

**SOPHIA CELINA DIESEL**

**THE CRUEL LOGIC OF NATURE:  
CHARLES DARWIN'S NATURAL SELECTION  
IN *JUDE THE OBSCURE*, BY THOMAS HARDY**

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**THE CRUEL LOGIC OF NATURE:  
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IN *JUDE THE OBSCURE*, BY THOMAS HARDY**

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Tese de Doutorado em Estudos de Literatura:  
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Orientadora: Profa. Dra. Sandra Sirangelo Maggio

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*Dedicated to Freddie*

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*Seemed the better way  
When first I heard him speak  
Now it's much too late  
To turn the other cheek*

*Sounded like the truth,  
Seemed the better way,  
Sounded like the truth,  
But it's not the truth today*

Leonard Cohen, "It Seemed the Better Way"

## RESUMO

A presente tese de doutorado propõe uma leitura do romance *Judas o Obscuro* (*Jude the Obscure*), de Thomas Hardy, sob a perspectiva da teoria da seleção natural de Charles Darwin. Popular desde sua primeira publicação, a teoria evolucionista de Darwin influenciou fortemente a cultura vitoriana do final do século dezenove ao apresentar uma visão de mundo materialista, de profusão e exuberância naturais, onde a vida evolui conforme a habilidade de cada indivíduo de sobreviver ao seu ambiente. Hardy era abertamente um admirador de Darwin, e encontrou nele uma forma válida de representar sua percepção da realidade, na qual o ser humano não é o centro do universo ou da criação divina, mas precisa se submeter às mesmas leis naturais, assim como qualquer outro ser vivo. Ao longo dos anos, seu polêmico *Jude* foi acusado de ser desde um tratado ao pessimismo gratuito até uma tentativa de parte de Hardy de começar uma guerra contra o cristianismo, devido à crítica religiosa, ao final trágico e ao tratamento hostil de seus personagens. Porém, essa tese adota a perspectiva de que o romance é basicamente o resultado das reflexões do autor sobre uma nova interpretação da vida, onde a mesma não acontece conforme caprichos humanos ou suas questionáveis leis morais, mas conforme necessidades próprias, relacionadas à adaptação e à sobrevivência. Ao invés de um punho erguido contra Deus, uma reconsideração de que talvez Ele não exista, e que a vida pode ser regida pela instintiva e insensível natureza, deixando a super evoluída raça humana isolada em seu próprio meio, buscando significados que também talvez não existam. Ao discutir as preocupações de Hardy com o sofrimento humano provocado por essa percepção, e a importância da empatia tanto entre seres humanos como para com todos os seres vivos, este estudo propõe reflexões sobre a teoria darwinista que vão além da sobrevivência do mais apto.

**Palavras-chave:** Thomas Hardy. *Judas, o Obscuro*. Charles Darwin. *A Origem das Espécies*. Crítica literária.



## ABSTRACT

The present dissertation proposes a reading of Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* in the light of the theory of Natural Selection, by the naturalist Charles Darwin. Popular from its first publication, Darwin's theory strongly influenced the Victorian culture of the end of the nineteenth century, by presenting a materialistic conception of a world of natural profusion and exuberance, where life evolves according to each individual's ability to survive their environment. Hardy was openly an admirer of Darwin's, and found in him a valid way of representing a tangible reality, where humankind is not the centre of the universe or of divine creation, but must submit to the same laws of nature as every other living being. Over the years, his polemic *Jude* has been accused of being anything from a treatise on gratuitous pessimism to an attempt on the author's part to start a war against Christianity because of its religious criticism, the tragic ending and the hostile treatment of the characters. However, this dissertation works on the premise that the novel is basically the result of the author's reflexions on a different interpretation of life, one in which life does not work according to human questionable moral laws and whims, but rather according to its own needs of adaptation and survival. Instead of a fist raised against God, Hardy presents us with a consideration that God might not exist, and that life could actually be ruled by an instinctive and callous nature, leaving super evolved mankind isolated in its own environment, looking for meanings that may not exist. By discussing Hardy's preoccupations on the human suffering provoked by such awareness, and the importance of empathy both among humans and towards other forms of life, this study proposes a reflexion on the Darwinist theory that goes beyond the survival of the fittest.

