Gypsy*, in which the protagonist seeks for an alternative knowledge, outside the academics walls of Oxford and Cambridge.

⁵ W. Pater, *The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry*, (1873), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 119.

⁶ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, (1891), ed. S. Gatrell, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, ch. XXXIX p. 284.

⁷ D. J. DeLaura, *The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels*, ELH, vol. 34, No. 3 (Sep., 1967), pp. 380-399, p. 382.

According to DeLaura, Arnold's work, along with Pater's, concerned the "adaptation of the traditional religious culture to the needs of the later nineteenth century"⁸.

Instead, the one who could not adapt the traditional religious beliefs to the modern world and stood against the demands of modern society was Thomas Hardy, to whom the last three chapters of this dissertation are dedicated.

Chapter two will focus on *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, which is not only a great novel but also a complex response to Arnold's views, with the character of Angel who seems a representation of a younger and more modern Matthew Arnold.

The novel, published in 1891, received mixed responses both from critics and from the reading public. Scandalous for the Victorian society, his famous heroine is the centre of a tragedy in which the faults of the past return and hunt her. Innocent for the author but guilty for the majority of readers, Tess is the victim of a dominant male culture and of a world which no longer understands a pure creature of nature. Hardy with this novel attacked the stereotyped Victorian culture and its ambiguous morality. However, the vitality of Tess and the energy of nature which she represents are doomed to disappear and die.

The following chapter will deal with the other great and controversial novel by Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*. Published in 1895 and possibly more tragic than *Tess*, the novel tells the story of a self-taught man, who might remind the readers of Arnold's *Scholar-gypsy*, and his desire of knowledge and learning. But the Victorian world was not ready to accept either Jude or Sue, his beloved cousin and independent woman, because they are over-developed and unfit for society. As with the previous novel, also *Jude* received negative responses, for its position about marriage, woman, and culture. Especially for his characterization of Sue Bridehead, undoubtedly a more free and modern woman than Tess, and her relationship with men, both Jude and Mr. Phillotson. Growing outside the traditional religious code, Jude and Sue are firstly excluded from a rigid society and then, when the tragedy falls on them, they are alienated from each other.

Furthermore, a biblical theme is shared by both protagonists. Not only does Jude continually quote verses from the Bible, but in the end he faces death quoting the Book of Job: "Let the day perish wherein I was born"⁹, a line which conveys all his

⁸ D. J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater*, cit., p. ix.

⁹ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), ed. D. Taylor, London, Penguin, 1998, part VI, ch. 11, p. 403.

sense of tragedy in life. The freethinker Sue, instead, "internalizes religious self-punishment"¹⁰ after the death of her children, blaming herself for this dreadful event. *Jude the Obscure* is also a novel about culture and art, on what Taylor called an "unguided self-education"¹¹ and on the unrest of the modern mind which characterizes Jude, who is trapped between a desire of an elevation through education and the impossibility to reach his dream. Moreover, for Jude, hope and goodness are always elsewhere, compelling him to an infinite quest and wandering. Although Jude seems to exhibit some characteristics of his author, for example, as Taylor underlined, "his love of music, his romantic longing for the well-beloved, his desire to rise in the world, his responsiveness to suffering"¹² Hardy, after the first chapters dedicated to the life of a young man full of hope, evolved other themes, namely marriage, religion and sexuality, leaving the artistic and cultural theme for the work which will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, the last novel published by Hardy, *The Well-Beloved*.

Previously serialized in the *Illustrated London News* with the title *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved*, it was published in 1897 as a book and marked the end of Hardy's career as a novelist.

Whereas *Tess* and *Jude* are tragedies and deal with the exclusion from society, religion and the weights of the past, *The Well-Beloved* is a more conscious novel on the artistic process and art, and it deals with the aestheticism, Neo-Platonism and the revival of the classical-Hellenic art which were part of the late nineteenth century Neo-paganism.

As it is frequently seen in his novels, Hardy, through his male characters, dealt with men's idealisation of women. More than *Tess* and *Sue*, the three Avices and also Miss Bencomb, are too much idealised and elevated at the rank of goddesses by the protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston. They become something unreachable, exiled from the everyday reality by the man who worships them. Jocelyn Pearston transforms his beloved women in an emanation of the Absolute or Ideal form of Beauty, an abstract entity which renders him incapable of a steady relationship or feelings.

Clearly *The Well-Beloved* is Hardy's most experimental novel, starting from its tripartite structure, with every section narrating a precise age in Jocelyn's life, but also for the *leitmotiv* of the novel: the description of a powerful desire, an account of

¹⁰ D. Taylor, *Introduction to T. Hardy, Jude the Obscure* cit., pp. xvi-xxxiii, p. xx.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. xxiii.

¹² *Ivi*.

the pursuit of perfection in beauty and love which seems to haunt the protagonist, who has to deal with his sensual impulses throughout his whole life. But, as Jane Thomas wrote, *The Well-Beloved* is also a retrospective glance at Hardy's own artistic career¹³, and at his major influences.

Though this is a novel deeply connected with Pater and the Pre-Raphaelites, it is also possible to see it as, again, a response to Arnold and his theories on art, Neo-Platonism and, of course, Hellenism.

Albeit Hardy considered Arnold compromised in the seventies for his new theological position, since, as Carroll explained, "in the second phase of his career Arnold occupies himself almost exclusively with reinterpreting the Bible and traditional religion in such a way as to preserve their moral and literary content"¹⁴, yet he absorbed his notions and views, especially because Arnold was the first in England to write about what later Hardy defined as the "Ache of Modernism". As DeLaura wrote, "Arnold had defined the emotional price of modernism: the sense of psychic dislocation and alienation, of wandering in an unmapped no man's land -between two worlds".¹⁵

If, on the one hand Arnold was too conservative for the almost modernist Hardy, on the other hand Arnold was too compromising, whereas Hardy permeated his novels with a strong element of radicalism, which he opposed to the modernity which was changing the world.

¹³ J. Thomas, *Introduction to The Well-Beloved*, (1897), J. Thomas ed., London, Wordsworth Classics, 2000, pp. ix-xxvii, p. xi.

¹⁴ J. Carroll, *The Cultural Theory of Matthew Arnold*, (1982), Berkley, University California Press, 1982, p. 39.

¹⁵ D. J. DeLaura, *The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels* cit. p. 380-1.

Chapter one

The Victorian frame of mind from Carlyle to Hardy

1.1 From Carlyle to Hardy

During Victoria's reign, who ascended the throne in 1837, Britain was developing fast, new cities were founded, the economy faced the explosion of capitalism and industrialization and the middle class arose satisfied and proud. Undoubtedly it was the most powerful nation in the world, whose power increased enormously in comparison with the previous century. As Thackeray wittily wrote: "It was only yesterday; but what a gulf between now and then!"¹⁶.

The signals of change, and also the symptoms of crisis, were already present at the end of the Eighteenth and the beginning of the Nineteenth century; on the one hand the Industrial Revolution had given power to business and bourgeoisie, and to the theorization of Utilitarianism by Jeremy Bentham:

By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever, and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government¹⁷.

On the other hand, Romanticism had exalted heroism, passions and Nature. It rejected the codes and precepts of Classicism, it reacted against the Enlightenment, it cultivated the religion of Nature and Imagination, mythicizing in verses the ancient past, the heroic deeds and the outsiders who became protagonists.

But Romanticism was also a thoroughly new aesthetic experience and it implied the appreciation of the sublime, creating the new sensibility which is found in the works of its major poets.

However, from 1830 onwards, the revolutionary tendencies of Romanticism faded away. Its passion was substituted with domestic feelings, the hero was superseded by the rigorous and rigid man, and a new puritan façade was erected as a kind of protection of an ambiguous and ambivalent society.

¹⁶ W. M. Thackeray quoted in W. E. Houghton, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ J. Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart eds., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 12.

With the First Reform Bill (1831), the era of bourgeoisie and industrialization, of the poor working class and of the trade unions started; and due to the profound changes of the society a great number of works were written on cultural and social questions because, as Arnold, with profound awareness stated, "traditional beliefs and institutions are no longer adequate to embody contemporary life"¹⁸.

First of all, at the beginning of the century, Thomas Carlyle in a prophet-like style started to write great essays on the conditions of society, on the "Condition-of-England question", analyzing the effects of industrialization and "mechanization", a word repeated more than seventy times in *Signs of the Times*, published in 1829 in *The Edinburgh Review*. This essay, doomed to become a controversial but influential work, attacked the principles of Benthamite Utilitarianism showing the contradictions of its model.

Carlyle labeled his time "the Age of Machinery"¹⁹ prophesying, with a pessimist outlook, a degeneration of society but also appealing to "the thinking minds of all nations" which, according to him, were called for a change²⁰. He strongly felt the need of reforming the world and his nation, concluding his essay with the statement of the urgency of reforming also man before mechanization should destroy the individuality of everyone, a danger that Carlyle felt impending because "men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force, of any kind"²¹.

Carlyle permeated his works with a strong imagery, a constant appeal to what appeared to him dogmas and, often, he wrote in an apocalyptic or visionary style. Undoubtedly he was able to recognize that his age was facing a crisis, namely the danger derived from an excessive use of machinery and industrialization.

Moreover, another feature of his style was his worshipping of force, of the "hero". He was one of the most polemical thinkers of the times, in fact, according to Houghton, he stressed the "conception of Force as the world's soul and animating principle"²² but, as many of his contemporaries, he was not alien to "religious doubts" and he was also "aware of weakness and frustration"²³.

¹⁸ M. Arnold quoted in W.E. Houghton, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁹ T. Carlyle, *Signs of the Times* (1829) in *Scottish and Other Miscellanies*, London, Dent, 1964, pp. 56-82, p. 59.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 82.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

²² W. E. Houghton, *op.cit.* p. 206-7.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

Carlyle was the first to give words to the anxiety of the time and he was recognized by all the Victorian intellectuals as an authority. His tone and temper will resonate in many successful works of the nineteenth century, as for example in Matthew Arnold's essays.

Arnold's attitude towards Carlyle, as DeLaura wrote, was:

a persistent ambivalence, one half of it a remarkable bulk of conscious and half-conscious borrowing of ideas and key expressions, the other half a seemingly fixed need to depreciate Carlyle, combined with something very close to concealment of his influence.²⁴

This attitude derives probably from the almost fanatic vein of some Carlylean statements and motifs. The once admired Carlyle of the young Arnold is treated with respect in *Culture and Anarchy*, making him and his genius a symbolic stand for what he meant by Hebraism. Furthermore words like "philistines" and "machine" in a critical context are all Carlylean borrowings²⁵. Moreover Carlyle focused on the spiritual price of social change and social progress, a theme that runs through all the Victorian period, from Arnold to Hardy. But Arnold contrasted Carlyle's conservatory view of aristocracy, calling the English aristocrats "Barbarians" in *Culture and Anarchy*, where he described their lack of light, the essential quality for the perfection of man.

As DeLaura claimed, Arnold condemned also Carlyle's "temper of mind"²⁶ favouring a more comprehensive public tone and impersonal criticism. As Arnold wrote: "the great thing is to speak without a particle of vice, malice, or rancor"²⁷.

But the sermon-like essays of Carlyle influenced many Victorians. Everyone who wrote against Machinery and Utilitarianism had clear in their minds Carlyle's writings. Carlyle also gave great importance to art and literature, venturing to say that Art and Science are free gift of nature and stressing the fact that "they originated in the Dynamical nature of man, not in his Mechanical nature"²⁸.

Later, even Hardy shared the Carlylean sense of the dangerous nature of an unbalanced progress. But at the same time, Hardy was very distant from Carlyle's

²⁴ D. J. DeLaura, *Arnold and Carlyle*, "PMLA", Vol. 79, No. 1, March 1964, pp. 104-129, p. 104.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 129.

²⁷ M. Arnold, *Letter of May 1863*, quoted in D. J. DeLaura, *Arnold and Carlyle* cit, p. 106.

²⁸ T. Carlyle, *Signs of the Times* cit, p. 70.

worshipping of heroes; Carlyle worshipped the cult of heroes, and this became almost an obsession, exhaustively explained in his essay *Heroes and Hero Worship* (1840). For Hardy instead, as J. Holloway underlines, "the heroic deed is impossible"²⁹, and, as it is seen in his tragic novels, his heroes try to survive rather than perform a real heroic deed.

Besides, their conception of nature was very different. For Carlyle, and Arnold as well, nature was to be mastered by men, i.e. both workers and owners together³⁰, instead Hardy was more close to the evolutionary and scientific theories of Thomas Henry Huxley, sharing with the scientists the idea that nature is *unmoral* and that the natural world is indifferent to human feelings and values³¹.

Yet Carlyle certainly made a strong impression with his writings on the new and young philosophers and scientists like Huxley, so much admired by Hardy, giving them, as Irvine stated, "not ideas but temperament"³².

Thomas Carlyle was the first essayist who deeply analyzed and understood the new contemporary society surrounding him. He left an important contribution to the British cultural *élite*, in spite of the harshness of his last essays where his political positions became more radical and led him to break with old friends and allies.

Furthermore, according to Turner, Carlyle "introduced German romanticism and idealism to the British reading public through translations, [and] interpretive essays"³³, starting the myth of Goethe and of the Greek revival in Britain, a cultural tendency which lasted until the end of the century.

Yet his works influenced also the social and historical aspects of Dickens's novels: *Signs of the Times* influenced *Hard Times* and *The French Revolution* influenced *A Tale of Two Cities*; moreover he inspired the social reforms of Ruskin and Morris, and he was also a critic of John Stuart Mill and his positions on Liberty and Democracy. He wrote against a "sham priesthood" (*Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 18), invoking for an "industrious, honest, and courageous teaching class that would

²⁹ J. Holloway, *op.cit.*, p. 281.

³⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 208.

³¹ Cf. R. Schweik, *The Influence of Religion, Science, and Philosophy in Hardy's Writings* in D. Kramer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 54-71 p. 62.

³² W. Irvine, *Carlyle and T. H. Huxley*, in H. Shine, ed., *Booker Memorial Studies*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1950, pp. 104-121, p. 121.

³³ F.M. Turner, *Victorian Scientific Naturalism and Thomas Carlyle*, "Victorian Studies", Vol. 18, No. 3, March 1975, pp. 325-343, p. 328.

educate and direct [í] society³⁴ and which would reinforce an already existent predicament of religious institutions.

Carlyle also contributed to intensify an already existing religious crisis which worsened after the publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859), the milestone text which challenged the Bible-rooted beliefs of Victorian society.

Moreover the Church was also threatened by the Neoclassicism and the Pagan Revival, which, as Louis underlined, òrose with startling energy in Victorian England³⁵.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 333.

³⁵ M. K. Louis, *Gods and Mysteries: The Revival of Paganism and the Remaking of Mythography through the Nineteenth Century*, òVictorian Studiesö, Vol. 47, No. 3, Spring 2005, pp. 329-361, p. 338.

1.2 Religious doubts and Science

In Victorian England a lot of people, of all social classes, felt a strong discomfort about religion. The Anglican Church had started to lose power already in the previous century due to the fragmentation of the Church which formed the dissenter movements, i.e. Evangelicals, Methodists, and so on. Certainly, this unsettled situation influenced the unsteadiness of Anglicanism and the negative response of people towards the clergy. The religious anxieties had already found expression in Puritanism, which laid great stress both on hard work and on moral discipline³⁶, as Houghton argued, and condemned the life of pleasures, art and philosophy included. As a consequence of the declining power of the Anglican Church many Victorians, as Houghton stated, cried out for a new faith that would end their distress of mind³⁷. The effect of all this uncertainty and of the sense of isolation that pervaded everyone, led to turning to Agnosticism or to Theism.

Theism was adopted by many intellectuals who substituted religion with a belief in a personal God and a divine moral law³⁸. Similarly, Matthew Arnold tried to elevate Poetry to the rank of religion even if he did not find an ultimate solution to the depression of modern times.

During the sixties Arnold indeed faced a profound religious crisis being, as DeLaura maintained, unsatisfied with his rather joyless stoicism that he had developed as an alternative to Christianity during the preceding two decades³⁹ and he spent the second phase of his career [í] almost exclusively with reinterpreting the Bible and traditional religion in such a way as to preserve their moral and literary content while discarding their supernatural dogmas⁴⁰. It was in this phase of his intellectual career that Arnold got close to John Henry Newman.

In one of the letters Arnold wrote to Newman, he declared that the Cardinal was one of the four people from whom he received a strong impression⁴¹. Although John Henry Newman was a rival of Matthew Arnold's father, he left a mark with his

³⁶ W. E. Houghton, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 48

³⁹ D. J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater* cit., p. 19.

⁴⁰ J. Carroll, *The Cultural Theory of Matthew Arnold* cit., p. 39.

⁴¹ Cf. D. J. DeLaura, *Arnold and Carlyle* cit, p. 104.

sermons on the young Matthew during his years in Oxford, even if at the beginning Arnold attended them only for "the sake of their rhetorical charm"⁴².

According to Ker, beautiful is Arnold's

romantic evocation of the "charm of that spiritual apparition [Newman], gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music, - subtle, sweet, mournful"⁴³

As far as religion is concerned, John Henry Newman professed a true and humble spirituality. He grew up as a Calvinist, lately he approached the Anglican Church and then, in 1845, he converted to the Roman Catholic Church, finding it more similar to the Church of the Fathers. He was disquieted about the Anglican Church, stating that it "has apparently undergone so many changes and variations over the centuries that the question arises whether there has been any "real continuity of doctrine" since the time of the Apostles"⁴⁴.

Interestingly, Newman, after his conversion to Catholicism, refused more than once the definition of theologian. He was always more interested in facts than the doctrine of faith. According to Newman, faith is a matter of absolute belief in God which can be obtained with a long and hard work. His sermons were severe even before his conversion, but his Catholic discourses became more radical, because, as Ker stated, "in order to highlight the bright side of Christianity, it was essential, Newman thought, to see the dark side"⁴⁵.

Moreover Newman was inflexible with his adversaries, as the Evangelicals, or the Liberals. In the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864), Newman wrote:

Liberalism then is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and of claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions

⁴² J. Carroll, *Arnold, Newman, and Cultural Salvation*, "Victorian Poetry", Vol. 26, No. 1/2, (Centennial of Matthew Arnold: 1822-1888), Spring - Summer 1988, pp. 163-178 p. 164.

⁴³ I. Ker, *The Achievement of John Henry Newman*, London, Collins, 1990, p. 75.

⁴⁴ J.H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, quoted in I. Ker, *op. cit.*, p.110.

⁴⁵ I. Ker, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word.⁴⁶

Newman's religious writings concerned self-denial, another way to reach perfection, but mainly focused on the danger of the false profession of religion which he saw as a sin.

For him, real religion is linked to practice, to factual acts. He advocated for not giving too much attention to theory and dogmatism, for self-examination and self-denial. His Christ is a true human being; he described Him without fear and trembling, in a decided and admiring tone. Love and obedience to God are in the little things people do every day.

His sermons were really influential and powerful. Many intellectuals, who attended Oxford, recalled them and their extraordinary force and shocking effect. Even Hardy, before his rejection of Christianity, looked at the Sermons of the Cardinal, hoping to find there an answer to his doubts.

As previously argued the Christian domain and authority fell apart with the new scientific discoveries starting to question the position of man in relation to God. The Evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin intensified the debate between science and religion which had begun in the previous years with the scientific discoveries of geology, mineralogy and also history. Science did not exclude the existence of the divine hence science cannot answer questions of the ultimate origins and of the final aim of humankind. But science, through observations and data, argued that God is not the starting point of the universe, and that the Bible is not reliable as a world-history book.

During the whole nineteenth century there was an honest attempt to combine the two spheres of religion and science, as the *Bridgewater Treatise* (1833 ó 1840) demonstrates. But when *The Descent of Man* and *The Origin of Species* were published, the whole religious and cultural scene was shocked by Darwin's statements and discoveries.

For most of the people it was hard to accept the idea of man descending from apes and of the violence of the struggle for survival. It was not only a religious problem but also an ethical controversy. Nature is indifferent to human problems, more than

⁴⁶ J. H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864), ed. I. Ker, London, Penguin, 1994, p. 254.

often the one fit to survive is not the best of men in terms of values, but in the natural world these are not problems.