**Key words:** Thomas Hardy. *Jude the Obscure*. Charles Darwin. *The Origin of Species*. Literary Criticism.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Jude the Obscure* is Thomas Hardy's final novel and final attempt to discuss openly his major concerns about life and the impediments for human happiness (MILLGATE, 2006). After the publication in instalments of a "lighter" version, which began in 1894, it was first published in book form, in its restored version, in 1895. Many of his contemporaries perceived the novel as pessimistic, disgusting and impious, including critic Edmund Gosse who asked his readers what "Providence had done to Mr. Hardy that he should rise up [...] and shake his fist at his Creator"? (GOSSE, 1979, p. 280). For Hardy, however, it was never more than "an endeavour to give shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impressions"; to deal unaffectedly with the "deadly war between the flesh and the spirit; and to the point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims" (HARDY, 2016a, p. 5).

*Jude the Obscure* became the cause of a deadly war between the press and the author. Among other events, it was banned from the W. H. Smith circulating library, and a copy was burned by the Bishop of Wakefield, the ashes sent to Hardy afterwards (COX, 1979, p. xxx). By the 1912 edition, Hardy was very upset by all the negative attention paid to the considered polemic points while most critics ignored "the greater part of the story – that which presented the shattered ideals of the chief characters". He ends the postscript declaring that the sad attacks had the effect of curing him of "further interest in novel-writing" (HARDY, 2016b, p. 6).

The religious background of *Jude* contributed much to the animosity towards it. There are many references to the Bible, in the form of quotes and images, as well as within the plot itself, which deals with the protagonists' changing religious views and with Jude's dreams of a religious academic formation. Yet, religiosity is one element among many in the novel; it is part of a social arrangement, not always amiable, in which Jude, Sue and other characters live, and which is also composed of issues of class, gender and the moral codes that trespass all those areas. Thomas Hardy's religious views changed along his life too and were shaken by many other influences that called his attention, from philosophy to astronomy. A voracious reader, intellectually, the author was always his own man: widely inquisitive and eclectic, but sceptical and hesitant to embrace wholeheartedly any of the various contemporary systems of ideas. Nonetheless, "his reading on the scientific thought of his day strengthened his sense that the supernaturalism of theological doctrines was an out-dated relic hindering development of more rational views of the world" (SCHWEIK, 1999, p. 59). Natural science and the works of Charles Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley were among Hardy's favourites, as he famously stated in

his autobiography having “been among the earliest acclaimers of *The Origin of Species*” (HARDY, 1989, p. 158).

The influence of Darwin’s theory of natural selection is often pointed out in Hardy in many instances of his work, for example, when the amplitude of time is highlighted at the moment Henry Knight faces a fossilized crustacean and thinks that “separated by millions of years in their lives”, they meet “in their place of death” (HARDY, 2005a, p. 200); or when individuals fight for their survival, as the trees in *The Woodlanders*: “close together, wrestling for existence, their branches disfigured with wounds resulting from their mutual rubbings and blows” (HARDY, 2005c, p. 280). Both Darwin and Hardy go beyond such isolated scenes. More than any other evolutionary theory, the theory of natural selection changed the way life itself was comprehended, presenting a world where living beings were not only connected but interdependent, and more than that, derived from one another, through millions of years of history of descent and variation. It removed mankind from a central position of creation and placed it in the daily fight for survival, just like any other fruit of the long and complex evolutionary process. Darwin altered the sense of meaning and purpose on which human civilization was built, replacing the creationist model for a perspective without privileges, where suffering and death were both commonplace and necessary to the maintenance of life. Reading Darwin gave Hardy a mode or representing a sense of reality, germinated in his mind in ways he was disposed to benefit, where humans were not demi-gods, but part of the natural balance (EBBATSON, 1982). From the origins of life, of man and animal suffering, to our responsibilities towards other forms of life, Darwin helped Hardy ponder on delicate subjects he felt were in time to be reconsidered.