One of the champions of science deeply involved with Darwinism was Thomas Henry Huxley who wrote controversial essays on the relationship between science and ethics and also dealt with the problem of evil. According to Antonello La Vergata, Huxley was: *“il portavoce della nuova classe sacerdotale, colui che aveva difeso la scienza come portatrice di valori morali e garante di un più giusto ordine sociale”*⁴⁷.

And of course he had to face: *“il problema del male, soprattutto in un'epoca di tensioni sociali e di insicurezze crescenti”*⁴⁸.

For Huxley there was no compromise between evolution and justice. Nature, for him, was not good or bad, simply it was *unmoral*, a thought which deeply influenced Hardy. Moreover, Huxley distinguished a *“State of Nature”* primeaval, the perfect scenery for the struggle, from a *“State of Art”* artificial, human and sorrowful. As La Vergata wrote in his comment on *Evolution and Ethics*:

Il raffinamento della sensibilità, l'apertura di nuovi campi d'azione dell'intelletto che hanno caratterizzato il progresso sociale e culturale, sono stati inevitabilmente accompagnati da una crescita proporzionale della capacità di soffrire⁴⁹

Huxley recognized the importance of sympathy between humans and of the moral values society elaborates for humankind. But he simply described the processes in the natural world, his *“cosmic process”* whose most pervading characteristic was

the struggle for existence, the competition of each with all, the result of which is the selection, that is to say, the survival of those forms which, on the whole, are best adapted, to the conditions which at any period obtain; and which are, therefore, in that respect, and only in that respect, the fittest⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ A. La Vergata, *Introduzione*, in T.H. Huxley, *Evoluzione ed Etica*, ed. A. La Vergata, Torino, Bollati Boringheri, 1995, pp. ix - lxiii, p. x.

⁴⁸ *Ivi*.

⁴⁹ A. La Vergata, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

⁵⁰ T.H. Huxley, *Prolegomena in Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 1-43, p. 4.

Again, this statement echoed in Hardy's tragic novels. His most famous protagonists, Tess and Jude, are not fit to survive in the modern world. Their failure in the struggle for existence, the shame and the wrong judgment passed on them by society lead them to surrender.

Moreover, the ancient theme of the sins of the fathers falling upon the children which recurs in Hardy's tragic novels, significantly was already present in Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. Here, Huxley described a dark and cruel natural world, which coincides quite perfectly with Hardy's vision:

the violator of ethical rules constantly escapes the punishment which he deserves; that the wicked flourishes like a green bay tree, while, the righteous begs his bread; that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children; that, in the realm of nature, ignorance is punished just as severely as willful wrong; and that thousands upon thousands of innocent beings suffer for the crime, or the unintentional trespass of one.⁵¹

Only the conscience of man can stand against "the moral indifference of nature"⁵² and its high values can save humanity. Huxley spoke of the ancient religions and cultures as the ones which tried to reconcile nature and the distribution of good and evil with humanity. Huxley excluded Christianity from his discourse, especially the Roman Church, which he held responsible, as Cyril claimed, "for the destruction of all that is highest in the moral nature, in the intellectual freedom, and in the political freedom of mankind"⁵³. Moreover, as an agnostic, Huxley promoted the reading of the Bible, but only an edited version of it, purged of the statements which science had proved to be false. Hardy certainly admired this attitude, because, as he wrote in a letter, religion is "a transient and ineffectual creed based on dubious legends no longer believed"⁵⁴.

⁵¹ T.H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, in *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* cit., p. 47.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 50.

⁵³ B. Cyril, *T.H. Huxley: scientist, humanist and educator*, London, Watts, 1959, p. 157.

⁵⁴ T. Hardy quoted in R. Schweik, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

1.3 Culture and Education

The increase in population and the improvement of literacy contributed to the enforcement of the idea of culture and, naturally, originated debates about the role of culture in society.

Moreover, the social progress led also to a development of schools for the lower classes in order to increase the literacy level of working class children. After the educational reforms, new schools and institutes were founded for lower class boys and girls, but obviously they never had the same opportunities of the high class children, as for example attending Universities.

In addition, during the XIXth century the new scientific discoveries started to be popularized in cheap publications made on purpose for the working class. A *Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* was also founded which published texts promoting the knowledge among the lower classes.

Notwithstanding this enormous progress in education, the government perceived the danger of a too much literate working class. Stamp taxes were introduced on what was considered "dangerous literature" and in this way higher classes controlled what books were published and to what books the working class had access. But, in 1855, as a consequence of an ever-growing popularity of novels and essays, the stamp taxes were abolished.

Regarding instead the middle class, the bourgeoisie's success in business and markets commenced also the popularization of culture. The middle class felt a strong need to learn and consequently the number of encyclopedias and essays published every year increased rapidly. Moreover, famous booksellers as Murray, Blackwood and Macmillan became entrepreneurs, who bought reviews and writings, becoming business men enjoying an influent presence in the market.

In addition, a great number of periodicals and newspapers, which contained fiction, opinions, reviews and criticism, started to be published. The major periodicals were the "Edinburgh Review" (founded in 1802), which hosted also Carlyle's essays, and the "Quarterly Review" (founded in 1809). Starting from the thirties also working class and women's magazines were established. Finally, the popularity of fiction encouraged many writers to try to write a novel, but also created the circulating libraries as Mudie's or W.H.Smith, through which people could borrow books at a very cheap annual subscription.

All these changes led to a modification of the meaning of culture. As Williams argued, from a 'general state or habit of the mind' or, simply, the 'culture of something', during the nineteenth century it came to mean a whole way of life, material, intellectual, and spiritual⁵⁵. Obviously, this alteration of the meaning of the word brought also to intellectual debates and to questioning the position of culture in Victorian society. For many artists and writers, as Williams underlined, 'culture became the normal antithesis to the market'⁵⁶.

For others, as Matthew Arnold, culture was something higher: what might lead to the perfection of man. In a period of revolution and changes Arnold saw the danger of instability and proposed Culture as a remedy:

being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically.⁵⁷

Arnold borrowed from Carlyle the concept of following notions mechanically, but he developed, in *Culture and Anarchy* more than in any other essay a concept of culture which was already discussed by Coleridge and Cardinal Newman.

In fact, John Henry Newman wrote extensively about education and on his idea of how a University had to be. He wrote also on culture and on the faculty of intellect, distinguishing it from morality and faith. For Newman, the perfection of intellect was 'the end of University Education' and he defined it as 'the clear, calm, accurate vision and comprehension of all things, as far as the finite mind can embrace them'⁵⁸.

In the definition of Culture by Arnold it is possible to find echoes of Newman, even if for Arnold, Culture is 'a pursuit of our total perfection' whereas for Newman is more a 'state'. Certainly culture was an essential condition for the expansion of the mind, but for Newman it did not imply a continuous movement towards perfection.

⁵⁵ R. Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958), London, Penguin, 1971, p. xvii.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, (1869), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 5.

⁵⁸ J.H. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, quoted in I. Ker, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

However, the concepts of light and connexion, so important in Arnold's discourse on Culture were already present in Newman's *Idea of University*, probably the most influential work for Matthew Arnold's development of Newman's theories.

But Matthew Arnold who shared with Newman the feeling of impatience and irritation towards the modern world, proposed in the third phase of his career, a definition of culture which comprehends the force and qualities of Hellenism, i.e. "the spontaneity of consciousness"⁵⁹ and the idea that Hellenism permits "to see things as they really are"⁶⁰ considering it superior to Hebraism and Christianity. While Newman, even if open to humanist and Hellenic influences, never considered Hellenism as the perfect solution for the disease of the modern world.

Furthermore, Arnold elevated poetry to the rank of a religion, because poetry, united with culture in a whole spirit, has the qualities necessary to the perfection of man, i.e., beauty, sweetness and light.

Culture, and especially poetry, are for Arnold "the general harmonious expansion of those gifts of thought and feeling which make the peculiar dignity, wealth and happiness of human nature."⁶¹ This kind of description returns frequently in *Culture and Anarchy* and in other essays, and Arnold used words like harmony and happiness also to oppose Hellenism and the life in Ancient Greece to Hebraism, where sense of obedience and strictness of conduct led to the awakening of the sense of sin and self-sacrifice⁶².

The distinction between Hellenism and Hebraism influenced also Hardy, who portrayed the pursuit of perfection and the struggle between the two opposing forces in Angel, his most "intellectual" and "Hellenic" character.

Hardy was also well aware that not all people could learn and receive a high education as Angel, or as Arnold had received in real life. His most famous characters, Tess and Jude, even if they received a better education than their parents, were excluded from University, because Tess is a woman and Jude is poor. Even Hardy did not attend university and he can be compared to his most tragic character, Jude, the self-taught man who craves for knowledge and learning.

As previously argued, for working class children education improved, but, for men of open mind, as John Stuart Mill, it was not enough. Mill advocated for equality and

⁵⁹ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p.97

⁶⁰ *Ivi.*

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 36

⁶² Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 100-1

for the possibility of a higher education. According to Mill, differences between social classes were only a matter of education. Even if in his youthful propagandism John Stuart Mill embraced the faith of his father in a popular education based on the diffusion of knowledge and the influence of reason⁶³, as argued by Roellinger Jr, he lately pointed to a democracy of intellect, claiming an education which comprehended not only practical and useful knowledge, as his father and the Benthamites proposed, but, as Rowllinger maintained, also the cultivation of feelings and proclaimed that the only useful knowledge is that which teaches us how to seek what is good and avoid what is evil⁶⁴.

Mill's idea of Culture had some points in common with Arnold's such as the importance of education, the value given to Greek and Roman culture and the praise of poetry. Moreover, both saw the aim of education as the self-development of the individual. Mill, however, differs from Arnold because he gave much more importance to the individual whereas Arnold theorized about a small *élite* of intellectuals who has to guide humanity towards perfect society. Mill evaluated the individual because he advocated for liberty and equality for everyone, he demanded

liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral or theological⁶⁵

Interestingly, the intellectual freedom and individualism proposed by Mill, were concepts which greatly influenced Hardy in his portrait of Angel Clare⁶⁶. Hardy was so familiar with the works of Mill that he claimed that in the 1860s he knew Mill's *On Liberty* almost by heart⁶⁷, as Schweik reported, and often his characters quote Mill or refer to his notions on intellectual liberty.

However, there was one thing Mill did not include in his idea of education: physical science. Huxley, instead, strived to make it enter as a discipline in colleges,

⁶³ F. X. Roellinger Jr., *Mill on Education*, "The Journal of General Education", Vol. 6, No. 4, July 1952, pp. 246-259, p. 249.

⁶⁴ *Ivi.*

⁶⁵ J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=MilLib2.xml&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1>

⁶⁶ Cf. D. J. DeLaura, *The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels*, cit. p. 396

⁶⁷ R. Schweik, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

considering it "absolutely essential"⁶⁸. Nevertheless, Huxley recognized the importance of both aspects of education, science and humanities, believing that "for the purpose of attaining real culture, an exclusively scientific education is at least as effectual as an exclusively literary education"⁶⁹.

But, all three intellectuals based their knowledge on the study of antiquity, and they agreed that there was no other example of perfect intellectual freedom, or as Arnold wrote "there was the utmost energy of life there, public and private, the most entire freedom, the most unprejudiced and intelligent observation of human affairs."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ T. H. Huxley, *Science and Culture* (1880) in *T. H. Huxley on Education, A Selection from his Writings*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 180-188, p. 180.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 181

⁷⁰ M. Arnold, *On the Modern Element in Literature* in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R.H. Super and A. Arbor, Rexdale, The University of Michigan Press, 1960, 9 vols, vol. I, pp. 18-37, p. 23

1.4 Paganism and Aestheticism

Along with the Judeo-Christian tradition, western culture had always been affected also by Greek culture which fostered in the Nineteenth century a revival of Paganism, or rather of a part of the Hellenic religion.

The main centre of classical learning had been Oxford for many centuries, but during the XIXth century the classical studies became a privileged field of research in the universities. As Hurst wrote: "Greece provided familiar and idealized cultural touchstones for the classically-educated Victorian gentlemen who considered themselves heirs to the Hellenic tradition"⁷¹.

Starting with the Romantic period, when the revived interest in classical culture was imported from Germany, Greek religion, associated with light, pleasure and nature, acquired admiration and followers. Greece was seen as an escape from the mistakes of the Christianity of the Middle Ages, which were, according to Evangelista, the "mortification of the senses, their false promises of redemption, and their failure to achieve any real emancipation."⁷² Though the contemporary neo-medieval movement strongly criticized Hellenism looking at the ancient religion with suspicion and considering it as a sinful and depreciable cult, the cultural *élite*, which was already imbued with classical art and literature, preferred the humanism and enlightenment, the democracy and also complexity of the Greek culture rather than the restrictions of Christianity.

Matthew Arnold tried, during his career, to find a compromise between the two forces which, according to him, contributed to shape the world. For him, both Hellenism and Hebraism, from which Christianity derived, had the same aim, namely the perfection of man. Also other Victorian intellectuals attempted to revise the hostility towards paganism, suggesting, as argued by Louis, "that the same religious sensibility informed both ancient Greek and modern Christian religion"⁷³.

Different attitudes can be seen also within the admirers of Paganism and Hellenic culture. Strong importance was given to the idealization of Greek spirit as a source of sweetness, light and beauty, but Victorians showed interest also for the Mysteries of Greek religion, namely the Eleusinian and Dionysian cults. These mysteries, and also

⁷¹ I. Hurst, *Victorian Literature and the Reception of Greece and Rome*, "Literature Compass" Vol. 7 No. 6 (2010), pp. 484-495, p. 484

⁷² S. Evangelista, *Aestheticism and Ancient Greece, Hellenism: Reception, Gods in Exile*, (2009) Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 32

⁷³ M.K. Louis, *op. cit.* p. 330

the myths of the ancient world, were elaborated and retold in order to represent more modern issues and tales, as in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, in which, according to Hurst, the "characters unknowingly act out the myth of Persephone"⁷⁴.

During the Victorian period, the myth of Persephone gained an extraordinary popularity not merely because of Hardy's novel, but especially through the poems of Swinburne "At Eleusis" or Tennyson "Demeter and Persephone". As argued by Louis, it was originally a "tale of disconnection and reconnection", but then it "turned into a tale of disconnection only"⁷⁵, focusing the attention especially on sorrow and on the abduction by Hades excluding the reconciliation between Persephone and Demeter. Exactly from this point of disconnection from the original story, Pater developed his own mythography of Greece, writing about both the Eleusinian and Dionysian mysteries in his work of 1895, *Greek Studies*. In this work, Pater underlined the importance of passion in Greek religion and the Greek perception and attitude on sex, describing a more complex culture than Arnold's picture of Greek culture, and correcting, as Evangelista stated, "Arnold's sanitized and bloodless idealization of ancient Greece"⁷⁶.

Therefore, Pater's aim was to demonstrate that Greek religion and culture was superior to Christianity and, according to DeLaura, "part of his strategy is to emphasize, [i]n the "Biblical" and "medieval" quality of Greek myth, its "sacredness" and "mystery"⁷⁷. For Pater, religious sensibility did not illuminate and it did not provide moral clarity. Religion only provided impressions, atmospheres, different for every individual.

Pater certainly modified Arnold's theories and, as DeLaura explained, he was in debt to Arnold's essay *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment* in which Arnold described a "polarized opposition of the medieval "religion of sorrow" and the allegedly superficial "religion of pleasure" of the Greeks"⁷⁸. Yet, even Pater tried to compromise Christianity and Hellenism and attempted to redeem Christianity even if he blames it for the Church's condemn of pleasure and beauty. But Pater searched for a harmonization of human forces, and he found it only in Greek Culture.

⁷⁴ I. Hurst, *op. cit.* p. 486.

⁷⁵ M.K. Louis, *op. cit.* p. 346.

⁷⁶ S. Evangelista, *op. cit.* p. 38.

⁷⁷ D. J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater*, cit. p. 247.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

At the fin-de-siècle, Paganism and mythology enjoyed increased popularity after the publication of *The Golden Bough* (1890) by James Frazer, and then with the work of Jane Ellen Harrison.

Despite all the admiration for Paganism, if initially Greek Religion was useful to criticize and substitute Christianity, at the end of the century the same resentment against Christian religion was turned against the Olympian Gods, who were attacked, according to Louis

for their separateness from humanity, their lack of sympathetic feeling, their indifference or cruelty, while the Mysteries are increasingly seen as expression of human anguish, hunger, or desire ó revelations of the sacral within the swift, bloody, and beautiful cycles of natural life. In the end, only the gods that die survive; the imperishable gods are dead.⁷⁹

A new sensibility arose, which tried to exalt and celebrate life according to the Dionysian Mystery. This new attitude offered a life within Nature, and it can be argued that it seemed a sort of inheritance of the Romantic sensibility, which still lasts at the end of the century.

Towards the end of the XIXth century, deriving his sources from the revival of paganism and the influence of Hellenism in culture, the Aesthetic movement acquired remarkable importance. Although Pater is now considered its father, because of the publication of his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* in 1873, Aestheticism had its origins also in Romanticism and Pre-Raphaelites, and of course in Arnold⁸⁰.

As it happened to the word culture, also the words art and artist changed their meaning throughout the century. They had come to indicate a special kind of truth and human being, and the word aesthete meant a special kind of person related to the new sense of the word *aesthetics* which, as Williams explained, òwas found to describe the judgement of art⁸¹.

As well as many other Victorian intellectuals, Pater looked at his present time conscious of its crisis and loss of faith in Christianity. He believed, as Beaumont

⁷⁹ M.K. Louis, *op. cit.* p. 354

⁸⁰ Cf. D. J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater*, cit. p. 230

⁸¹ R. Williams, *op. cit.* p. xvi

claimed, that the ðpaganistic impulses of the past [í] can redeem the present⁸². In *The Renaissance*, he searched the presence of the Hellenic temperament in contemporary life and described how the pagan spirit was still a strong presence at the end of the middle ages; furthermore, he demonstrated that the age of Lorenzo deø Medici was comparable to the Athens of Pericles, which had been so much exalted by Arnold in *On the Modern Element in Literature*.

Pater certainly agreed with Arnold in his description of the qualities of Hellenism, namely the clearness of vision, the radiancy, which were summarized in Arnoldø ðthe sweetness and lightö. The important features of Greek culture were for both authors, in particular for Pater, essential qualities for men to attain perfection.

Notwithstanding Arnoldø great influence on Pater, since the sixties, the period of Arnoldø religious crisis, Pater commenced a process of deconstruction and developing of Arnoldø concepts. According to Arnold, art always conveyed a moral or social purpose or message, which can be helpful to elevate the human mind and soul. Pater, on the contrary, in the famous conclusion of *The Renaissance*, wrote what was to become the main Aesthetic tenet, art for artø sake⁸³, which completely detached art from the moral and social sphere.

Yet, Pater was so indebted to Arnold that he quoted him at the beginning of *The Renaissance*. And, most important, as argued by Delaura, his

four-part division of human nature ð ñthe body, the senses, the heart, the intelligenceø ð is so close to the final formula of Arnold's *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, ñthe senses and understanding, [...] the heart and imaginationø as to suggest that Pater is consciously countering Arnold's assignment to the Renaissance of the senses and understanding alone. Pater is in effect asserting that the Renaissance is as adequate an expression of the ñimaginative reasonø as adequate a servant of the ñmodern spiritø as Arnold's great Greek century.⁸⁴

Even if Arnold had already stated the superiority of Hellenism to Hebraism in *Culture and Anarchy*, Pater overexalted the Greek ideal, and tended to shape human

⁸² M. Beaumont, *Introduction*, in W. Pater, *The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry*, (1873), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. vii-xxix, p. xv

⁸³ W. Pater, *The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry*, (1873), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p.121.

⁸⁴ D. J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater*, cit. p. 236.

life on the Greek model. But Pater, as Arnold had done before him, had to come to terms with the medieval inheritance of the modern world⁸⁵, and in a reconciliatory mood he recognized to the culture of the middle ages its own merits, such as the flourishing of courtly love and poetry, and courtly art.

Interestingly, Pater wrote also a short essay, *Diaphaneitè* (1895), describing what Beaumont called an ideal kind of person who reinstates the ethics and aesthetics [í] of Hellenism⁸⁶ and sublimate [í] the exquisite sensitivity⁸⁷ of the diaphanous character. But again some sort of a diaphanous character had been already present in Arnold, since, as DeLaura wrote, "Pater's diaphanous temperament is in fact the moral equivalent of Arnold's ideal of disinterested criticism"⁸⁸.

Moreover some features of Pater's diaphanousness are to be found in the character of Angel in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. According to Pater features of the diaphanous temperament, are a moral sexlessness and a clear crystal nature⁸⁹ which are all features present in Angel. But Angel still retains a conservative and ethical aspect, which is incompatible with Pater's idea of the ideal human disposition. Also in Jocelyn Pierston, the protagonist of *The Well-Beloved*, it is possible to find some of the attributes of *Diaphaneitè*, such as the passion, and the pursuit of harmony and beauty. But what makes Hardy so different from Pater is that neither Jocelyn nor Angel are the agents of that regeneration of the world⁹⁰ which, according to Pater, was what this kind of temperament was to produce because, despite their Hellenism, they both lack harmony being desperately modern characters.

Hardy's *The Well-Beloved* drew from Pater's Aestheticism also the concept of Ideal Beauty and the powerful drive of sensual desire which are the two forces that dominated Jocelyn Pearston throughout the whole novel. What Hardy described in this book is an artistic temperament, and its real theme is the relationship of art to life⁹¹ as the subtitle of the book, *A Sketch of a Temperament*, explained. Jocelyn Pearston is described as wonderful and successful sculptor but he is also a frustrated

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 256.

⁸⁶ M. Beaumont, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

⁸⁷ *Ivi*.

⁸⁸ D. J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater*, cit. p. 228.

⁸⁹ W. Pater, *Diaphaneitè* in *The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry*, (1873), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 136-140, p.139.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

⁹¹ Cf. J. Thomas, *Introduction* cit., p. x.

Platonic lover and he lives an existence of wandering, following his ideal aesthetic beauty which eludes him all the time.

Chapter two

Tess of the D'Urbervilles

2.1 Angel as a sample product of the last five-and-twenty years

When *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was published in 1891, Thomas Hardy was already well known as a novelist and poet. The novel immediately gained a scandalous notoriety⁹², due to the complexity of its heroine and the provoking themes explored by Hardy, such as the concept of woman's purity and the attack on some tenets of Christian morality. Moreover, besides its tragic aspects, *Tess* shows the price of progress and the results of a life conducted outside traditional beliefs and habits. *Tess* is also characterized by the contrast between Christianity and Paganism and by a representation of an ambiguous Nature and of an ancient world which seems to resist to modernity.

Throughout the Victorian era these themes had returned frequently from Romantic authors to the Aestheticism at the end of the century, and as already argued, Hardy was deeply indebted to Huxley, Mill and also Pater. But in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* the deep influence of Arnold is clearly visible, especially in the characterization of the male protagonist, Angel Clare.

But *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* can be seen as a complex response to Arnold as DeLaura defined it, also because Hardy attempted to delineate

a Greek or Hellenic view of life, which is also somehow natural [í] an interest in Arnold's doctrine of culture [í] and the unrelenting attack on Christianity, the Churches, and their redemptive theolatriy.⁹³

All these features converged in the character of Angel, the most Arnoldian of all Hardy's protagonists. The characterization of Angel shows some features already present in Arnold's description of the Hellenic man in the fourth chapter of *Culture and Anarchy*, "Hellenism and Hebraism" Arnold wrote that the Hellenic human being is invested with a kind of aerial ease, clearness, and radiancy; they are full of what we call sweetness and light⁹⁴. Hardy referred to Angel in similar terms: "more

⁹² M. R. Higonnet, *Introduction*, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, (1891) ed. T. Dolin, London, Penguin, 1998, pp. xix-xli, p. xix.

⁹³ D. J. DeLaura, *The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels* cit., p. 381.

⁹⁴ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* cit., p. 99.

spiritual than animal; he had himself well in hand, and was singularly free from grossness⁹⁵, and these terms also recall Pater's diaphanous character.

Arnold's influence, alongside with Mill's, are clear in the portrait of the intellectual life of Angel. His will of reforming the world according to freedom of thought, and of spreading the light are reminiscent of Mill's equalitarian principles and Arnold's Hellenism. Angel refuses the rigidity and dogmatism of the Church, preferring philosophy, and in his melancholic and artistic attitude recalls also a sort of Shelleyan, ethereal and Platonic hero. Moreover, Angel does not only question the principles of Church, but he actually prefers "sermons in stones"⁹⁶ namely, philosophy and books and he joined a sort of Hellenic Paganism, as Hardy defined his creed, referring both to the Arnoldian Hellenism and to a natural paganism still present in the rural communities of England.

Angel refuses both to attend University and to take the orders, as his father and brothers did, and he actually wanders through the country, experiencing London's temptations and finally reaching Talbothays in the War Vale where he wants to acquire practical skills in farming and dairy managing. Interestingly, Angel, during his education, is assailed by the same religious doubts which tormented Hardy for all his life.

When Angel explains to his father why he did not want to take the orders, Hardy wrote in few lines what most of the intellectual *élite* of the Victorian age had felt or thought:

I love the church as one loves a parent. I shall always have the warmest affection for her. There is no institution for whose history I have a deeper admiration; but I cannot honestly be ordained her minister, as my brothers are, while she refuses to liberate her mind from an untenable redemptive theolatriy.⁹⁷

The same feeling of discomfort was experienced by Arnold during his religious crisis of the sixties. Hardy, who read *Culture and Anarchy* but also *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, shared with Arnold the sense of the inadequacy of the Church and its models and gave a strong importance to the Hellenic aspects of life. Hardy

⁹⁵ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. XXXI, p. 192.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, ch. XXIII, p. 143.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, ch. XVIII, p. 115.

infused Angel with this vision of a life conducted within Hellenism, and he actually tells his father that it might have resulted far better for mankind if Greece had been the source of the religion of modern civilization, and not Palestine⁹⁸. This idea derives directly from *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, and provokes in Angel's father, who is a good-hearted but conservative man, a painful grief. Angel's father, The Reverend Clare, is a "man of Apostolic simplicity in life and thought"⁹⁹, he loves the church to the utmost, he believes in the truth of the Bible and is "antipathetic in a high degree" to the "aesthetic, sensuous, pagan pleasure and lush womanhood"¹⁰⁰. Angel, instead, believes in a pagan life, full of natural impulses and pleasures. He shares the Arnoldian vision of Greek Paganism, because as Arnold wrote, "the ideal, cheerful, sensuous, pagan life is not sick or sorry, it is all sense and understanding"¹⁰¹. Moreover, Arnold added in *Culture and Anarchy*:

Essential in Hellenism is the impulse to the development of the whole man, to connecting and harmonizing all parts in him, perfecting all, leaving none to take their chance; because the characteristic bent of Hellenism, as has been said, is to find the intelligible law of things, and there is no intelligible law of things, things cannot really appear intelligible, unless they are also beautiful.¹⁰²

Angel is the "developed man" and he can actually see the beauty and truth in things. But despite aspiring at "the spontaneity of consciousness"¹⁰³ of Hellenism, he is not perfect according to Hardy. Although in the Talbothays Vale, when he meets Tess and falls in love with her, Angel is seen as a perfect pagan and a nature worshipper, he soon falls on his Puritan or, according to Arnold's definition, Hebrew side. In the Arcadian and idyllic Var Vale, Angel plays the harp, reads poetry and comes in contact with a natural and simple world of peasants. Here, he can inscribe Tess in his pantheon, idealizing her and calling her with deity names¹⁰⁴. In the perfectness of the ancient Vale of Var they can restore a Greek model of life, or, retaining a Christian vision, they can be seen as new Adam and Eve¹⁰⁵.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, ch. XXV, p. 158.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, ch. XXV, p. 157.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, ch. XXV, pp. 157-8.

¹⁰¹ M. Arnold, *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, cit., pp. 222-226.

¹⁰² M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* cit., p. 114.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. XX, p. 130.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Ivi*.

Tess believes in him and in his spontaneity of consciousness, in his sweetness and light, she worships him like a God. Actually, Hardy described Tess's feelings as "idolatry"¹⁰⁶.

Moreover, Angel is a guide for Tess, he is also godlike in her eyes¹⁰⁷, and he acquires the role of the educator for Tess, infusing in her part of his knowledge. As Hardy wrote: "her natural quickness, and her admiration for him, having led her to pick up his vocabulary, his accent, and fragments of his knowledge, to a surprising extent."¹⁰⁸

But Angel is not only the educator of Tess, the natural woman, he is also, in Arnold's terms, "in the position of one who makes a contribution in aid of the practical necessities of our times."¹⁰⁹ He fits perfectly Arnold's description of the culture-developed man, who could reform the world. But, according to Bonaparte, he also recalls Pater's Marius, in his intention of "reconstruct, re-conceive, remake the world"¹¹⁰. Furthermore, in Angel's beliefs the influence of Mill's ideas is clearly foreshadowed:

in the lapse of ages, improved systems of moral and intellectual training would appreciably, perhaps considerably, elevate the involuntary and even the unconscious instincts of human nature; but up to the present day culture, as far as he could see, might be said to have affected only the mental epiderm of those lives which had been brought under its influence. This belief was confirmed by his experience of women, which, having latterly been extended from the cultivated middle-class into the rural community, had taught him how much less was the intrinsic difference between the good and wise woman of another social stratum, than between good and bad, the wise and the foolish, of the same stratum or class.¹¹¹

Clearly, Angel's idea of the equality of classes and also of women and men derive from Mill's *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women*, while the idea of the

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, ch. XXXIII, p. 214.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, ch. XXIX, p. 181.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, ch. II, p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 71.

¹¹⁰ F. Bonaparte, *The Deadly Misreading of Mythic Texts: Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (Winter, 1999), pp. 415-431 p.417.

¹¹¹ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. XXVI, p. 165.

improvement brought about by culture and education can be retraceable again in Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*.

However, Angel remains in his Hellenising vision only as far as pain and suffering do not fall upon him. Both Tess and Angel are in fact mistaken in idealizing each other too much.

When finally Tess confesses to him her past, Angel refuses her. He condemns Tess and she cannot find the forgiveness that she has hoped to receive.

Angel surrenders to his Hebrew self, he is not following "the whole play of the universal order"¹¹² anymore, but he actually follows only his "strictness of conscience"¹¹³. Tess is the victim of the Puritan side of Angel. He leaves her, and he altogether rejects his Hellenism. According to Hazen:

in its confrontation with the problem posed by Tess's revelation of "sin," Angel's allegiance to his Hellenic Paganism receives its hardest test. Here his ability to make a "stream of fresh thought play freely about our stock notions and habits" (Arnold's words) breaks down temporarily, and he judges Tess according to notions and habits of mind inherited from the surrounding culture.¹¹⁴

In his crisis Angel continually wavers from a more sympathetic and pagan attitude to a more rigid and Christian evaluation of Tess's "sin". In search for advice he quotes in his mind both the words of "the pagan moralist" Marcus Aurelius, and of Christ, making the difference between the pagan and Christian thought apparent. But neither Marcus Aurelius nor Christ help Angel to escape his slavery to "custom and conventionality"¹¹⁵, and to their limitations. He even accuses Tess of being only a peasant woman, claiming that they belong to "different societies, different manners. You [Tess] are an unapprehending peasant woman, who have never been initiated into the proportions of social things. You don't know what to say"¹¹⁶. In this passage

¹¹² M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 97.

¹¹³ *Ivi.*

¹¹⁴ J. Hazen, *Angel's Hellenism in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles"*, *College Literature*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Spring, 1977, pp. 129-135, p. 132.

¹¹⁵ Cf. T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. XXXIX, p. 265.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, ch. XXXV, p. 232.

Angel's conventionality of thought reaches its peak, provoking in Tess an impulse to anger¹¹⁷.

Angel flies to Brazil, and in such a savage and naturally violent world as that southern state of America he starts to reconsider what is moral and who is the moral man or woman. He sees the death of many children during his journey, he experiences what is the struggle for survival and he falls ill. During a journey, Angel entrusts to a stranger the story of his life. The stranger replied to him that he was wrong in coming away from her.¹¹⁸ The stranger's advice and sudden death arouse in Angel remorse, and his words influenced Clare more than all the reasoned ethics of the philosophers¹¹⁹. Therefore Angel returns home not only physically changed, but he had mentally aged a dozen years¹²⁰ and he finally forgives and accepts Tess for what she really is, a child of the soil, pure and innocent.

Tess and Angel suffer from the same disease, the ache of modernism defined by DeLaura as the distress and rootlessness of those whose intellectual honesty forces them to live without a sense of Providence¹²¹.

As it was previously argued, Arnold was the first English intellectual who delineated the price of modernism. In his early poetry Arnold actually described the sense of wandering between two worlds¹²² and the impossibility to rest in a world which continually changes. But Hardy's characters, actually, wander between an ancient world rooted in natural and conservative beliefs, which include also superstitions and ambiguous relationships with Nature, and a modern world characterized by consumerism, violence and mechanization.

But Angel's most prominent defect is the lack of fire and strength¹²³, the two qualities which are present in the modern world and which had been cultivated and worshipped through labour and mechanization. Both qualities, according to Arnold, were present in the Barbarians and Philistines, and Hardy portrayed Alec DeUrbervilles in accordance with these characteristics, rendering him the opposite of Angel. Of course fire and strength were not to predominate, as they do in Alec, otherwise they were doomed to produce fanaticism and an energy directed only to

¹¹⁷ *Ivi.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, ch. XLIX, p. 341.

¹¹⁹ *Ivi.*

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, ch. XLIX, p. 340.

¹²¹ D. J. DeLaura, *The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels*, cit. p. 381.

¹²² M. Arnold, *Stanzas from the Great Chartreuse*, quoted in D. J. DeLaura, *The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels* cit. p. 381

¹²³ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* cit., p. 120

carnal possession. If Angel is only spirit, Alec is only flesh and moreover, Alec is more a Byronic hero than a Shelleyan character.

Furthermore, Arnold advocated for a balance of forces, in order to "get the basis for a less confused action and a more complete perfection"¹²⁴ but Hardy showed through the characters of Angel and Alec how in the modern mechanized world, the balance of flesh and spirit is no longer possible.

If Angel reassembles the Hellenic character, Alec possesses the qualities of both Barbarians and Philistines, i.e. aristocracy and middle class. Alec is the son of a middle class man who had made money with trades and moreover, with the profits of his business, Alec's father bought the aristocratic title of the De Urbervilles. Alec is described as a young man full of energy and passion, selfish and vigorous. These are all features present in Arnold's description of the Barbarians:

staunch individualism, [...] passion for doing as one likes, [...] an exterior culture mainly: it consisted principally in outward gifts and graces, in looks, manners, accomplishments, prowess [...] far within, and unawakened, lay a whole range of powers of thought and feeling, to which these interesting productions of nature had, from the circumstances of their life, no access.¹²⁵

Being an aristocrat only by name, he possesses also the qualities of the Philistines, namely "an enemy of the children of light"¹²⁶. In opposition to Angel, he is one of those who "do not pursue sweetness and light, but prefer to them [that] machinery of business"¹²⁷.

In fact, Alec treats Tess as an object, from whom he can derive exclusively sexual pleasure. Even if he loves her, he does it in a contorted and unhealthy way. He invests Tess with a morbid passion obtaining only hate and fear from her. He is the ultimate product of the modern and mechanized world.

But, as previously argued, the product of the modern world is also Angel. For Hardy, Angel and Arnold shared the same sin, i.e. "the imperfect modernism"¹²⁸ because, according to DeLaura, they both fall on "custom and conventionality"¹²⁹. In Arnold's

¹²⁴ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 120.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 76-7.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

¹²⁷ *Ivi*.

¹²⁸ Cf. D. J. DeLaura, *The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels*, cit. p. 382.

¹²⁹ *Ivi*.

religious crisis of the sixties and in his religious writings, Hardy saw 'insincerity' because Arnold tried to compromise the moral dogmas of religion with Hellenism. Towards Angel instead, Hardy remained ambiguous, although he condemned him for his rejection of Tess and lack of sympathy.

According to DeLaura, Angel Clare became for Hardy 'the representative of a whole generation of 'advanced' but misdirected thought.'¹³⁰. Hardy had certainly portrayed the modern man, with all his defects and sins.

Angel's sin is exactly that of being ineffectual, mere spirit, he is over-idealistic and for Hardy this can be a dangerous attitude¹³¹. In chapter XXXVI of *Tess*, Hardy wrote: 'Clare's love was doubtless ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability.'¹³². Clearly, Angel needed some of Alec's animalism as the narrator hints when he says, in chapter XXXI that 'he was, in truth, more spiritual than animal; [í] he was rather bright than hot [í] more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal'¹³³.

It can be also argued that Angel's conservative judgement leads Tess to her tragedy not less than Alec's violence. The tragedy in *Tess* is composed of two forces, the first is the ancient theme of the sins of the fathers falling upon the children, represented in her relationship with Alec and his violence. The second is the price of modernism and progress which affected also Tess's life, and it is portrayed in Angel's ineffectuality.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 385.

¹³¹ Cf. *Ibidem*, cit. p. 392.

¹³² T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. XXXVI, p. 244.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, ch. XXXI, p. 192. For further explanations on this issue see E. Villari, *La Fatale Ostilità tra Carne e Spirito. Paganesimo, Cristianesimo e Tragico Moderno in 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' and 'Jude the Obscure'* in P. Tortonese ed., *Il Paganesimo nella letteratura dell'Ottocento*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2009, pp. 205-28.

2.2 Tess: Nature and Paganism

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy showed the dichotomy between a benevolent and indifferent nature, a theme which runs throughout the whole Nineteenth century, from the beginning, with the Romantic poets as Wordsworth, who saw Nature as a positive force, to the late debate originated by the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* which changed drastically the perspectives on the relationship between man and nature.

In the novel Hardy struggled to find a compromise between a romantic vision of Nature attached to his heroine and the scientific idea derived from Darwin and Huxley.

The benevolent aspects of Nature are presented in the character of Tess, who is frequently associated with birds or other wild animals, and Angel more than once calls her 'a daughter of the soil'¹³⁴ and later he describes Tess as 'full of poetry or actualized poetry [...] She lives what paper-poets only write'¹³⁵. Even Alec states that 'there was never before such a beautiful thing in Nature or Art'¹³⁶.

In the novel, as Lodge claimed, Hardy constantly emphasized Tess's kinship to Nature which drew him towards the Romantic view of Nature as a reservoir of benevolent impulses¹³⁷.

Moreover, he imbued Nature with human qualities that are merged with the human spirit. But only the rural world is seen by Hardy as imbued with ancient wisdom and positive Nature. The modern world is separated from this encouraging vision of Nature, as it is clearly explained in the description of the Stoke-D'Urbervilles mansion:

The Chase is a truly venerable tract of forest land, one of the few remaining woodlands in England of undoubted primaeval date, wherein Druidical mistletoe was still found on aged oaks, and where enormous yew-trees, not planted by the hand of man, grew as they had grown when they were pollarded

¹³⁴ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, cit., ch. XIX, p. 126

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, ch. XXVI, p. 164.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, ch. IX, p. 61.

¹³⁷ D. Lodge, *Tess, Nature, and the Voices of Hardy*, in *Thomas Hardy Critical Assessments*, ed. G. Clarke, Mountfield, Helm Information, (1993), 4 vols., vol. IV, pp. 145-157, p.154.

for bows. All this sylvan antiquity, however, though visible from The Slopes, was outside the immediate boundaries of the estate.¹³⁸

The Druids' wisdom, along with magic and folktales are still present in the peasant world in which Tess is born. Joan Durbeyfields continually sings old ballads to her children and in Mr. Crick's dairy superstitions and creeds survive and influence everyday life.

A new hand among workers, or somebody falling in love, are seen as explanations for the changes in the taste or production of milk. Moreover, old tales and legends accompany the social moments in the Talbothays dairy. According to Van Ghent, 'the magic is a knowledgeable mode of dealing with the unknowledgeable'¹³⁹. For peasant people magic and pagan superstitions merged with Christian education.