Along the decades Hardy has left at a loss readers and critics who search for significance in the cruelty the author is accused of inflicting on his characters, and many have come to the conclusion that in Hardy’s fiction, God is mean and careless about His own creation. However, in the light of natural selection and all the scientific advancements of the times in which he lived, Hardy can also be understood as someone who was questioning, as many others did, the very existence of God. Through this light, pain and death do not request meaningful explanations, neither are they a matter of punishment or moral probation, but rather natural conditions of a world where competition is fierce simply because “many more individuals are born than can possibly survive” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 63). In Darwin, life is self-propelled, “the aggregate action and product of many natural laws” (DARWIN, 1959, p. 165), which contradicts the idea of a conscious Creator, once it exists despite us, our creeds or dreams.

There is a gulf though, between man and other animals, as pointed out by Thomas Henry Huxley in 1863 while celebrating the physical evidence that showed how humans and higher apes were closely related. He stated that human superiority is a result of a very successful evolutionary history, but only when contemporary science overcame its own limitations that we would have further explanations about how it happened. Still, he thought it very ironic that the same intellectual superiority that places humans in advantage over other animals is also what enables us to be conscious of the randomness of life and to realize how our own existence is not as imperative as we thought it was (HUXLEY, 2009b).

The present dissertation discusses how this feeling of displacement of man and woman in relation to the very environment that produced them is dealt with in *Jude the Obscure*. Considering Hardy as a reader of Darwin, it discusses how characters of the novel understand themselves as being both part of the natural world, and also limited by it; how they are shown in a context that sets humans initially as not more exceptional than overdeveloped apes, but at the same time isolated because of their overdeveloped minds. The cousins Jude and Sue test the limits of their intellect and their freedom, supported by their irregular access to knowledge, in a society that oppresses them because of their class, gender and ideals. It concerns Hardy's words over "the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead" (HARDY, 2016a, p. 352), having in mind how the chief characters' quest for happiness always seems to be blocked by a sense of impotence in face of the antagonism of forces that go beyond their comprehension. It discusses how the plot raises pressing existentialist questions involving the limits of individuality and free will in a context where the biological sharing of traits among families and species gain importance and the common goal of survival surpasses individual aims. It is important to point out, this is not a matter of establishing final words on Thomas Hardy's philosophy; this is a study that reads Hardy's text through a Darwinian perspective, taking into account the historical period which both writer and naturalist shared, considering Hardy's fictional and non-fictional words, but without attempting to give conclusive answers on his intentions.

The text is divided into two main parts: chapters one and two deal with the problematic placement of humankind as part of the natural world; with the downgrading from demi-divinity to members of the animal kingdom, and the lack of control over our lives and instincts. Chapters three and four discuss the displacement that comes afterwards: even though part of the natural world, dominant humanity feels apart from it; searching for answers to justify such dominance. The main object of this discussion is Thomas Hardy's final novel *Jude the Obscure* (the 2002 edition, edited by Patricia Ingham is the one referenced directly, only by page number)

supported by other editions of *Jude* and other fictional texts written by the author, as well as non-fictional like letters, prefaces, essays and an autobiography. The criticism on *Jude*, both contemporary of the first publication, and modern, and biographies of Hardy are also included, as well as the iconic works of Gillian Beer and George Levine, that famously link Victorian literary theory to the Darwinian revolution. The discussion follows basically the chief couple Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead, but also includes other characters such as Arabella Donn, Richard Phillotson, and the children whenever relevant. Although both Jude and Sue are often considered equally relevant as main characters, Jude has more to offer for our study: he is the only one whose thoughts readers have access either directly or indirectly through the narrator, which gives us more of him to work with. Unfortunately, Sue has no such internal focalization and is always seen through others' perspectives, with the exception of her direct speeches, which leaves us with a little less material, even so, that does not make her less interesting.

The theoretical support to the analysis is largely supplied by the works of Charles Darwin: *On the Origin of Species* (1859), *The Descent of Man* (1871), *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839) and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), among other minor works, letters, essays and an autobiography. Furthermore, Professor Thomas Henry Huxley – Darwin's "rottweiler" (DESMOND, 1998, p. xiii) – responsible for defending and spreading Darwin's ideas with fierce enthusiasm, contributes with important works. Huxley's books such as *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863) and *Essays Upon Some Controverted Questions* (1892) are important because they fill gaps left by Darwin, sometimes only because he did not develop the ideas on paper or avoided polemics. Greatly eloquent, Huxley often articulates Darwin's theory better than Darwin himself and is an essential figure on the subject both historically and scientifically speaking. Other contemporaries such as the philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer, the philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill, the economist Thomas Malthus and the geologist Charles Lyell enter the discussion to provide support from how Darwin's thought was born to how it permeated the late-Victorian intellectual discourse and promoted the emergence of new areas of knowledge and investigation, those being social, economic, political, and more. Considering that it is almost impossible to trace and delimitate the reach of Darwin's scientific and cultural influence, this work proposes sticking to the naturalist's own words as much as possible and to his closest contemporaries; also because they were Thomas Hardy's contemporaries too, and the ones who helped shape what Darwin and his theory represented in their own times.