Also Tess shared this feature with rural people. But, although 'like all the cottagers of Blackmoor Vale, Tess was steeped in fancies and prefigurative superstitions'¹⁴⁰ she does not belong neither to the superstitious peasants nor to the puritanical middle class. She has 'a large and impulsive nature'¹⁴¹, and her beliefs are rooted both in the Christian education she has received and in the Pagan self which is innate in her. Reaching the dairy in the Var Vale, surrounded by Nature, Tess recognizes that her companions 'don't quite know the Lord as yet'¹⁴², and the intrusive voice of the narrator explains that:

woman whose chief companions are the forms and forces of outdoor Nature retain in their souls far more of the Pagan fantasy of their remote forefathers than of the systematized religion taught their race at later date.¹⁴³

This sound influence of Nature is used by Hardy also to justify Tess's innocence. In fact it is the law of society which condemns Tess, and according to Hardy it had no foundation in Nature¹⁴⁴. According to Paris, for Hardy 'acts are good if they are

¹³⁸ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. V, p. 38.

¹³⁹ D. Van Ghent, *On Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, in *Thomas Hardy Critical Assessments* cit., vol. IV, pp. 113-124, p. 122.

¹⁴⁰ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. VI, p. 44.

¹⁴¹ Cf. *Ibidem*, ch. XII, p. 77.

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, ch. XVI, p. 104.

¹⁴³ *Ivi*.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *Ibidem*, ch. XLI, p. 279.

in harmony with nature, bad if they are not.¹⁴⁵ If this assumption is correct also the subtitle of the book, *A Pure Woman*, is properly given to Tess. As Angel learns after his travel to Brazil, Tess has always been pure and innocent, contrary to the social world which is corrupted and therefore judges her as sinful.

In one of the most moving passages in the novel, Hardy describes a lonely and desperate Tess who finds refuge in a plantation and "outside humanity, she had at present no fear"¹⁴⁶. Here, surrounded only by Nature and completely immersed in it, she hears the sounds of a group of wounded pheasants. She feels connected with these "weaker fellows in Nature" and decides to "put out of torture" the birds. Tess is ashamed of herself, however it is not for the blame and judgement she received from the laws of society but she is ashamed of supposing she is "the most miserable being on earth"¹⁴⁷. Nature and his creatures can be victims as well as Tess. Progress and modernity do not only render the life of "the children of the soil" impossible but they also destroys the natural world. For Hardy modernity intrudes drastically in the rural world and this can be seen in the train which crosses the valley and in machines in the fields:

the machine had begun, and a moving concatenation was visible over the gate [...] along one side of the field the whole wain went, the arms of the *mechanical* reaper revolving slowly. [...] rabbits, hares, snakes, rats, mice, retreated inwards as into a fastness, unaware of the ephemeral nature of their refuge, and of the doom that awaited them later when [...] they were huddled together, friends and foes, till the last few yards of upright wheat fell also under the teeth of the unerring reaper¹⁴⁸. [*italics mine*]

However, despite this vision of nature as life-giving and threatened by man, Hardy, and also Tess, know perfectly well that "the sun do shine on the just and on the unjust alike"¹⁴⁹. She even says to her little brother Abraham that "we live in a blighted star"¹⁵⁰. Obviously this was also the conflict in Hardy's mind which led him

¹⁴⁵ B. J. Paris, "A Confusion of Many Standards: Conflicting Value Systems in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Jun., 1969), pp. 57-79 p. 64.

¹⁴⁶ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, cit., ch. XLI, p. 278.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, ch. XLI, p. 279.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, ch. XIV, p. 87.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, ch. XIX, p. 126.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, ch. IV, p. 31.

to question who has the authority for speaking of 'Nature's holy plan'¹⁵¹, and to reject Wordsworth's philosophy of Nature as good and bounteous.

Even if, according to Lodge, a network of imagery and reference encourages us to think of Tess as essentially 'in touch' with Nature [...] it is equally true that Nature is indifferent to Tess and her fate¹⁵². For Hardy, as well as for Huxley, 'nature is unmoral' and it is neither good nor bad. Hardy, who shared Huxley's vision of Nature, argued in *Tess* that his heroine is pure and innocent according to the laws of the natural world.

It is the social world which judges and condemns Tess. Therefore, Hardy saw Nature as cruel because it is indifferent even in front of Tess's tragedy. As Paris argued, 'if Tess is an attack on society and convention, it is equally an attack on the cosmic process'¹⁵³. The 'cosmic process' described by Huxley in *Evolution and Ethics*, is 'a process of incessant change, which has been going on for innumerable ages'¹⁵⁴ and, as previously argued, its most pervading characteristic was 'the struggle for existence'. In this scenery, not only supernatural tragedy and society is against Tess, but also Nature, because she is not fit to survive in a cruel world.

It was actually the Victorian modern society, led by progress and new discoveries that misunderstood the concepts explained by Darwin in his groundbreaking theory. In fact, the reception of Darwin's theory of evolution had emphasized only the concept of survival and competition, diminishing the concept of co-operation among humans¹⁵⁵ which was fundamental in Darwin's theory as it is hinted in *The Origin of Species*: 'I should premise that I use the term Struggle for Existence in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence of one being on another'¹⁵⁶. Among the supporters of the sympathy and compassion included in Darwin's theory there was also Huxley who did not deny the existence of pain, but he recognized its existence as well as highlighted the importance of its relation with pleasure and stressed the value of compassion enlarged also to animals. Hardy agreed with both scientists; in fact, in his *Apology*, the writer stated

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*, ch. IV, p. 24.

¹⁵² D. Lodge, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

¹⁵³ B. J. Paris, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁵⁴ T. H. Huxley, *Prolegomena*, in *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 5

¹⁵⁵ Cf. E. B. Gose Jr., *Psychic Evolution: Darwinism and Initiation in Tess*, in *Thomas Hardy Critical Assessments* cit., vol. IV, p. 161.

¹⁵⁶ C. Darwin, *The Origin of the Species*, quoted in E. Villari, *La Fatale Ostilità tra Carne e Spirito: Paganesimo, Cristianesimo e Tragico Moderno in 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' e 'Jude the Obscure'* cit., p. 218.

whether the human and kindred animal races survive till the exhaustion or destruction of the globe, or whether these races perish and are succeeded by others before that conclusion comes, pain upon it, tongued or dumb, shall be kept to a minimum by loving-kindness¹⁵⁷

Moreover, Hardy wrote in his notebook that 'the discovery of the law of evolution, which revealed that all organic creatures are of one family, shifted the centre of altruism from humanity to the whole conscious world collectively'¹⁵⁸.

And in his novel Hardy portrayed Tess as the only one capable of feeling compassion and sympathy towards animals, as showed in the episode of Prince's death or the pheasants-killing. She preserves a sense of altruism and proximity of man to nature which society has forgot. For this reason she is also a victim of the misinterpretation of the evolutionary system.

Moreover, according to Hardy it is hard to find morality, either in man or in Nature. In fact, Angel asks himself 'who was the moral man? Still more pertinently, who was the moral woman?'¹⁵⁹ and due to the stranger's advice he is able to state 'the beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay, not among things done, but among things willed'¹⁶⁰. In fact, throughout the whole novel the real self of Tess remains always the same, namely, her will is always directed to the good. Undoubtedly, in this way, Hardy minimized the importance of the moral laws of society which condemn Tess¹⁶¹. Yet, it is possible to see how Hardy agreed with Huxley's vision of the *unmorality* of nature, because, as Van Ghent claims, in *Tess* there is an 'antagonistic earth where events shape themselves by accident rather than by moral design'¹⁶².

The double standard in the characterization of Nature is equal to the two Pagan attitudes showed in *Tess*. As it was previously argued Angel follows the Hellenic principles of life but his paganism is founded more on an intellectual base rather than real impulses. On the other hand, Tess inherited a natural paganism which worships

¹⁵⁷ T. Hardy, *Apology* in 'Late Lyrics and Earlier', *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy*, ed. S. Hynes, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, 4 vols., vol. II, p. 319.

¹⁵⁸ T. Hardy quoted in E. B. Gose Jr. *op. cit.*, p. 161.

¹⁵⁹ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *cit.*, ch. XLIX, p. 340.

¹⁶⁰ *Ivi.*

¹⁶¹ Cf. R. C. Schweik, *Moral Perspective in Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *College English*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Oct., 1962), pp. 14-18, p. 16

¹⁶² D. Van Ghent, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

or follows a life in harmony with Nature. Hardy had always looked at Natural paganism with sympathy and in his previous novels there are many characters who live according to Nature, as for example Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

Tess feels Nature and its joyous reinforcing power:

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.¹⁶³

But Tess's paganism can be dangerous as well as Angel's Hellenic Paganism. Nature, as Bonica claimed, can also intensify human sorrow¹⁶⁴. Moreover, according to Bonica, judging Tess and nature according to Christian values renders both guilty. Judging Tess and nature according to pagan values renders them both innocent¹⁶⁵ even if Hardy believed in the idea of Nature as *unmoral*.

Tess is in conflict in her own judgement of her behaviour. If she judges her past according to Christian beliefs she feels guilty, when she looks at her past with a benevolent gaze derived from her harmony with nature she feels innocent. However, neither the moral world of society nor the pagan natural world can satisfy human needs.

Tess's inner conflict leads her to waver between a tendency to martyrdom and a strong will of self-preservation. She repeatedly says that she wishes she had never been born¹⁶⁶ or that she wants to kill herself¹⁶⁷. Only at the end, when the world allows her to enjoy a perfect moment of happiness, she is ready to die and leave the "blighted star"

Significantly Tess is arrested in Stonehenge, situated in the centre of Wessex which was the quintessence of ancient druidical paganism. And in the pagan temple Tess for the first time feels she is at home: "you used to say at Talbothays that I was a heathen. So now I am at home"¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶³ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, cit., ch. XVI, p. 103.

¹⁶⁴ C. Bonica, *Nature and Paganism in Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ELH, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Winter, 1982), pp. 849-862, p. 852.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 854.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. XII, p. 76.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibidem*, ch. XXXV, p. 230.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, ch. LVIII, p. 393.

On the altar stone where she has fallen asleep she becomes a pure creature, ready to be sacrificed to God, that mysterious entity who has played with Tess for her entire life until, finally, the President of the Immortals [...] had ended his sport with Tess¹⁶⁹. Interestingly Hardy ended his novel with a verse from a Pagan writer, Aeschilous, but Angel and Liza-Lu leave hand in hand as Adam and Eve leave the Garden of Eden at the end of *Paradise Lost*. Once again are merged in Hardy's vision Pagan and Christian tradition.

It is difficult to determine what or who is God for Hardy. In *Tess* Angel considers Tess as a deity and also Tess looks at him as if he were a God. But in the whole novel the sun can be seen as the primary deity. In chapter XIV an August dawn is presented to the reader as something alive:

The sun, on account of the mist, had a curious sentient, personal look, demanding the masculine 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-faced, mild-eyed, God-like creature, gazing down in the vigour and intentness of youth upon an earth that was brimming with interest for him.¹⁷⁰

However, the Heliolatry presence in the novel is as amoral as the nature to which it belongs. The sun sometimes shines on Tess and reinforces her joy, sometimes it disappears leaving Tess in a "mist" especially in the worst moments of her life, namely Alec's seduction, Angel's desertion and her final surrender to the police. The mist blurs the boundaries of reality for her. As Bonica claims, it is "a distorting medium that functions throughout *Tess* as a signal of moral or intellectual confusion"¹⁷¹.

Along with the primeval traces of religion, Hardy inserted in *Tess* also Romano-British religious traditions and festivities as the Cerealia rite and the May-Day festivity. According to Radford, *Tess* "chronicles the death of a figure traditionally associated with the blossoming organic fecundity of an agricultural milieu. [...] Tess

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, ch. LIX, p. 397.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, ch. XIV, p. 86.

¹⁷¹ C. Bonica, *op. cit.*, p. 852.

Durbeyfield is the 'survival' of a moribund mythology whose actuality we no longer accept¹⁷².

According to Van Ghent, 'the subject [of Tess] is mythological, for it places the human protagonist in dramatic relationship with the non-human and orients his destiny among preternatural powers'¹⁷³. Actually Hardy incorporated in *Tess* a real mythological figure, making of Tess a modern version of Persephone.

Even if the Eleusinian mysteries were 'the most famous and solemn religious rites of ancient Greece'¹⁷⁴ Hardy was ironical in his representation of it and of the tale of Persephone. The name of Persephone does not appear in the novel, but, the title of the first phase, 'The Maiden' is linked to the Greek Goddess and the whole phase is connected with the myth. As in Pater's *The Myth of Demeter and Persephone*, Tess is connected with flowers, especially roses, before her abduction by Alec who represents Hades. In the myth, also in Ovid's version, Persephone was picking roses and poppies when Hades seduces her and carries her away to the Underworld¹⁷⁵. Other, further parallelisms can be seen, according to Radford

when Alec carries an apprehensive and frightened Tess [...] off to his residence in a manner that grotesquely parodies Hades's seizing of the unwilling Persephone and bearing her away in his chariot to the Underworld. But instead of the Underworld god's 'golden car' Alec ironically possesses a 'dog-cart'¹⁷⁶

In addition, seasons seem to follow the cycles of Tess's tragedy, from a beautiful and sympathetic spring and summer to the rigid winter at Flintcomb-Ash, which can be seen as the Underworld or the Hell. Accordingly, at Flintcomb-Ash Tess is again provoked and harassed by Alec-Hades.

But Hardy ironically played with the roles of the myth. The role of Tess's mother, Joan is a reverse of Demeter's role. In fact, she sends Tess to 'Hades' instead of saving her from him. As Felicia Bonaparte stated

unlike Demeter, who hears Persephone's cry at last and spends the larger part of the Hymn lamenting and searching for her daughter, Tess's mother has not

¹⁷² A. Radford, *Thomas Hardy and the Survivals of Time*, Aldershot. Ashgate, 2003, p. 160.

¹⁷³ D. Van Ghent, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

¹⁷⁴ James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, quoted in A. Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. A. Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 165

only so ælasticø a temperament that she neither feels nor realizes the agony her daughter suffers.¹⁷⁷

Moreover, if in the myth Demeter wanders through the land in search of her daughter, in Hardyø novel, it is Tess who wanders through England in search of work and new opportunities.

At the end of the novel, Alec-Hades gains back Tess, who becomes his mistress as in the myth Persephone becomes the æQueen of the Underworldø Angelø return however, leads Tess to kill Alec. This can be seen as an heroic deed, which permits Tess to follow her instinct. Of course, in the social world it is a criminal and morally wrong act. Tess is forced again to wander through the country, this time with Angel.

In this mythic interpretation of the novel, Angel is seen as an imperfect Apollo, the sun deity, who actually carries Tess to Stonehenge, the heathen temple dedicated to Sun, creating a parallelism between Greek and Druidic religion. Tess abandons her tired body over the altar stone as if she is ready to be sacrificed to some God.

Thus Tess never gains the regeneration and rebirth which are characteristic of Persephoneø tale.

The ambivalence Hardy showed towards Nature and paganism is present also in the representation of the myth. The characters can be seen at the same time as Greek or Christian figures. In fact, Tess and Angel are not only Persephone and Apollo but also Adam and Eve, and Alec is both Hades and the Devil as clearly Alec states in chapter L (You are Eve, and I am the old other One come to tempt you in the disguise of an inferior animal¹⁷⁸) quoting also Miltonø verses from the *Paradise Lost*.

As its heroine, also the whole novel is a mixture of Christian and Pagan traditions. Some of Tessø feelings however, are connected not only to religion and Nature but also to the aesthetic experience. The aesthetic experience described by Pater at the end of *The Renaissance* is comparable to various moments in the novel in which the characters experience profound feelings, as for example, as Higonnet explained, the øcstatic rendition of pastoral loveø¹⁷⁹ in Talbothays, where Angel and Tess live their love as if they were the only human beings on earth surrounded by an extraordinary atmosphere which enclose their passion and ecstasy.

¹⁷⁷ F. Bonaparte, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

¹⁷⁸ T. Hardy, *Tess of the DøUrbervilles* cit., ch. L, p. 349.

¹⁷⁹ M. R. Higonnet, *op. cit.*, p. xxxi.

As Radford claimed, [Pater] describes ecstasy as a moment of intoxication when the body and matter of the physical world coalesce¹⁸⁰ and Tess and Angel feel exactly this moment of intoxication while living in the dairy, feeling that their bodies and souls coincide.

A comparable experience of intoxication is perceived by Tess's brothers and sisters when she baptizes Sorrow, a passage in which Hardy showed the greatness of Tess and reunites in her the spiritual and the aesthetic moment:

The ecstasy of faith almost apotheosized her; it set upon her face a glowing irradiation, and brought a red spot into the middle of each cheek; while the miniature candle-flame inverted in her eye-pupils shone like a diamond. The children gazed up at her with more and more reverence, and no longer had a will for questioning. She did not look like Sissy to them now, but as a being large, towering, and awful ó a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common.¹⁸¹

But a similar religious intoxication and ecstasy had already been described in Arnold's *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, and it can be argued that Tess includes both the Greek noble and touching application [that] could lead the soul to elevating and consoling thoughts¹⁸² and the sentiment of the religion of sorrow¹⁸³. The halos of sanctity and purity surrounds Tess and accompanies her throughout the whole novel. Tess is, according to Radford, "a goddess figure of immense stature"¹⁸⁴ but she is not fit to survive in the modern world.

According to Hardy's agnostic vision, heaven does not exist and neither providence nor divine justice are retraceable in this world: "God's not in his heaven: all's wrong with the world"¹⁸⁵ says Angel after Tess's confession.

At the end Tess is sacrificed to the cruel laws of society and not to God, be it pagan or Christian, and she expects no heaven for her. As D.H. Lawrence stated, Hardy's characters "were not at war with God, only with society"¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸⁰ A. Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

¹⁸¹ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. XIV, p. 95.

¹⁸² M. Arnold, *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, cit. p. 222.

¹⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 229.

¹⁸⁴ A. Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

¹⁸⁵ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* cit., ch. XXXVII, p. 254.

¹⁸⁶ D. H. Lawrence, *Thomas Hardy*, in *Thomas Hardy Critical Assessment* cit., vol. III, pp. 241-284, p. 250.

Chapter three
Jude the Obscure

3.1 Jude as *The Scholar-Gypsy*

Jude the Obscure was published in 1895 and it marked the end of Hardy's career as a novelist. As it had happened with *Tess*, also *Jude* gained immediately a scandalous notoriety¹⁸⁷, due to its direct attack on social conventions, on the marriage laws and especially, on religion. Moreover, the protagonists, Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead, are characterized by a deep sense of unconventionality which leads them to fight against society.

Undoubtedly, Jude recalls some of Hardy's personal characteristics such as the sense of being excluded, the will of self-improvement and self-education and also various character traits, according to Taylor, as his love of music, his romantic longing for the well-beloved, his desire to rise in the world, his responsiveness to misery. Jude's loss of religious belief at the age of 25 corresponds to Hardy's own loss at that age¹⁸⁸. Both Jude and Hardy work in the architectural field and they are never admitted to University. In addition Jude, as Hardy, for all his life returns to the Bible and Christianity, showing a profound sense of ambiguity towards religion.

Clearly Jude, being a tragic hero, is deeply alienated from society, a trait which leads him to say that "I am an outsider to the end of my days!"¹⁸⁹.

Moreover, Jude is a Romantic character, characterized by a fervid imagination and the pursuit of an open-ended dream which started in his childhood. He is also a wanderer, one of the most typical Romantic features. Jude, wanders through the country, in search of a practical application of his dream. And the first time he arrives at Christminster, the fictional representation of Oxford, Jude's romantic imagination reaches its peak and he starts a fictitious conversation with the men of letters, philosophers, poets and scientists who had lived in Christminster-Oxford and who had influenced Jude in his studies:

Jude found himself speaking out loud, holding conversations with them, as it were, like an actor in a melodrama who apostrophizes the audience on the other side of the footlights; till he suddenly cease with a start at his absurdity. Perhaps those incoherent words of the wanderer were heard within the walls by

¹⁸⁷ M. R. Higonnet, *op.cit.*, p. xix.

¹⁸⁸ D. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

¹⁸⁹ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* cit., pt. VI, ch. 1, p. 328.

some student or thinker over his lamp; and he may have raised his head, and wondered what voice it was, and what it betokened¹⁹⁰.