It is important to highlight that there are many schools, scientific and cultural, that, from the first publication of *The Origin* until today, have seized Darwin to sponsor their own ideas,

although many are clearly not always in accordance with Darwin's views, or go much beyond them. From social Darwinism to twentieth century Nazism, experiences of racist and eugenicist politics made use of terms like "favoured races", "struggle for life" and "selection" acquire bitter tastes over time (RICHTER, 2011, p. 8). Those significations are avoided here because they exceed Darwin's texts. When the terms "Darwinian" or "Darwinist" are used here they refer to Darwin's words, or in a few instances, to Huxley's. It is not the objective of this dissertation to defend the naturalist from controlling or allowing certain interpretations of his famous texts, therefore whenever pertinent to the topics, polemic points will be evaluated as impartially as possible. The same applies to Hardy, whose often vague "impressions" and "seemings" (HARDY, 2016a, p. 5) may not satisfy the questions his own work proposes. Another interesting language observation refers to the common use by Darwin, Hardy and other contemporaries of terms like "mankind" and especially "man" to refer to the human race in general. These are terms considered appropriate and inoffensive in Victorian times, although, as will be discussed, indeed inferred a certain sense of male superiority which was also considered normal at the time, but sounds inappropriate to the twentieth-first century reader. Here those terms, when not in direct speech, will be substituted by modern terms like "humankind", "humanity" or just "humans", meaning basically the same thing.

Chapter one begins with a brief introduction of Darwinian theory, aimed at readers who do not know it or to refresh the memory of those who already do. It then discusses Darwin's natural selection in the novel's context of myth and superstition mixed with an unresolved sense of religious belief. Jude is an uncared for and aimless boy who sees in the plans of his teacher a possibility to escape his own meaningless life by becoming a scholar and future deacon of the Anglican Church. To attain this, he needs to study at Christminster University (a fictitious version of Oxford University), something totally incompatible with his social position. To make things worse, Jude, like his cousin Sue, is part of a "cursed" family, according to their aunt, and therefore should never marry, otherwise death and suffering will come their way. When death and suffering do come and all plans are shattered, the cousins wonder who or what is to blame, if themselves or "something external" (p. 327); they wonder whether their fates are regulated by a superior limiting power, whatever this power is, or if they are able to make their own life choices. However, not even the dismissal of God and religion, or the apparent rejection of old superstitions frees them from the sense that free will is an illusion. The discussion follows the way Darwin's theory on descent explains the transmission of traits between generations and how this can be more determinant to our choices, tastes and histories than we like to acknowledge.



Chapter two is about the conflict between sexual instincts and reason. Sexual selection is the complement of natural selection; it determines the fittest individuals to procreate and pass their characteristics to the next generation, according to their abilities to secure the best partners. Fighting for females, selecting the best males, being sexually attractive, and producing healthy offspring are some of the challenges entailed. In *Jude the Obscure* sexuality seems to be an aspect related with the uncivilized, the animalistic, like in the case of the sexy Arabella, whose image constantly links her to pigs. Jude tries to use rationality to be rid of the “biological trap” (SHOWATER, 2006, p. 418) that pushes him towards women and drinking; he wants to study and prove “himself superior to the lower animals” (p. 56), but fails utterly. Sue goes further and denies her sexuality completely in an attempt not to be reduced to it. She is Hardy’s “bundle of nerves” (HARDY, 2016b, p. 8), representing the modern young woman whose ideals of equality and intellectual freedom are at odds with the role of women in Victorian society. However, Sue discovers that rationality cannot help her run from “the inexorable laws of nature” that eventually catch her in the circle of “injustice, loneliness, child-bearing, and bereavement” (p. 134-135) common to her sex.