This passage conveys the depth, and also the inconsistency, of Jude's dream. But it also conveys the sense of tragedy attached to Jude and to his desire to raise himself and be a guide for human beings.

Moreover, Jude's romanticism is showed again in his relationship with Sue. Jude, as all Hardy's male protagonists do, idealizes Sue too much, elevating her to a status of divinity. Sue, who is not only an intellectual and modern woman but also a Shelleyan character, lives in a ideal world and "could only live in the mind"¹⁹¹ as D.H. Lawrence stated. According to Hassett, Sue, as Jude's dream, belong to a "purely mental and spiritual state of being"¹⁹² and both will cause profound suffering and dissatisfaction in him.

Furthermore, Jude is a "product and hapless victim of Oxford culture"¹⁹³. The young Jude, who for the first time saw Christminster shining "in the limits of the stretch of landscape"¹⁹⁴, starts to call it a "heavenly Jerusalem", connecting to the city of culture his dreams and life, believing that it is:

"The city of light," he said to himself.

"The tree of knowledge grows there," he added a few steps further on.

"It is a place that teachers of men spring from and go to."

"It is what you may call a castle, manned by scholarship and religion."

After this figure he was silent a long while, till he added:

"It would just suit me."¹⁹⁵

But all Jude's invocations and beliefs are false because they are not rooted in everyday reality. Christminster will not suit Jude and his dreams, it will not be his Alma Mater and Jude cannot be its beloved son¹⁹⁶. And it leads Jude to become a

¹⁹⁰ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit., pt. II, ch. 1, p. 81.

¹⁹¹ D. H. Lawrence, *Thomas Hardy*, in *Thomas Hardy Critical Assessment*, cit., vol. III, pp. 241- 284 p. 273.

¹⁹² M. E. Hassett, *Compromised Romanticism in Jude the Obscure*, "Nineteenth-Century Fiction", Vol. 25, No. 4 (Mar., 1971), pp. 432-443, p. 433.

¹⁹³ Thomas Hardy, *Literary Notebooks*, quoted in A. Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

¹⁹⁴ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, pt. I, ch. 3, p. 21.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, pt. I, ch. 3, pp. 25-6.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. I, ch. 6, p.38.

bitter and drunken self-educated young man who is forced to leave continually houses and employments.

In this wandering and in his exclusion from colleges, Jude recalls the scholar protagonist of Matthew Arnold's elegiac poem *The Scholar-Gipsy* (1853).

The poem starts with a beautiful description of a "summer day" in the fields, and the eye of the protagonist "travels down to Oxford's towers"¹⁹⁷ as Jude's eyes scout the horizon in search of Christminster. In the poem, Nature is described in all its season and characteristics, and it recalls obviously Hardy's novels and his description of natural landscapes. However, in *Jude*, the presence of Nature is retraceable only at the beginning of the novel, in which a young Jude is depicted as a boy sympathetic and in harmony with the natural world and its inhabitants. As it has been argued for Tess, also Jude feels himself connected with Nature, as it is apparent in the episode with the rooks which he is supposed to scare:

They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them. [...] "Poor little dears!" said Jude, aloud. "You shall have some dinner & you shall. There is enough for us all. [...] They stayed and ate, inky spots on the nut-brown soil, and Jude enjoyed their appetite. A magic thread of fellow-feeling united his own life with theirs. Puny and sorry as those lives were, they much resembled his own."¹⁹⁸

Throughout the whole novel Jude retains his trait of communion with Nature, as well as the scholar in the poem feels in harmony with nature, shepherds and the "boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks"¹⁹⁹.

But the story of *The Scholar-gipsy* is centred around a poor scholar of "quick inventive brain"²⁰⁰ who leaves Oxford and departs with a gipsy-crew to learn their culture and then impart it to the world²⁰¹. The scholar-gipsy has "one aim, one business, one desire"²⁰², and similarly, Jude desires to "become a prophet, however humble, to his struggling fellow-creatures, without any thought of personal gain"²⁰³

¹⁹⁷ M. Arnold, *The Scholar Gipsy*, in *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. C.B. Tinker and H.F. Lowry, London, Oxford University Press, (1950), p 256, l. 30.

¹⁹⁸ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit., pt. I, ch. 2, p. 15.

¹⁹⁹ M. Arnold, *The Scholar Gipsy*, cit. p. 257, l. 64.

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 256, l. 34.

²⁰¹ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 256, ll. 48-9.

²⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 259, l. 152.

²⁰³ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit. pt. IV, ch. 3, p. 217.

which was also Angel's desire and the ultimate scope of the intellectual man in *Culture and Anarchy*.

The scholar-gipsy, as Jude, is excluded from the standard culture and from the Universities of Oxford-Christminster, which Matthew Arnold described as the 'home of lost causes'. Interestingly, as reported by Radford, Saint Jude is exactly the 'patron of the lost causes'²⁰⁴, an appropriate name for a character who continually follows an unreachable idea and who symbolically recalls a saint or a martyr.

In his wanderings with the gipsy, the protagonist of Arnold's poem sees the harshness but also the energy of Nature and the world. Moreover, he learns the suffering, the joy and hope of human beings, and he continually pursues his dream 'waiting for the spark from heaven to fall'²⁰⁵. Instead Jude, in his wandering through the country in search of home and work, learns and experiences only the harshness and cruelty of human beings, he is constantly falling in his weakness, i.e. alcohol and women, and he starts to lose faith and hope. Nevertheless, Jude becomes a skilled stonemason, he learns Latin and he reads religious writings and under Sue's influence he learns also poetry and modern prose. Jude is a self-taught man who has always been regarded as strange but also admirable by his fellow-human beings.

When he returns to Christminster with Sue and the children, Jude is recognized by his pub companions who a few years before incited him to recite the Creed in Latin. Now, Jude, who is at the centre of the general curiosity, starts a monologue about his misfortunes in life stimulated by his disquieted state of mind. Despite the contrasts and the invitation of Sue to calm down, Jude amuses the crowd, with a sermon-like discourse which ends with a quotation from the Ecclesiastes. At the end of the monologue, Tinker Taylor, Jude's former friend, utters

'Well Preached!' said Tinker Taylor. And privately to his neighbours: 'Why, one of them jobbing parsons swarming about here, that takes the services when our head Reverends want a holiday, wouldn't he have discoursed such doctrine for less than a guinea down? Hey? I'll take my oath not one of 'em would! And then he must have had it wrote down for 'em. And this only a working man!'²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ A. Radford, *op. cit.* p. 188.

²⁰⁵ M. Arnold, *The Scholar Gipsy*, cit. p. 258, l. 120.

²⁰⁶ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit. pt. VI, ch. 1, p. 327.

Nevertheless, Jude always remains a poor working man. All his dreams are shattered by the social conventions which oppose his aspirations.

Jude's disappointment with the academic world starts when he received a response from one of the Masters of the Colleges:

Sir, - I have read your letter with interest; and judging from your description of yourself as a working-man, I venture to think that you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your trade. [...]

This terribly sensible advice exasperated Jude. He had known all that before. He knew it was true.²⁰⁷

During a drinking night in the pub with Uncle Joe, Tinker Taylor and some undergraduates, it is exactly Tinker Taylor who says to Jude that 'I always saw there was more to be learnt outside a book than in' ²⁰⁸ which is precisely what Arnold's scholar-gipsy learns in his wanderings.

In fact, the narrator of the poem describes the life of the Scholar as particular and different from the life of the Oxford students and scholars:

Because thou hadst ó what we, alas! Have not.
For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!²⁰⁹

But what incites the scholar-gipsy to depart from Oxford is an 'onward impulse' which is typical of modern times and it is exactly 'the ache of modernism' described by Hardy in his novels.

Both the scholar-gipsy and Jude suffer from the 'disease of modern life' ²¹⁰ which Hardy defined in Jude as 'the modern vice of unrest' ²¹¹. For both Hardy and Arnold

²⁰⁷ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit. pt. II, ch. 6, p. 117.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, pt. II, ch. 7, p. 120.

²⁰⁹ M. Arnold, *The Scholar Gipsy*, cit. pp. 259-60 ll. 160-6.

this modern disease leads to social unrest, to continuous escape, and it is characterized by a "sick hurry and divided aims"²¹². For Hardy, however, this disease of the modern spirit is something always destructive which leads to "social restlessness"²¹³ and make people unhappy. Moreover, as DeLaura stated, Hardy concentrated more on "the painful exigencies of modernism, its human cost, and not on its liberating effects"²¹⁴.

Hardy did not propose solutions for the modern sickness, while Arnold proposed a model of culture for the perfection of man in order to avoid the instability of the modern world, even if in *The Scholar-Gipsy*, he mourned for an intellectual condition which seems lost forever, due to "this strange disease of modern life". However, as it has been previously argued, Arnold believed that the perfection of man and the balance between the two forces of the world, i.e. "Hellenism" and "Hebraism", was still possible as argued in *Culture and Anarchy*.

Hardy, instead, described a number of characters who suffer from the disease of modern life and who try, with useless efforts, to escape from the mechanization of the world. However, Hardy searched for a "freer and more personal morality"²¹⁵ but he, and his characters, had to learn "to accept the ache of modern dislocation"²¹⁶. Hardy tried to describe this new morality as a profound understanding between men and women which is detached from the dogmatism of Christianity and its false piety. The strong attack on Christianity and society is at the core of *Jude* and it shows how human beings "over-evolved", as Jude and Sue, are incapable of living outside the social boundaries and the conventions dictated by late-Victorian society and religion. The restlessness of modern characters and the incompatibility with the rules of society lead the protagonists of Hardy's novels to fall on conventionality and dogmatism, as it happens with Angel and Sue, or to feel the "universal wish not to live"²¹⁷ as it happens with Jude, who at the end of the novel, curses the day he was born and prays God to let him perish escaping finally from his passion and his "misery of mind".

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 261, l. 203.

²¹¹ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit. pt. II, ch. 2, p. 85.

²¹² M. Arnold, *The Scholar Gipsy*, cit., p. 261, l. 204.

²¹³ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* cit., pt. VI, ch. 1, p. 327.

²¹⁴ DeLaura, *The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels* cit, p. 396.

²¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 399.

²¹⁶ *Ivi*.

²¹⁷ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit., pt. VI, ch. 2, p. 337.

3.2 Sue's Hellenism and Jude's Hebraism

Jude the Obscure is a novel characterized by contrasts, as Hardy stated:

Of course the book is all contrasts - or was meant to be in its original conception. Alas, what a miserable accomplishment it is! - e.g., Sue and her heathen gods set against Jude's reading the Greek testament; Christminster academical, Christminster in the slums; Jude the saint, Jude the sinner; Sue the Pagan, Sue the saint; marriage, no marriage; etc. etc.²¹⁸

But, the fundamental contrast is between Sue's Hellenism and Jude's Hebraism at the beginning of the novel. This dichotomy will be reversed after the tragedy which falls upon them, and which leads to Sue's return to conventionality and self-denial and Jude's complete rejection of Christianity.

When Jude reaches Christminster, "the most Christian city in the country" he already knows that Sue lives there and that she is, like him, fond of books. Moreover, according to a familiar superstition, they share also the misfortune in love and marriage. Despite the advice and warnings of Aunt Drusilla, Jude meets Sue and immediately falls in love with her, a modern and tantalising young woman.

Sue is described as "light and slight", "mobile", and "all nervous motion"²¹⁹. For Jude "she remained more or less an ideal character"²²⁰. She is an ethereal being, all nerves, capable of the highest moments of ecstasy. As Heilman argued:

Sue takes the book away from the title character, because she is stronger, more complex, and more significant, and because her contradictory impulses, creating a spontaneous air of the inexplicable and even the mysterious, are dramatized with extraordinary fullness and concreteness.²²¹

Not only the novel is all contrasts but also Sue's character is distinguishable for its alternation between a quiet intellectual person and an all-nerves girl. At the beginning she follows the principles of Hellenic life, rejecting Christian dogmas and

²¹⁸ Thomas Hardy quoted in B. N. Schwartz, *Jude the Obscure in the Age of Anxiety*, "Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900", Vol. 10, No. 4, (Autumn, 1970), pp. 793-804, p. 795.

²¹⁹ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit., pt. II, ch. 3, p. 90.

²²⁰ *Ibidem*, pt. II, ch. 3, p. 89.

²²¹ R.B. Heilman, *Hardy's Sue Bridehead*, in *Thomas Hardy Critical Assessment* cit., vol. III, pp. 211-224, p. 211.

Victorian conventionalities. But she is an incomplete Hellenic character because she refuses the pleasures of life being only a theoretical person.

Moreover, she can be described also as a Romantic and ideal object of desire, in fact she is a Shelleyan character, ethereal and aerial, who refuses sex and flesh and she can be comparable also to Keats's *Belle Dame Sans Merci*, because she, as Heilman explained, is:

leaving men not palely loitering but worse off than that: of the three men who have desired her, one finally has her but only as a shuddering sacrificial victim, and the other two die of consumption²²²

In her behaviour towards Jude and even Phillotson she is at the same time kind and gentle and sometimes harsh and selfish; at times she needs support and at times she is diffident. She refuses sex and marriage but she wants Jude to love her tenderly.

The contrasts in her behaviour are clearly visible also in her attitude towards life. At Christminster, she works for an ecclesiastic establishment but she prefers to worship Greek divinities. In Part Second, Chapter III, during an afternoon's holiday, she purchases two little statues, one of Venus and one of Apollo, and this little adventure leads her to cry "Well, anything is better than those everlasting church fal-lals!"²²³. The same night, she "unrobed the divinities in comfort"²²⁴ and begins to read Gibbon and she quotes Swinburne's *Hymn to Proserpine*, one of the most influential poem of the Hellenic revival. But, notwithstanding her deep admiration for Hellenic culture, Sue is afraid of her enterprise and she constantly blames herself for her extravagancy and peculiarities.

Moreover, she continually quotes from Shelley, and she even asks Jude to describe her as the Being in Shelley's *Epipsychidion*: "A seraph of Heaven, too gentle to be human / Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman."²²⁵. Jude recognizes in the lines the description of Sue but this passage confirms again her inconsistency as if she is a heavenly creature and, furthermore, this request of Sue shows also her need to be courted and her coquette traits.

²²² *Ibidem*, p. 215-6.

²²³ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit. pt. II, ch. 3, p. 94.

²²⁴ *Ibidem*, pt. II ch. 3 p. 95.

²²⁵ *Ibidem*, pt. IV, ch. 6, pp. 244-5.

Nevertheless, she is also an intellectual woman, who has studied and read even more books than Jude and who possesses an acute critical sense. She is independent and unconventional. She had lived with a undergraduate at Christminster, who taught her a great deal²²⁶. She has no fear of men, as such, nor of their books. I have mixed with them²²⁷, and she stays innocent, sexless and philosophical. Nevertheless, through Jude's intercession, she meets Phillotson and starts to work as his assistant at school. Soon enough, Phillotson falls in love with her, and Sue, under a feeling of obligation, accepts his proposal. But, meanwhile she has fallen in love with Jude, and in an impetuous moment she even escapes from the school. After the marriage with Phillotson, she realises that her happiness can only be with Jude. Even if this is a passionate decision, she justifies and explains her reasons appealing to her intellectual hero, John Stuart Mill. And she especially cites from *On Liberty* when she leaves Phillotson:

She, or he, who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. J.S. Mill's words, those are. Why can't you act upon them? *I wish to, always.*²²⁸ [italics mine]

Although she truly believes in what she says, as she explains to Phillotson and to Jude, at the same time she always fears and regrets her decisions, and she will not always follow Mill's words. She rejects convention but the duality in her spirit will cause her breakdown. And as John Stuart Mill in real life faced his personal crisis finding a therapy in poetry, Sue is not able to find a cure or therapy for her suffering²²⁹ and at the end she falls into customs and tradition, as it had previously happened to Angel in *Tess*.

The major difference between Sue and Jude is exactly their vision of the world. In one of the exchanges of opinions between Sue and Phillotson, she states: "I fancy we have had enough of Jerusalem," she said, "considering we are not descended from the Jews. There was nothing first-rate about the place, or people, after all – as there

²²⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. III, ch. 4, p. 148.

²²⁷ *Ibidem*, pt. III, ch. 4, p. 147.

²²⁸ *Ibidem*, pt. IV, ch. 3, p. 223.

²²⁹ Cf. R.B. Heilman, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

was about Athens, Rome, Alexandria, and other old cities.²³⁰ Phillotson does not agree with her, and tells her that even her cousin Jude "doesn't think we have had enough of Jerusalem!"²³¹.

Jude, in fact, "has taken Christianity"²³² and he can be seen also as a Biblical figure or, even Christ, and tries to follow a strict conduct of morality linked to Arnold's definition of Hebraism, while Sue searches for a restoration of Pagan sentiments.

In Part Fifth, Chapter V, Jude and Sue go to Great Wessex Agricultural Show and Sue feels that "we have returned to Greek joyousness, and have blinded ourselves to sickness and sorrow, and have forgotten what twenty-five centuries have taught the race since their time, as one of your Christminster luminaries says"²³³. One of these luminaries is exactly Matthew Arnold, who in *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment* defined the opposition between Greek joy and the religion of sorrow, i.e. Christianity. Sue and Jude want to live according to their own ideals, conducting a life "cheerful, sensuous and pagan" which "is not sick or sorry"²³⁴.

Sue is undoubtedly an Hellenic character, portrayed with "aerial ease" and "clearness"²³⁵ and she sees the "things in their essence and beauty"²³⁶ but she is also contaminated by the "present unsettled state so full of the seeds of trouble"²³⁷, namely the modern vice of unrest, as well as Jude.

Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* advocated for a communion of the two forces of the world, Hellenism and Hebraism, which both lead to the perfection of man. In *Jude*, the harmony between Jude and Sue, which represents the two forces, is a representation of the perfection of intellectual human beings. But, if Arnold believed that this perfection would be possible, Hardy instead, described a social world which condemned and excluded Jude and Sue, and especially their way of living.

The classical element of the sins of the fathers falling upon the children which activated the tragedy in *Tess*, is present also in *Jude* and regards their refusal of marriage. Being excluded by a society which does not understand their companionship, Sue and Jude have to face poverty. The tragedy reaches its peak after

²³⁰ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit., pt. II, ch. 5, p. 106.

²³¹ *Ivi*.

²³² Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. III, ch. 4, p. 153.

²³³ *Ibidem*, pt. V, ch. 5, p. 297.

²³⁴ M. Arnold, *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, cit., p. 222.

²³⁵ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 99.

²³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

²³⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 106-7

a misunderstanding between Sue and Little Father Time, which provokes the death of all the children. From this moment onwards, Sue estranges herself from Jude, and, as Hassett argued, she sacrifices her free will to God²³⁸. Instead Jude, becomes even more bitter and careless of conventions. Their aspiration towards an higher life is drastically brought to an end by what Hardy considered "the inexorable laws of nature"²³⁹.

Sue, blaming herself for the death of her children, forces her body to surrender to Phillotson, returning to the conventionality of marriage and to a mood of self-denial typical of Christianity. At the end, for Sue, Hellenism is false as well as any other religion or beliefs but she finds a refuge in self-denial.

On the contrary, Jude, after the children's tragedy blames God and he falls in a vicious circle of alcohol and in a relationship with Arabella. As Sue loses her Hellenism, Jude does not follow anymore the strictness of conduct of Hebraism and its beliefs.

Jude, similarly to Hebraism which is the force which ruled the world since Hellenism faded and which is rooted in Christianity, aims at "self-conquest and rescue from the thrall of vile affections, not by obedience to the letter of a law, but by conformity to the image of a self-sacrificing example"²⁴⁰ and, moreover, "Hebraism speaks of becoming conscious of sin, awakening to a sense of sin"²⁴¹.

In harmony with Arnold's definitions, Jude follows the higher example of self-sacrifice, i.e. Jesus, and he is always well aware of his sins. Furthermore, he also tries to obey to the letter of the law, but as the subtitle of *Jude* informs the reader, "the letter killeth" However, it is difficult to define which is the law that killed Jude, as Taylor wittily argued, because there are many candidates, from the social conventions, to the religious code and also the university rules. All this social structures however are dominated by the other characteristic of Hebraism, i.e. the strictness of consciousness, which can lead to harshness and Puritanism. What Hardy tried to do with his critiques of the social structures is to find an substitute to a rigorous and restricted way of living. And, according to Taylor,

²³⁸ M.E. Hassett, *op. cit.*, p. 442.

²³⁹ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* cit., pt. III, ch. 3, p. 141.

²⁴⁰ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* cit., p. 101.

²⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

Hardy attacked the ways that religion, and any other system, can become a letter of the law that kills; and yet he repeatedly returns to the Pauline formula which makes Charity supreme as the norm by which all else is measured. [...] suffering and mercy are Hardy's two great principles, and they stand as his great late Victorian alternatives to the Letters that Kill.²⁴²

²⁴² D. Taylor, *op. cit.* p. xxxiii.

3.3 *Jude the Obscure* as symbolism and modernity

Jude the Obscure is a highly symbolical novel. Besides Jude and Sue and their emblematic meaning, the other prominent characters, as Mr. Phillotson, Arabella and Little Father Time, have a symbolical connotation attached to their appearance.

Furthermore, the theme of the struggle of survival, which was already present in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, is useful to understand the outcome of the novel. In fact, according to Holloway, "the central train of events demands description in Darwinian terms: organism, environment, struggle, adaptation, fertility, survival, resistance"²⁴³.

Moreover, as it was previously argued, *Jude* is a novel of contrasts and it shows the divergences between past and present in an unsettled and changing world. Although this theme is not so prominent as it is in *Tess*, it is possible to observe in *Jude* some traces of a fading past and of the folklore traditions which influence the characters, for instance the curse that falls on the Fawley family or the love filters of Physician Vilbert. Also the survival of the medieval architecture of Christminster and its traditions can be seen, according to Radford, as a survival of a "medievalizing Catholicism"²⁴⁴ which is dangerous for Jude, who contributes to its survival through his work as stonemason, as well as for Sue.

However, if Jude and Sue have ideas that are "fifty years too soon to be any good"²⁴⁵ to them, other characters, as Arabella, have learned how to survive in the modern world. Also Phillotson is shown as a character who struggles between advanced ideas and conventionality.

At the beginning of the novel Phillotson is presented as the intellectual guide and hero of the young Jude and the one who inspires in the protagonist the dream of being a scholar in Christminster. In fact, Phillotson in Chapter One is leaving Marygreen in order to live in Christminster and be a "university graduate and then to be ordained"²⁴⁶. But when Jude reaches Christminster he discovers that Phillotson has failed and he did not become a graduate. He has maintained his occupation as a school-master and is comfortable in his present position²⁴⁷.

²⁴³ J. Holloway quoted in B. N. Schwartz, *op. cit.*, p. 796.

²⁴⁴ A. Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

²⁴⁵ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* cit., pt. VI, ch. 10, p. 400.

²⁴⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. I, ch. 1, p. 10.

²⁴⁷ Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. II, ch. 4, p. 102.

Phillotson is not the ideal lover or dreamer typical of Hardy's novels²⁴⁸, he is more of a practical man, who tries to break the rules of society but at the same time he is incapable of strong decisions. As his name recalls, he is a Philistine, the middle class man, and even if he is not an enemy of the children of light²⁴⁹, as Arnold defined the middle class, he never seeks for human perfection and he quickly abandons his dream of intellectual raising. As Holland Jr. stated: "Philistine" may also be taken in Arnold's sense, as the conventional middle-class person who oppresses the artist or Sue²⁵⁰.

Nevertheless, he possesses altruistic characteristics that lead him to help both Jude and Sue, especially in the first parts of the novel.

But he soon falls in love with Sue and he is highly influenced by the young woman and her vigorous ideas. Even if Phillotson knows that he could not be Sue's soul mate and companion, and he understands the strong feelings between the young cousins, his desire and need of having Sue as his wife is so strong that despite the unfavourable conditions he marries her anyway. Phillotson soon realizes Sue's unhappiness. He is also able to understand Sue's desire for freedom and even her repulsion for him. Suppressing his own feelings and conventionality, he gives to Sue the permission of reaching Jude and living as she likes.

As he states to his friend Gillingham:

"Their supreme desire is to be together or to share each other's emotions, and fancies, and dreams."

"Platonic!"

"Well no. Shelleyan would be nearer to it. They remind me of Laon and Cynthia. Also Paul and Virginia a little. The more I reflect, the more entirely I am on their side!"²⁵¹

Phillotson knows that his decision to let Sue free will bring to him difficulties and that the society will blame him, but his love for Sue and the effectiveness of her arguments convinces and upholds his mind. With Phillotson's generous action of letting Sue go, Hardy showed the schoolmaster's kindness and moral integrity.

²⁴⁸ Cf. J.C Dave, *The Human Predicament in Hardy's Novels*, London, Macmillan, 1985, p. 130.

²⁴⁹ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit. p. 75.

²⁵⁰ N. Holland Jr., *Jude the Obscure: Hardy's Symbolic Indictment of Christianity*, "Nineteenth-Century Fiction", Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jun., 1954), pp. 50-60, p. 52.

²⁵¹ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit., pt. IV, ch. 4., 231.

Phillotson even stands against the impositions of society, and he refuses to send his resignation, justifying his decision as right in the sight of Heaven and his act as one of natural charity which does not harm anyone or injure morals²⁵². Nevertheless, he is obliged to leave the school after a period of rumours and misunderstandings which result in a scuffle and a melancholic illness for Phillotson²⁵³.

When he meets Arabella, she informs him of Jude and Sue's conditions; he is stressed and he starts to regret his decision, due also to the influence of Arabella's words. He remains firm in his opinions about Sue's freedom, but he soon begins to feel that he would be gratified to have her again as his²⁵⁴. Phillotson wants to restore a companionship with Sue, because he sees the possibility of acquire some comfort, resume his old courses, perhaps return to the Shaston School, if not even to the Church itself as a licentiate²⁵⁵. He becomes the enemy of light seeing only his advantages and he rejects what he has considered a principle of justice, charity, and reason²⁵⁶.

When Sue returns, after the children's death and Phillotson's proposal of taking her back, he accepts her, without remorse or second thoughts, breaking the rules of human compassion which are so important in Hardy's world. He returns to the conventionality of the roles of marriage, incapable of understanding Sue's suffering and self-annihilation.

At the end although Phillotson's behaviour seems opportunist, the real calculating and opportunistic character in the novel is Arabella. Comparable to Alec in *Tess*, Arabella is a sexual character, who lives according to her needs and moreover, she is capable of taking and exploiting what it is necessary in every moment of her life. But if Alec is a Barbarian, Arabella can be seen as part of the Populace, incapable of elevating herself and living according the meanness of her instincts. She is raw and half-developed²⁵⁷ and she lacks the spirit of indulgence which is a necessary part of sweetness²⁵⁸.

Moreover, Arabella is linked with images of brutal animality, and she is associated with pigs and with alcohol, especially through her work as barmaid. She continually takes and leaves her husbands, Jude and Cartlett, according to the best opportunity of the moment. Unlike Sue, Arabella is described as

²⁵² Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. IV, ch. 6, p. 247.

²⁵³ Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. IV, ch. 6, p. 248.

²⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, pt. VI, ch. 6, p. 358.

²⁵⁵ *Ivi*.

²⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pt. VI, ch. 6, p. 359.

²⁵⁷ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 78.

²⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 78-9.

a fine dark-eyed girl, not exactly handsome, but capable of passing as such at a little distance, despite some coarseness of skin and fibre. She had a round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and the rich complexion of a Cochin hen's egg. She was a complete and substantial female human²⁵⁹.

Initially she entangles Jude and forces him to marry her under the presumption of her pregnancy. But, being an earthly and common woman, Arabella despises Jude's dream of being an intellectual and continually criticises him for his incapability in the domestic work. Arabella fits only the sexual part of Jude, while Sue fits his soul and mind, i.e. Jude's higher side²⁶⁰.

After few months of bad marriage Arabella leaves Jude and emigrates to Australia, leaving him free to pursue his dream. When they meet again in Christminster, Jude finds Arabella working as a barmaid in the tavern where he had recited the Creed in Latin. Here, Jude learns that she has legally married a man in Australia and then she returned to England to work. Notwithstanding his appointment with Sue, Jude succumbs to his passion, alcohol and women, and spends the night with Arabella. Theirs is not a tender encounter and the morning after they part again.

Arabella often returns in Jude's life, especially in the crucial moments of the novel.

She reappears in a desperate mood in Chapter II of Part Fifth, delivering to Jude the news of Little Father Time's existence and begging him to accept the child.

Lately, Arabella sees, or rather spies, Jude and Sue at the Wessex Agricultural Show, an episode in which all her jealousy explodes in spite of the presence of her husband Cartlett. As her friend Anny notices, Arabella wants always another man than her own²⁶¹. In Arabella, in fact, the unrest of the modern woman is shown through her sexuality and perpetual wandering from man to man. But she lives through all the changes in her life without identity crisis or suffering. As she states at the end of the novel, while Jude is on his death-bed:

Well! Weak woman must provide for a rainy day. And if my poor fellow upstairs do go off so as I suppose he will soon so it's well to keep chances open. And I can't

²⁵⁹ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit., pt. I, ch, 6, p. 39.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Holland Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²⁶¹ Cf. T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit., pt. V, ch. 5, p. 293.

pick and choose now as I could when I was younger. And one must take the old if one can't get the young²⁶².

It is exactly in the episode of Jude's death that Arabella reveals all her indifference and lack of compassion towards the protagonist, a feature that she has shown from the beginning of the novel, in the pig-killing episode or in the discard of Little Father Time. She is dominated by a non-vital energy; she is an artificial modern product who knows the exact rules and ploys necessary to survive in the world.

But a sheer product of modernity is embodied in the most symbolic character in the novel, Little Father Time. Rejected by his mother, he is sent to Jude and Sue, who welcome him with love and compassion.

Little Father Time is a complex child, described for the first time as 'Age masquerading as Juvenility' but 'doing it so badly that his real self showed through crevices'²⁶³. He has frightened eyes and ideas of life different from the common boys, he has 'begun with the generals of life'²⁶⁴ which were cruelty and indifference in his world.

In Little Father Time, Jude sees the possibility of repairing to his own failings, in fact, he exclaims to Sue: 'I have an idea! We'll educate and train him with a view to the University. What I couldn't accomplish in my own person perhaps I can carry out through him?'²⁶⁵. To this suggestion Sue answers only 'O you dreamer!'²⁶⁶. Little Father Time is certainly a child of high intelligence and perspicacity but his parents' circumstances make the realization of Jude's plan impossible, rendering it a mere dream. But, undoubtedly, Little Father Time finds immediately in Jude and Sue an unconditioned love and affection which he has lacked in Australia.

Nevertheless, Little Father Time shares with his father the thoughtfulness of a child who 'has felt the pricks of life somewhat before his time'²⁶⁷ and who knows that he lives in a world which did not want him. As the young Jude, also Little Father Time wishes he had not been born, a feature which is, however, much more rooted in the child. More than once he repeats to Sue, during their wanderings in search of lodgings, that he ought not have been born and he is stressed by the adversities and poverty that they have to face. He soon realises that sometimes children are a problem for the society that

²⁶² *Ibidem*, pt. VI, ch. 10, p. 401.

²⁶³ *Ibidem*, pt. V, ch. 3, p. 276.

²⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, pt. V, ch. 3, p. 278.

²⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, pt. V, ch. 3, pp. 278-9

²⁶⁶ *Ivi*.

²⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, pt. I, ch. 1, p. 11.

surrounds them and their family. And Sue's self-pitying words do not help and comfort the child. As a matter of fact, Sue's complaints enhance Little Father Time's melancholic and sensitive mood which leads him to say:

And what makes it worse with me is that you are not my real mother, and you needn't have had me unless you liked. I oughtn't to have come to see that's the real truth! I troubled 'em in Australia, and I trouble folk her. I wish I hadn't been born!²⁶⁸

Incapable of enduring the adversities of life, he commits the atrocious murder of his siblings and then he hangs himself, leaving only a note saying *õDone because we are too mennyõ*²⁶⁹. For Sue the children's death is a punishment of Fate, because she and Jude have followed their natural instincts in a society that have thwarted the joyfulness of love and Nature²⁷⁰ and then, she starts to blame herself.

But, as the doctor stated, it was in Little Father Time's nature to do it. He says that:

there are such boys springing up amongst us ó boys of a sort unknown in the last generation ó 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. [...] it is the beginning of *the coming universal wish not to live*²⁷¹. [italics mine]

He has inherited Jude's thoughtfulness and Arabella's non-vital energy, and these features in the little child are amplified by the cruelty and violence of modern life. As Tess and Jude, he is not fit to survive in this world.

Symbolically, Little Father Time's murder-suicide can be seen also as Christ crucifixion. He hangs between his two siblings, and Sue's weeping recalls Mary's crying at Christ's cross²⁷². Moreover, the tragedy happens in Christminster, the heavenly Jerusalem of Jude. Of course, this episode is a grotesque parody of the crucifixion of Christ. The sacrifice of Little Father Time is completely useless and leads to nothing, except suffering and the disruption of Jude and Sue's relation.

²⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, pt. VI, ch. 2, p. 333.

²⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, pt. VI, ch. 2, p. 336.

²⁷⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. VI, ch. 2, p. 339.

²⁷¹ *Ibidem*, pt. VI, ch. 2, p. 337.

²⁷² Cf. Holland Jr. *op. cit.*, p. 53.

If this symbolical interpretation is accepted, it is possible to say that, as Holland Jr. stated:

The Christian allegory introduces Hardy's conception of fate as well as his criticism of society: Christ's sacrifice was an attempt, like all other aspirations, to overcome the grinding down of fate on humans, and, like all other aspirations, failed²⁷³.

But not only Christianity and Christ have failed. Sue's return to conventionality, as previously Angel's rejection of Hellenism, demonstrated that also Paganism is unstable and it is destroyed by the violence of life. Accordingly, also Jude's aspiration failed for the same reason.

In *Jude the Obscure* no one is innocent, and no one is capable of elevating and being the prophet of the modern civilization. The perfect union of Hellenism and Hebraism advocated by Arnold, that leads to "the enlarging of our whole view and rule of life"²⁷⁴, which is the one thing needful, according to Arnold, in the "present unsettled state"²⁷⁵, and which is represented in Hardy's Sue and Jude "complete mutual understanding" which "made them almost the two parts of a single whole"²⁷⁶ is not possible in Hardy's world because, in the end, the "seeds of trouble"²⁷⁷ described by Arnold prevail in modern civilization. Even if Jude tries to be a prophet, an elevated and educated man, he has to, as Radford claimed, "fully awaken from his enthrallment to dreams of 'high' Christminster culture into prosaic concrete history, the Arnoldian 'Iron Time'²⁷⁸, namely the time of "doubts, disputes, distractions, fears"²⁷⁹.

More explicit than in *Tess*, the struggle for survival in *Jude* is harsh and its tragedy seems a lament that, according to Schwartz, leads to "mourn man's condition, evoking sadness and regret"²⁸⁰.

Curiously, in *Jude* only Arabella and Phillotson, the two characters who lack Hardy's essential conditions, i.e. human compassion and natural charity, are able to survive or at least they are able to resist the adversities of society and they lead an adequate life,

²⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

²⁷⁴ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 106.

²⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 106-7.

²⁷⁶ T. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, cit., pt. V, ch. 5, p. 292.

²⁷⁷ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, cit., p. 107.

²⁷⁸ A. Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

²⁷⁹ M. Arnold, *Memorial Verses 1850*, in *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* cit., p. 289.

²⁸⁰ Schwartz, *op. cit.*, p. 803

maybe because they are, as Huxley stated, "the survival of those forms which, on the whole, are best adapted, to the conditions which at any period obtain; and which are, therefore, in that respect, and only in that respect, the fittest"²⁸¹.

²⁸¹ T.H. Huxley, *Prolegomena in Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* cit., p. 4.

Chapter four
The Well-Beloved

4.1 Neo-Platonism and Aestheticism

Hardy, after the publication of *Jude the Obscure* and the subsequent negative critiques, meditated to abandon novel-writing in order to write only poetry. But, in 1897, Hardy decided to publish *The Well-Beloved* in form of a novel, rewriting the last chapters of the *Pursuit of the Well-Beloved*, serialized in 1892.

The Well-Beloved is a strange fable-novel on the artistic process and on the aesthetic experience, but it is also a novel full of irony. It was received negatively or condescendingly as one of Hardy's fantastic and idiosyncratic novels. Moreover for many years it was considered by scholars as a minor novel. However, Hardy considered his last novel as an experiment or a little fancy and he answered to the negative response with the caustic irony which characterized him.

As already claimed, in *The Well-Beloved* Hardy developed the themes of aesthetic experience but he also dealt with the theme of marriage and of the relationship between man and woman which were exhaustively debated in *Jude the Obscure*.

Encircling the publication of *Jude*, *The Well-Beloved* can be compared to Hardy's masterpiece. Even if Hardy's last novel tells the story of an artist, the character of Jocelyn Pierston is distanced by his author, and furthermore

Lo stile distaccato della narrazione, la caratterizzazione spesso caricaturale di Jocelyn e la meccanicità delle sue ossessioni amorose sottolineano una dissoluzione dell'integrità del personaggio²⁸²

while *Jude*, despite its tragic ending, is the most complete and introspective of Hardy's heroes and, as previously argued, the one who actually recalls its author. The ironic glances of the narrator towards Jocelyn, instead, place him in contrast with *Jude*, even if they share some common features, as the Romanticism of their dream, the idealization of women and their failures in the pursuit of their dreams.

Despite the similarities, *The Well-Beloved* diverges from *Jude the Obscure*, and it can be considered a light novel and the only incursion by Hardy in the genre of the artist's novel.

And the history of the text is as noteworthy as the issues developed in it. The first ideas on the subject were shaped many years before. As reported in his *Life*, Hardy

²⁸² E. Villari, *Il Vizio Moderno dell'Arretratezza, Saggio sui romanzi di Thomas Hardy*, Adriatica, Bari, 1990, p. 99.

was interested in writing something which involved the idea of ða face which gets through three generations or more²⁸³. However, the themes of Time passing and its consequences, of the elusive migratory Ideal and of artistic creation return frequently in the work of Hardy, especially in his poetry.

In fact, firstly Hardy wrote a poem entitled 'The Well-Beloved' which is collected in *Poems of the Past and the Present*. In this poem Hardy told the story of a bridegroom who meets a spirit who represents the Ideal woman. Significantly, the protagonist of the poem reaches the hill where in ancient times 'the Pagan temple stood'²⁸⁴, a place similar to the hill described in *The Well-Beloved* and where Jocelyn kisses Avice for the first time. Here, the bridegroom talks to the sky and trees as if he were an Arcadian shepherd in a situation similar to the passage of the novel where Jocelyn sends a kiss to the moon. Suddenly the woman-spirit appears and talks to him softly about Love and she presents herself not as the woman he loves but as the ideal woman he, and all men, saw in their dreams. When finally he reaches his bride on the altar he compares her with the Spirit, but she now looks 'pinched and thin / as if her soul had shrunk and died, / and left a waste within'²⁸⁵. Reality falls short of the illusion of the dream and it leaves the man alone and dejected.

Furthermore the theme of an Ideal face which passes through the years was developed also in 'Heredit' Hardy's poem collected in *Moments of Vision*. In it Hardy described a 'family face' which is an 'eternal thing' as the Caro's family in *The Well-Beloved*, and introduces also the prominent importance of Time and its effects.

However, the first idea for both the serial and the novel was a story similar to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, but Hardy then discarded the idea inserting it only in the vague allusions between Jocelyn Pierston and Marcia Bencomb, at the beginning of the first part, when they discover that they belong to two rival families and Jocelyn compares them to the Capulets and Montagues²⁸⁶.

Thus Hardy focused on the Platonic idea, a theme which had interested the writer since the early years of his career. Hardy was influenced by the ideas on Love and Platonism of his most admired Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley. Even the epigraph of *The Well-Beloved*, 'One shape of many names', is taken from Shelley's

²⁸³ T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* by Thomas Hardy, M. Millgate ed., Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989, p. 226.

²⁸⁴ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* in *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy* cit., vol. I, p. 168, l. 7.

²⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 179, ll. 65-8.

²⁸⁶ Cf. T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* (1897) J. Thomas ed., London, Wordsworth Classics, 2000, pt. I, ch. 5, p. 21.

The Revolt of Islam. As already argued, Hardy borrowed many themes from the Romantics, but in *The Well-Beloved* the influence of Shelley is evident, as Hillis Miller stated:

The Well-Beloved takes from Shelley the theme of a brother-sister love, or narcissistic loving of oneself in the beloved. Such a love searches for a perfecting of oneself by joining oneself to a double of the other sex [...] Like Shelley, Hardy explores the relation of this theme to the problem of writing or of the creative imagination²⁸⁷.

The question of ideal Love, erotic impulses and artistic creativity is at the core of the novel. In fact, *The Well-Beloved* revolves around the pursuit of perfection in beauty and love which seems to haunt the protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston, who has to deal with his sensual impulses throughout his whole life. But he is also obsessed by the "migratory, elusive idealisation" that he called his Love²⁸⁸ and which encloses all his aspirations and everything he regards as elevated and noble²⁸⁹. Accordingly, as a Platonic lover he follows and researches a heavenly woman rather than a real one, and he attributes to the beloved celestial qualities. According to Pinion, Shelley accepted the theory that "the perfect exists only in heaven, and [...] mortals in their transit from eternity to eternity can in general glimpse its manifestations only dimly at best"²⁹⁰, except for "poets or creators (including artists and statesman) being the only persons endowed with the divine faculty of seeing forms of the Ideal beyond the veil"²⁹¹. Jocelyn, being a sculptor, has the faculty to see in this world his Ideal. However, he does not see only one manifestation of the Ideal, but uncountable forms of incarnation of the same spirit, and this never-ending quest makes him to the eyes of the reader a kind of parody of the Platonic lover.

Nevertheless, Jocelyn is perfectly conscious of his problem but he cannot control it and prefers to live in an ideal world of beauty and love in which the Platonic ideal is retraceable. As in the poem previously discussed, the illusion is strong but it leads to a misinterpretation of reality and to an incapability of distinguishing between a real and an imaginary world.

²⁸⁷ J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 148.

²⁸⁸ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. I, ch. 1, p.10.

²⁸⁹ J. Thomas, *Introduction* cit., p. xi

²⁹⁰ F. B. Pinion, *Hardy the Writer*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1990, p. 169-170.

²⁹¹ Ivi.

In fact, Jocelyn loves not the reality of woman but the vision or image of her that exists in his mind²⁹². He suffers, as many other Hardy's characters, from the ache of modernism, which renders him unable to rest and feel satisfaction. His modern restlessness provokes in Jocelyn a continuous chase of the Beloved and an endless work as a sculptor in order to secure to eternity the perfect Beauty, failing, however, in both enterprises²⁹³.

Similarly to Jude, also Jocelyn is compared to the Wandering Jew because he is forced to follow, every time the Ideal spirit finds a new host, the new incarnation forgetting the previous one. As Arnold stated in *The Scholar-Gipsy* 'the soul is condemned to fluctuate idly without term or scope'²⁹⁴, and in *The Well-Beloved*, both the woman's spirit and Jocelyn's soul fluctuated across the years without reaching their purpose.

At the beginning of the novel, being a young man of twenty, Jocelyn has already loved uncountable embodiments of the Well-Beloved, but as the narrator states:

To his Well-Beloved he had always been faithful; but she had had many embodiments. Each individuality known as Lucy, Jane, Flora, Evangeline or what-not, had been merely a transient condition of her. He did not recognize this as an excuse or as a defence, but as a fact simply. Essentially she was perhaps of no tangible substance; a spirit, a dream, a frenzy, a conception, an aroma, an epitomized sex, a light of the eye, a parting of the lips. God only knows what she really was; Pierston did not. She was indescribable.²⁹⁵

Pierston, similarly to other Hardy's lovers, idealizes the woman he loves venerating her as a goddess. But, contrary to Angel's or Jude's idealizations, which provoke tragedy, Jocelyn's misreading leads only to his ridiculousness and ephemeral love.

Furthermore, Hardy depicted Jocelyn as the aesthetic artist who 'consecrate[s] the material world through the medium of imagination, which penetrates the surface of the 'dream' of reality beneath and then strives to bring that dream into a material existence on the page, on the canvas and in the studio'²⁹⁶. Jocelyn, penetrating in his

²⁹² R. H. Taylor, *The Neglected Hardy*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1982, p. 153.

²⁹³ Cf. E. Villari, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

²⁹⁴ M. Arnold, *The Scholar-Gipsy* cit., p. 260, l. 167.

²⁹⁵ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. I, ch. 2, p. 12.

²⁹⁶ J. Thomas, *Icons of Desire: The classical Statue in Later Victorian Literature*, 'The Yearbook of English Studies', Vol. 40, No. 1/2, (2010), pp. 246-272, p. 248.

dream and rendering it real through his statues, nourishes his desire and thirst for pleasure. In fact, as Thomas wrote, "the work of art, then, does indeed excite desire, a desire that is at once aesthetic and sensuous and, in the case of sculpture, sometimes sensual and troublingly erotic"²⁹⁷.

Accordingly, all Jocelyn's statues are woman, i.e. the woman he loves or his personal goddesses; they are his muses which are translated in marble and rendered immortal. Similarly, also in Hardy's creative life women exercised a prominent role. He depicted the most complete and interesting female characters, as for example Tess, Sue, *The Well-Beloved's* women, but also Bathsheba in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, demonstrating an incredible ability to understand woman's heart and even to comprehend them better than his male characters. In *The Well-Beloved*, however, women not only are elevated to the rank of goddesses but also become muses and Jocelyn tried to reproduce them, though he obtains the effect of reducing them to mere objects. Despite Jocelyn's efforts to conquer his beloved ones, Marcia, but also Nichola Pine-Avon and Avice the Third, are presented as independent and self-sufficient women who resist Jocelyn and even abandon him. Hardy portrayed a sort of "New Woman" towards whom he felt sympathy and support, in contrast with the rendition of Sue, who has been depicted as the frustrated "New Woman" incoherent with her beliefs. Yet, for Jocelyn, woman "provides aesthetic sustenance" as well as for Hardy during his long career. Contrary to Jocelyn, however, Hardy would not "exploit her as his muse as well as feeding off her sensibility"²⁹⁸.

In Part First, Chapter One, Jocelyn returns to the Isle of Slingers, his homeland, after a long absence. Here, he re-encounters Avice Caro, his youth companion. She is still the simple country girl, affectionate to his friend, who immediately kisses him at the door. After a brief moment of astonishment and coldness, Avice's kiss begins to nourish in Pierston a sensation of pleasure. Even if his feelings remain that of comradeship [rather] than love²⁹⁹, Jocelyn, following his impulses which are led by his thirst for pleasure, proposes to Avice to marry him. Jocelyn is not sure of seeing in her the embodiment of the "elusive spirit" nevertheless he continues his courtship and, despite his modernity, tries to persuade Avice to meet him in order to perform the "native custom" of sexual encounters before marriage.³⁰⁰ Avice misses the

²⁹⁷ Ivi.

²⁹⁸ J. Thomas, *Introduction* cit., p. xxiii.

²⁹⁹ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. I, ch. 2, p. 12.

³⁰⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. I, ch. 2, p. 14.

appointment explaining to Jocelyn her feelings. Comparable to Sue's physical restraint, Avice's "modern feelings" as she called them, are originated by the middle class morality which has reached the Isle in the last years. Even if the Isle is the "last stronghold of the pagan divinities, where pagan customs lingered yet"³⁰¹, Victorian morality has started to be integrated in the straightforward manners of the inhabitants of the Isle. But Avice is different from the generation of her parents, being quite an intellectual (she reads poetry) and influenced by "the tendency of the age"³⁰², and she cannot accept Jocelyn's proposal of sexual encounter.

Disappointed and frustrated by Avice's refusal, Jocelyn meets Marcia Bencomb, and immediately feels that the "elusive spirit" has changed residence. Jocelyn is amazed by her appearance, he compares her to Juno and he even states that he has never seen something more classical³⁰³. Again Jocelyn's misperception of reality leads him to compare Marcia to a divinity and to see her through the lens of the artist. As Bullen claims "Pierston's first response to woman is always a visual one, but his observations are idealized through reference to works of art"³⁰⁴. In his mind Jocelyn transforms the encounters with women in an aesthetic experience, increasing their value and meaning, and he tries to secure the perfection of beauty and love that he derives from them in the marble of the statues. Hence, without the ideal spirit of the Beloved, which he calls his "curse" or "influence"³⁰⁵, he is unable to be inspired and to sculpt. His creations gained an extremely success in London cultural society, and Pierston is described by his friend Somers as the only one inspired sculptor of their times, and calls him Praxiteles and Lysippus³⁰⁶.

Therefore, when the Ideal spirit leaves its last embodiment, i.e. Marcia, Jocelyn dedicates all his efforts to the study of art, acknowledging that "the absence of the corporeal matter did not involve the absence of the informing spirit"³⁰⁷ which is his real inspiration. He enjoys the study of art and beauty for years, searching everywhere, in the streets, on the omnibuses, through crowds, the face which can include perfection and the next incarnation of the Beloved³⁰⁸. But he is never

³⁰¹ Ivi.

³⁰² Cf. Ivi.

³⁰³ *Ibidem*, pt. I, ch. 4, p. 18.

³⁰⁴ J.B. Bullen, *The Expressive Eye, Fiction and Perception in the Work of Thomas Hardy*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 225.

³⁰⁵ Cf. T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. I, ch. 6, p. 27.

³⁰⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. II, ch. 3, p. 58.

³⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, pt. I, ch. 7, p. 29.

³⁰⁸ Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. I, ch. 9, p. 38.

satisfied with his work, because the statues, even if beautiful and appreciated by society, lack the sparkle of life and he sees all his efforts as failures³⁰⁹. He is incapable of translating the fullness of the spirit of the Well-Beloved in an eternal work of art.

Instead of living fully his love experience he continually lives in an aesthetic dream which has prevailed on his entire life. Similarly to the Aesthetic creed professed by Pater, Jocelyn's world, as Iser underlines, is "transformed by art into an aesthetic phenomenon" which "cuts out the distinction between poetry and life"³¹⁰. Moreover, according to Pater,

The lover, who is become a lover of the invisible, but still a lover, and therefore, literally, a seer, of it, carrying an elaborate cultivation of the bodily senses, of eye and ear, their natural force and acquired fineness [...] into the world of intellectual abstractions; seeing and hearing there too, associating for ever all the imagery of things seen with the conditions of what primarily exists only for the mind, filling that "hollow land" with delightful colour and form, as if now at last the mind were veritably dealing with living people there, living people who play upon us through affinities, the repulsion and attraction, of persons towards one another, all the magnetism, as we call it, of actual human friendship or love: - There [...] is the essential condition of [...] Platonism.³¹¹

Undoubtedly Pierston is portrayed as the Lover described in this passage by Pater, he is in fact, the lover of the invisible, of a phantom. This becomes even clearer when Avice the first dies and Jocelyn discovers himself in love with the memory of her that he has created in his mind. Only now that death has made her inaccessible and she is inserted forever in a world of perfection, Pierston sees Avice as "the only woman whom [he] never rightly valued [...] and therefore the only one [he] shall ever regret!"³¹². Furthermore he begins to consider her as more celestial than every other woman he has ever met. Under the influence of love he decides to return to the Isle of Slingers in order to attend her funeral. Here he meets Ann, Avice's daughter. The perfect resemblance of mother and daughter, notwithstanding their diversities in soul

³⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, pt. II, ch. 1, p. 50.

³¹⁰ W. Iser, *Walter Pater, the Aesthetic Moment*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 110.

³¹¹ W. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, London, Macmillan, 1920, pp. 139-140.

³¹² T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. II, ch. 3, p. 56.

and manner, arises in Jocelyn the desire of possessing her and she nourishes his fantasy. This return of the spirit of Love, however, brings a change. As Pierston recognizes "the Beloved had seldom informed a personality which, while enrapturing his soul, simultaneously shocked his intellect"³¹³. According to Hillis Miller, probably, "love is intensified when the beloved is the repetition of an earlier beloved"³¹⁴. As well as his love, also his fantasies are intensify, and consequently, Jocelyn invests Ann of symbolical comparisons with goddesses and works of art, as Minerva or Rubens's woman paintings. Completely obsessed with her, Jocelyn sees Ann "as a sylph [...] more real, more interpenetrating"³¹⁵, she becomes even "an irradiated being, the epitome of a whole sex"³¹⁶. He inscribes her in his pantheon but, at the same time, as Radford notes, he "reveals a catastrophic inability to fully acknowledge that, for love to flourish, tangible external reality must sooner or later disperse the impalpable ether of a visionary world"³¹⁷.

Curiously Ann Avice suffers from the same doom as Jocelyn, triggering an ironic reversion of Jocelyn's curse. She states that

I get tired of my lovers as soon as I get to know them well. What I see in one young man for a while soon leaves him and goes into another yonder, and I follow, and then what I admire fades out of him and springs up somewhere else; and so I follow on, and never fix to one. I have loved *fifteen* already!³¹⁸

In this passage Hardy grotesquely inverted the roles, and Pierston becomes the embodiment of the Ideal spirit of love and not the seeker. However, contrary to Jocelyn, Ann does not see the beloved through the lens of art and she is not able to come close to the aesthetic experience. During their brief period of cohabitation in London, Jocelyn tenderly loves Ann and proposes to her more than once. But she candidly refuses to marry him and at the end he discovers that she is already pregnant and married to Isaac Pierston. Generously, Jocelyn reunites the couple and leaves them in the Isle.

³¹³ *Ibidem*, pt. II, ch. 6, p. 68.

³¹⁴ J. Hillis Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

³¹⁵ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. II, ch. 6, p. 68.

³¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pt. II, ch. 9, p. 81.

³¹⁷ A. Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

³¹⁸ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. II, ch. 8, p. 78.

In the third section of the novel Jocelyn's misinterpretation of his perceptions creates even more embarrassment than in previous parts, because he does not recognize the passing of Time and his real age. Actually he is sixty but, as the title of the section claims, he is still a "young man" preserved from the flux of time as if he were one of his statues.

Moreover, his journey to Rome and the study of art "had nourished and developed his natural responsiveness to impressions"³¹⁹. This naturally leads to a return of the Well-Beloved, this time in the body of Avice the third, Ann's daughter. The young Avice, reunites the soul of her grandmother and the physical aspect of his mother. This likeness "helped the dream"³²⁰ in Jocelyn, who is encouraged also by Ann, and immediately falls in love with the girl. However, Hardy plays with him and his efforts to court Avice, rendering him ridiculous, in one of the most ironic passages of the novel:

"I was once the lover of your mother, and wanted to marry her; only she wouldn't, or rather couldn't, marry me."

"Oh how strange! Said the girl [...] yet of course, you might have been. I mean, you are old enough."

He took the remark as a satire she had not intended. "Oh yes *ó quite old enough*," he said grimly. "Almost too old."

"Too old for mother? How's that?"

"Because I belonged to your grandmother." [...]

"But you couldn't have been, Mr. Pierston! You are not old enough! Why, how old are you? *ó* you have never told me."

"I am very old."

"My mother's and my grandmother's," she said, looking at him no longer as at a possible husband but as *a strange fossilised relic in human form*. [...] "and were you my great-grandmother's too?"³²¹ [italics mine]

Nevertheless, Jocelyn does not accept his age; he does not see himself as a relic and continues to pursue his dream of Love. His narcissism and desire for eternal youth render him blind to his ageing and he becomes a parody of himself. He seems a ghost

³¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pt. III, ch. 2, p. 114.

³²⁰ *Ibidem*, pt. III, ch. 2, p. 116.

³²¹ *Ibidem*, pt. III, ch. 4, p. 129.

who chases an illusion and yet, reaching his mature age, Jocelyn learns nothing from experience which rather leads to a disintegration of the self.

Finally, passing in front of a window and seeing his reflected image, Jocelyn recognizes his age, comparing himself to something ghostly³²². Moreover, the illness which has followed Avicø's flight with Henri Leverre, Marcia Bencombø's adopted son, and Annø's death, leave him not only aged but deprived of every trace of artistic temperament, and also of his dream of the Beloved which throughout the novel Jocelyn has called 'his curse'

He was no longer the same man that he had hitherto been. The malignant fever, or his experiences, or both, had taken away something from him, and put something else in its place. During the next days, with further intellectual expansion, he became clearly aware of what this was. The artistic sense had left him, and he could no longer attach a definite sentiment to images of beauty recalled from the past. His appreciativeness was capable of exercising itself only on utilitarian matters.³²³

Jocelyn, with his curse removed, disperses the whole collection of his statues and retires to Isle of Slingers with Marcia. Without his dream of the Well-Beloved he is incapable of artistic appreciation and aesthetic experience. His life is no longer devoted to Art and without his inspiration, as Taylor remarks, 'he must renounce art'³²⁴. At the end, he 'becomes utterly insensitive in a manner abhorrent to Hardy [...]'. Jocelyn is transformed into an unreflective modern, a practical man engaged in the most mundane acts of aesthetic vandalism³²⁵. Actually he destroys Elizabethan cottages and closes old natural fountains in order to replace them with new buildings³²⁶.

Even if the 1897 novel's ending is not as pungent as the 1892's ending, which closes on a bitter laugh of Jocelyn, Hardy is clearly ironic and critical towards his character and both endings show Jocelyn's failure.

Arguably therefore Jocelyn's entire life can be defined as a failure. He fails to see clearly the object of his love, he fails to recreate in his statues the perfection of

³²² Cf. *Ibidem*, pt. III, ch. 4, p. 128.

³²³ *Ibidem*, pt. III, ch. 8, p. 152.

³²⁴ R. H. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

³²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

³²⁶ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. III, ch. 8, p. 158.

beauty, and he fails continually in his misinterpretation of experiences. Even if Jocelyn lives according to his senses and pleasures, following the Greek ideal described in Arnold's *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment* as a "gay sensuous pagan life"³²⁷, he exaggerates this model, distorting the simplicity and cheerfulness of pagan life. Thus, as Arnold feared, this "emblem of the power of life and the bloom of beauty"³²⁸ stimulates "a single side of us too absolutely"³²⁹ and the individual is not balanced. Describing a character who prays Pagan divinities, sings to the moon and comes from the "last [...] stronghold of pagan divinities"³³⁰ and who is guided by Platonic fantasy, Hardy compares Jocelyn to the Paterian model of man and simultaneously criticizes it. Pater, in fact, emphasises, as McGrath underlines, "the primacy of sensation for its own sake"³³¹ and in so doing, as Evangelista writes, "he effectively frees the individual [...] from moral imperatives"³³².

The moral imperatives of course are those of Victorian middle class, individuated by both Arnold and Pater as the first sense of philistinism. Also Hardy, as previously argued, denounces the strict moral conduct of Victorian society, and especially in this novel he inserted traditional customs, as for example the pre-marriage intercourses, which are incompatible with modern moral tendencies. But Hardy in *The Well-Beloved* criticised also a conduct of life too much romanticised and devoted only to Aesthetic pleasures. According to Pater, "not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end", and in the "Conclusion" of *The Renaissance* he continues:

To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits [...] we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses³³³.

Hardy disagreed with Pater and portrayed Pierston as unable to hold this model. Accordingly, Jocelyn's sense are not stirred, but somehow frustrated by the inability

³²⁷ M. Arnold, *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment* cit., p. 223.

³²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 222.

³²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 223.

³³⁰ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. I, ch. 2, p. 14.

³³¹ F. C. McGrath, *The Sensible Spirit*, Tampa, University of Southern Florida Press, 1986, p. 54.

³³² S. Evangelista, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

³³³ W. Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* cit., p. 120.

to realize his dream. Moreover, his experiences do not contribute to increase his knowledge; actually they are only a continuous repetition of the same pattern which transforms his life in a mere "ghost story". At the end, when his creative power is vanished, he becomes even ineffectual and very similar to the character described by Shelley in *On Love*, namely a "living sepulchre of himself, and what yet survives is the mere husk of what once he was"³³⁴.

Hardy represented the failure of the Platonic dream and the uselessness of the aesthetic model, but he wrote an impressive novel on the powers of representation and artistic process.

³³⁴ P.B. Shelley, *On Love in Shelley's Prose*, (1954), D.L. Clark ed. London, Fourth Estate, 1988, p. 171.

4.2 Art and Life

The Well-Beloved is the only novel by Hardy that can be described as a *Künstlerroman*, i.e. an artist's novel. Hardy devoted almost a quarter of the century to write fine novels and his last work explores and reflects exactly on the artistic process. Despite the ironic handling of the protagonist, the last novel of Thomas Hardy is full of references to the work of the artist and to how art is perceived, and even if Jocelyn Pierston is a sculptor and not a writer, the artistic process is similar. As previously argued Pierston is depicted as a parody of the Platonic lover and as a character unable to hold the aesthetic model, but Jocelyn's characterization recalls also some of Hardy's personal traits, especially in the evaluation of works of art and in his creative process.

According to Hardy, there is 'solidarity of all arts'³³⁵ and, as Byerly wrote, they 'are all seen as natural expressions of different kinds of truth'³³⁶. As previously argued, Hardy was deeply influenced by romantic poets, and, as Page wrote, he 'embrace the Keatsian idea of a work of art enshrining beauty and truth'³³⁷ but for Hardy beauty is not absolute, is influenced by the individual perceptions, and even truth can be of different kinds and he stated that

we don't always remember as we should that in getting at the truth we get only at the true nature of the impression that an object, etc., produces on us, the true thing in itself being still beyond our knowledge³³⁸

Displaying a character who overlaps life and art, Hardy gives form to an Aesthetic tenet common in the last years of the Nineteenth century, especially in the works of Pater and Wilde. The Paterian Aestheticism considers art as an influence on all aspects of life, and moreover, according to Iser, 'enables life to be mastered'³³⁹. According to Pater's thought, eventually, art removes the 'end' from life and it triumphs over reality³⁴⁰. Hardy disagreed with Pater, showing in the novel that is

³³⁵ T. Hardy quoted in N. Page, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

³³⁶ A. Byerly, *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-century Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 149.

³³⁷ N. Page, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³³⁸ T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 261-2.

³³⁹ W. Iser, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

³⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 35.

impossible to remove the ændø from life, because, as Pierston experiences, Time and deterioration have to be accepted.

But, Hardy certainly shared with Pater the concept of Beauty as not absolute, as stated in *The Renaissance*:

To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics³⁴¹.

And Pierston can be compared to the true student of aesthetics because, as previously argued, he tries to imprison in his statues the essence of the Ideal Beauty and in his moments of crisis òthe study of Beauty was his only joyö³⁴².

In his study of Beauty, however, he also tries to find òa novelty of expressionö against the òrigidly enforced conventionsö³⁴³, similarly to Hardy who in his striving for artistic perfection, researched an adequateness of style in order to convey in his novels his ideas and òimpressionsö which Holloway defined as Hardy òfavourite term for whatever sense of life his novels conveyö³⁴⁴. Moreover, according to Shires, as well as Jocelyn, also Hardyø òimagination is primarily visual, as is attested by his painting-like set pieces and his many poetic effortsö³⁴⁵. Also Jocelynø act of creation in *The Well-Beloved* is similar to Hardyø artistic process; in fact, as Bullen explained, òit is the eye of Jocelyn Pierston which searches for the forms of the inspirational well-beloved, and it is that same eye which translates the forms into works of sculptureö³⁴⁶. Hardy searched in the forms and objects of the world his inspiration and translated them in works of literature.

Notwithstanding these similarities, while Pierston is devoted to a concept of life and art which recalls Paterian Aestheticism and which renders life aesthetic and continually selects, as Iser argued, òthe precious, the incomparable and the inimitable [endowing] human existence with a seeming perfection which in reality it lacksö³⁴⁷,

³⁴¹ W. Pater, *Studies in the History of The Renaissance* cit., p. 3.

³⁴² T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. I, ch. 9, p. 38.

³⁴³ A. Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

³⁴⁴ J. Holloway, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

³⁴⁵ L. M. Shires, *The Radical Aesthetic of Tess of the DøUrbervilles*, in *The Cambridge Companion To Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 148.

³⁴⁶ J.B. Bullen, *op cit.*, p. 224.

³⁴⁷ W. Iser, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Hardy preferred to show insights on the everyday reality of the world, with its imperfections and curiosities, expressing also the personality and uniqueness of the author.

However, according to Hardy and also to the aesthetes, realism is not art³⁴⁸. He believed that there is a difference between a reportage and an artful novel. As Thomas claimed Hardy felt strongly that the artist [...] should be a painter rather than a mere documenter of reality³⁴⁹. Hence for Hardy art is a disproportion of (i.e. distorting, throwing out of proportion) of realities³⁵⁰ thus, agreeing with the promoters of Aestheticism, it becomes clear that he felt himself in contrast with Realism, and especially Naturalism. Hardy preferred to show in his novels glimpses and insight of the real world rather than picturing it accurately, he reproduced a series of impressions on ordinary events which are transformed by the artist's mind. Undoubtedly Hardy was fascinated by the different shades of life, and as if he were an impressionist artist, he portrayed a country world in which dominate the exaggerations, the first impressions and the repetitions; in Hardy's Wessex the coincidences and the melodrama are emphasized. But in this way Hardy, looking deep into the matters of life and portraying also the cruelty and the narrow-mindedness of society, underlined the importance of mutual understanding and compassion.

Furthermore, according to Bonaparte, Hardy in his novels was setting up an ironic relationship between the reality he sees and the reality seen by his characters³⁵¹. The reality seen by the majority of his characters, especially in the case of Jocelyn, is distorted, as if they were looking through a glass or in a constant dream. Actually Hardy portrayed most of his characters as dreamers, but in the modern world, the dream is no longer possible and it becomes almost dangerous. The characters that continue to pursue their dream, as Jocelyn does, have lost the continuity with reality and they are on a false track which leads them to tragedy or to ridiculousness.

If Hardy demonstrated that while it may be desirable or even necessary to privilege Life over Art, a life without ideals is a short and brutal affair³⁵², Jocelyn, following an aesthetic model, not only privileges ideals but he allows Art to master his life, becoming for Hardy only a mockery of Paterian Aestheticism.

³⁴⁸ T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 239.

³⁴⁹ J. Thomas, *Introduction* cit., p. xiii.

³⁵⁰ T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 239.

³⁵¹ F. Bonaparte, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

³⁵² J. Thomas, *Icons of Desire: The classical Statue in Later Victorian Literature* cit., p. 269.

According to Pater's theory, art [...] perfects life to the degree in which it renders life aesthetic³⁵³; for Hardy instead, as Byerly claimed, art has to be governed by life, or better, it is most valuable when it parallels the movement of daily reality³⁵⁴. It is culturally and individually formed, it has a social value and it is useful to the culture that generates and utilizes it.

Similar to Pater, Jocelyn turns his gaze to the ancient pagan world, as in the passage above mentioned where Jocelyn prays to the moon, but he even feels tortured by the Christian dogmas, because he had devoted himself both in his craft [...] and his heart³⁵⁵ to pagan Gods. Moreover, he continually compares himself and his experiences to the ancient heroes of the Greek classical tradition, for example Aeneas³⁵⁶. Similarly to Angel and Sue, Jocelyn is guided by the illusion of a false paganism because he does not see things as they really are³⁵⁷ which was, according to Arnold, the principal tenet of Hellenism. Jocelyn, following only Hellenism, namely only one side of human forces which dominate the human soul according to Arnold, lacks the harmony necessary to improve himself, and which is essential also in art.

Moreover, Hardy agreed with Arnold in the necessity to find a compromise between the Hellenic and Hebrew part of man. According to Pinion, Hardy reported in 1876 that he recognized the opposition of these two cults³⁵⁸ and, as Arnold did, advocated for a synthesis between Hellenism and Hebraism. Nevertheless Hardy's Hellenic characters never find this compromise and, in fact, they lack not only the finer ideas derived from Christianity, namely altruism and Pauline charity, but also they are not sympathetic with the other characters and experiences a profound inner crisis. Both Hardy and Arnold searched for harmony and a solution for the disease of the modern time, and both proposed an increasing of mutual understanding.

Furthermore, both Arnold and Hardy elevated poetry, especially Arnold who considered poetry as the medium of maximum expression, as he stated in *Wordsworth*: "Now poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth"³⁵⁹. Accordingly, for Hardy

³⁵³ W. Iser, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

³⁵⁴ A. Byerly, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

³⁵⁵ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. II, ch. 9, p. 85.

³⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pt. III, ch. 7, p. 147.

³⁵⁷ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* cit., p. 23.

³⁵⁸ F.B. Pinion, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

³⁵⁹ M. Arnold, *Wordsworth in The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold* cit., vol. IX, pp. 36-56, p. 39.

the ultimate aim of the poet should be to touch our hearts by showing his own³⁶⁰, and also in his novels he continually used poetical sceneries and descriptions, because poetry is emotion put into measure. The emotion must come by nature³⁶¹ and he attempted to maintain his prose writing as near to poetry in their subject as the conditions would allow, and had often regretted that those conditions would not let him keep them nearer still³⁶².

Hardy shared also Arnold's concept of 'imaginative reason' Introduced at the end of *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, this ideal is, as DeLaura claims,

the characteristic demand of 'the modern spirit,' which is best conveyed in the greatest Greek poets, somehow reconciles the senses and the understanding, the heart and the imagination; it strikes a balance between 'the thinking-power' and 'the religious sense'³⁶³

Once more, Arnold attempted to find a compromise between the forces which coexist in the human being. And, in order to find this harmony it is necessary to recognize that 'the heart is reached not so much by reason and logic as by the imagination'³⁶⁴.

Arguably therefore the medium to reach this harmony and perfection between reason and heart is poetry, which became the priestess of the 'imaginative reason'

The 'imaginative reason' or power as Hardy called it, is essential to the creative process which for Hardy was a way of 'intensify[ing] the expression of things [...] so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible'³⁶⁵. Hardy recognized that the congenial genre to express at his best his 'impressions' was exactly poetry and Arnold, who also returned to poetry at the end of his career, even declared that 'the best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can'³⁶⁶.

Furthermore, Hardy agreed with Arnold that:

A poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it

³⁶⁰ T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 131.

³⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 322.

³⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 309-10.

³⁶³ D. J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater* cit., p. 37.

³⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

³⁶⁵ T. Hardy, quoted in J. Thomas, *Introduction* cit., p.xvi.

³⁶⁶ M. Arnold, *The Study of Poetry in The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold* cit., vol. IX, pp. 161-188, p. 163.

is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment. In presence of the most tragic circumstances, represented in a work of art, the feeling of enjoyment, as is well known, may still subsist: the representation of the most utter calamity, of the liveliest anguish, is not sufficient to destroy it: the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible³⁶⁷.

However, this statement can be considered well-founded also for Hardy's prose. The novelist knew perfectly that even tragedy can be beautiful and terrible at the same time, and admiring so much the Greek tragedians, he inserted in his novel classical tragic elements and references to the works of Greek tragedians which amused him. Even if Hardy, when he was a young architect and poet, decided to write novels in order to receive an income sufficient for the support of his family, considering it as a trade as he considered his work as an architect³⁶⁸, immediately demonstrated to be an extremely powerful and talented novelist. In fact, his use of irony, bizarre events and a certain degree of detachment from his characters underline Hardy's enjoyment in writing and the facility with which he filtered real situations into the literary world. Nevertheless, Hardy, even if he denied that his novels had a purpose³⁶⁹, inserted anyway sharp reflections on society, man and also ferocious critiques of institutions. Consequently, after having pleased his readers with the first novels with which gained celebrity, he started to receive ferocious critiques. His uneasiness with society, his nonconformist opinions and his particular style divided the public opinion and made Hardy increasingly discomforted. His engagement with the novel form and with the public response was never peaceful and Hardy, who always struggled with critics and the reading public in order to be understood, decided at the end of the century to stop writing novels and to write only poetry, because he felt that:

perhaps I can express more fully in verse ideas and emotions which run counter to the inert crystallized opinion so hard as a rock so which the vast body of man have vested interests in supporting. To cry out in a passionate poem that (for

³⁶⁷ M. Arnold, *Preface to the First Edition of Poems (1853)* in *The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold* cit., vol. I, pp. 1- 15, p. 2.

³⁶⁸ Cf. T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 107.

³⁶⁹ J. Thomas, *Introduction* cit., p. xiv.

instance) the Supreme Mover or Movers, The Prime Force or Forces, must be either limited in power, unknowing or cruel ó which is obvious enough, and has been for centuries ó will cause them merely a shake of the head; but to put it in an argumentative prose will make them sneer or foam, and set all the literary contorsionists jumping upon me³⁷⁰.

Clearly Hardy recognized the dangerousness of prose, and even if he estimated the novel-writing he considered poetry a safer medium than prose, and after almost twenty-five years of novel-writing he decided to return to poetry, tired of the continuous critiques and having established for himself fame and economical security

At the end of his last novel, Hardy wrote about Jocelyn, its protagonist:

at the present he is sometimes mentioned as -the late Mr Pierstonø by gourd-like young art-critics and journalists; and his productions are alluded to as those of a man not without genius, whose powers were insufficiently recognised in his lifetime³⁷¹.

Clearly, he hinted also at his own career and at his retirement from prose. Nevertheless, he did not retire from art, and he continued for almost thirty years to write beautiful poems, because, as he answered to Sir Arthur Blomfield: ãa sense of the truth of poetry, of its supreme place in literature, had awakened itself in me. At the risk of ruining all my worldly prospects I dabbled in itö³⁷².

³⁷⁰ T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 302.

³⁷¹ T. Hardy, *The Well-Beloved* cit., pt. III, ch. 8, p. 158.

³⁷² T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 415.

Conclusion

In his long career which overlaps a century of turmoil, Hardy dealt with many important issues, as this dissertation has tried to argue. Hardy's desertion of novel-writing did not prevent him from continuing to develop themes and problems already discussed in his novels, such as the relationship between Man and Nature, the traditional folklore and also his Aesthetic tenets.

After the success of his first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, he had stayed at the centre of London cultural society for many years, and he was acclaimed as one of the finest novelist of the century. Also the sales of his novels confirm this reputation and he was appraised by poets as Swinburne and novelists as Meredith, who was also his first literary advisor. After *The Well-Beloved*, his last novel, he published many collections of poems, with old and new poems, his long poem *The Dynasts* and collections of short stories, until his death in 1928. Moreover he did not retire from the public sphere, and he continued to write letters and brief articles on contemporary events and to answer to requests of literary contributions.

On the one hand, Hardy owed much of his philosophy to the eminent intellectuals of the Victorian age, as J.S. Mill, T.H. Huxley and Walter Pater whose thoughts are retraceable in Hardy's masterpieces, *Jude* and *Tess*, but he was influenced also by his friends, as Leslie Stephen. On the other hand he was a self-taught man and among his readings are listed various and different books, from Greek authors, to Romantic poetry, but also scientific and art treatises. His interests varied from music to antiquarianism, even if his passion was architecture. His love for the Arts permeates all his works, confirming his belief of the sisterhood of arts; in Hardy's novels references to painters as Rubens or Turner are to be found, but also to the architectural field with his beautiful descriptions of palaces and churches, as in *Jude the Obscure*.

Hardy's novels and poems have been defined in many ways even if he disdained definitions, especially when critics said that he permeated his work with pessimism. As he stated in 1922, critics considered him and his work "pessimist" but, his literary work is, in truth, only such "questionings" in the exploration of reality, and is the first step towards the soul's betterment, and the body's also³⁷³.

Arguably therefore, the improvement of the soul and of the human being was an essential theme in Victorian age, and many intellectuals devoted their writings on this issue, proposing different solutions. As far as Hardy is concerned, he showed the

³⁷³ T. Hardy, *Apology* cit., p. 318.

harshness of reality and the limits of humankind, advocating for an enlargement of human compassion and sympathy, similarly to many other Victorian writers.

As many Victorian intellectuals, Hardy was a supporter of the evolutionary theory and he was one of the few that recognized the sympathetic part of it. However, in agreement also with Huxley, as Beach argued, he knew that "Mother Nature, or the alternative God, is [...] blind and dumb, a mere somnambulist"³⁷⁴, and Hardy's characters experiment the blindness and indifference of Nature in front of its creatures' destiny, as it is clearly shown in *Tess*.

Hardy was not an unhappy man, but he was honest with himself and the world, and he was well aware of the tragedy of the world and the *unmoral* aspect of Nature. Moreover, Hardy knew that humanity is impotent in front of the laws of Nature and social codes, as the tragedy of Sue and Jude demonstrates, and the harshness that derives from these conditions made him discontent.

As Beach claimed "this is the price which Hardy pays like Mill before him for his supposition that the ruling power is not deliberate planner of mortal miseries. The ruler of the universe, as they both hold, cannot be benevolent and omniscient at the same time"³⁷⁵.

As argued in the previous chapters, Hardy was especially influenced by one of the luminaries of the Victorian age, as he is called in *Jude*, namely Matthew Arnold.

Hardy admired Arnold and considered him one of the few modern critics "who seem [...] worth reading"³⁷⁶, and he agreed with Arnold on the importance of poetry and in the search for harmony between oppose human forces. He came close to Arnold's idea of poetry as religion in *Apology*, where he wrote:

poetry, pure literature in general, religion or I include religion, in its essential and undogmatic sense, because poetry and religion touch each other, or rather modulate into each other; are indeed, often but different names for the same thing or these, I say, the visible signs of mental and emotional life³⁷⁷.

Similarly, they both attacked "Philistinism" and the social convention of Victorian middle class. Certainly Hardy admired Arnold, especially in his definition of the

³⁷⁴ J. W. Beach, *Hardy in Thomas Hardy Critical Assessments* cit., vol. IV, pp. 246-261, p. 259.

³⁷⁵ *Ivi.*

³⁷⁶ T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 112.

³⁷⁷ T. Hardy, *Apology* cit., pp. 323-4.

purpose of poetry and criticism, but the writer diverged from Arnold, in the evaluation of the little and common things in which great things can be found. Arnold, in fact, criticized the provincialism of England while Hardy evaluated it and set his novels in Wessex, a province recreated *ad hoc* for his purposes and where rural characters and nature can still coexist even if for a brief period. As Hardy stated provincialism is "the essence of individuality, and is largely made up of that crude enthusiasm without which no great thoughts are thought, no great deeds done"³⁷⁸, hence, according to him, Matthew Arnold was wrong in his evaluation of province and its features.

Moreover, Hardy considered Arnold too conventional for his approach to religion in the middle of his career. Hardy, being an agnostic, could not accept the dogmas and doctrines of the Church while Arnold tried to reinterpret the Bible and the Church teachings in order to find a compromise suitable for his age.

Nevertheless Hardy studied and knew perfectly the Bible, and, as already said, he maintains as a fundamental principle the Pauline charity, as well as Arnold. But, influenced also by the scientific discoveries and especially by Huxley's thought, Hardy expanded this charity and compassion to animals.

If Arnold was considered an innovator for his social division and definition of society and for the solution proposed for the elevation of man, Hardy, even if he agreed with his precursor, saw clearly the modern man's agony and he portrayed it in his novels with a technique that unites the common and the extravagant, because, according to him, "a story must be worth the telling"³⁷⁹. Moreover, his style is full of the instability of the age merged with his striking sincerity and poetical prose, creating a spell which is difficult to miss. As Hardy held "we tale-tellers are all ancient Mariners, and none of us is warranted in stopping Wedding Guests (in other words, the hurrying public) unless he has something more unusual to relate than the ordinary experience of every average man and woman"³⁸⁰.

Hardy blended high poetical scenes with acute irony, nonconformist ideas and an undeniable wit, and despite the uncountable critiques, he was appreciated not only by his contemporaries but also by modernists, as Virginia Woolf and especially D.H. Lawrence and the war poets. Even one of Hardy's most pungent critics, T.S. Eliot,

³⁷⁸ T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* cit., p. 151.

³⁷⁹ Quoted in D. Cecil, *Hardy the Novelist, an Essay in Criticism in Thomas Hardy Critical Assessments* cit., vol. IV, pp. 398-426, p. 402.

³⁸⁰ Ivi.

had to admit that Hardy's style "touches sublimity", although he wrote, immediately after, that Hardy "never [...] passed through the stage of being good"³⁸¹.

³⁸¹ T. S. Eliot, *From After Strange Gods* in *Thomas Hardy Critical Assessments* cit., vol. III, pp. 239-240, p. 239.

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