Chapter three examines the motivations and significances of post-Darwinian life. Hesitant that the frightening field of pain and death of natural laws might be too unsettling, Darwin assured readers that “the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 62). Happiness as a factor of survival, a motivator for it, seems an intriguing and apparently improvised resource, but it reflects the very essence of Darwin’s sensitive “view of things” (BEER, 2009, p. 35), and in its turn, Hardy’s art too: “their mutually loving, meticulous, and ethically intense attention to the whole range of nature, organic and inorganic, in their discovery of narratives latent in all things” (LEVINE, 2009, p. 37). However, in *Jude*, the search for happiness has faded to a worldly level. Characters seem to be too detached from nature to profit by the old Hardian sense of fullness and enchantment it provided in his other novels. Jude’s search for significance in education and social ascension clashes with his inability to read and interpret the world around him, preventing him from drawing strategies, correcting mistakes, and retracing goals according to concrete circumstances. This chapter pursues language-related problems in Jude’s learning of Latin and Greek; it discusses how language limitations complicate reshaping the world when the very language is shaped by the established understanding of life centred on creationism. The inescapable use of the agent in the English language helps understand Jude and Sue’s confusion in personifying nature and taking “Nature at her word” (p.328), in order to escape the institutions, rules e moralities they find oppressive.

Chapter four is about human relations with other creatures and the human evolutionary process. Characteristics considered weaknesses in the chief couple can actually be a sign of their intellectual development, according to Darwin. Both Jude and Sue are accused of being too soft, too compassionate for everyone and everything since their childhood, an attitude that promotes their own suffering by exposing the amount of pain every creature is submitted to. From the “poor little dears” (p. 9), the birds at farmer Troutham’s, to the acceptance of a son unsure of the paternity, Jude’s sense of sympathy overcomes financial, family, and even species boundaries, making him often diverge from his path in order to help others. Darwin believed the capacity to sympathize with someone outside one’s close circle of relations was a sign of a highly developed intelligence, resulting from the successful human evolutionary process. The capacity of not only making rational decisions, but understanding the consequences of those decisions, and thus learning from them, is what generates a strong sense of morality, which in humankind is more developed than in any other species. The discussion centres on how the protagonists’ sensibilities help or injure their fight for survival, how they overcome the problematic ideas of progress, of nature as a conscious ruler, and how the allegory of Little Father Time relates with humanity becoming perhaps “too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions” (HARDY, 1989, p. 227) and the very environment that produced it.

Looking back now in the twentieth-first century, it may be difficult to understand the commotion caused by the popularization of the theory of natural selection at the time. This owes to the fact that some concepts became so internalized in modern science and culture that they seem quite obvious now. Darwin definitely changed the way we see the world, and unlike most of his contemporaries, not only he is never forgotten, but he is permanently confirmed as years pass and as scientific knowledge advances. This happens much due to our growing consciousness about the importance of preserving natural resources; about the interrelatedness and interdependence of all living beings – aspects of the Darwinian thought that Victorians did not seem to pay much attention to, perhaps because they had already too much to think about, like being related to animals, the uncertainties of dealing with long stretches of time, the affronts to creationist tradition; perhaps only because they did not see the damaged world as we do. Now, as the biodiversity of the planet is visibly threatened by our actions and the losses are more than ever apparent, we are forced to acknowledge that without nature there is no future. Natural resources are not endless, and the natural forces do not seem to plan to start subjecting us now more than they did before. The acknowledgment of nature as a major force that exists independently of human presence, whims and creeds is more than ever imperative to a relation of less egocentrism and more respect on our part; still, the most difficult task remains exactly

the one that messes with human vanity and egocentrism. Back in his times Thomas Hardy wrote that “the discovery of the law of evolution [...] shifted the centre of altruism from humanity to the whole conscious world collectively” (HARDY, 1989, p. 373), but he feared humanity would not accept the new moral duties and responsibilities thrust upon it (SCHWEIK, 1999, p. 62). The resistance to those responsibilities is still a reality.

Set apart from many of his contemporaries who saw “grandeur” and “progress” in evolutionary change, Hardy saw the plight of humankind was to be trapped in a universe oblivious to human feeling and ethical aspirations (SCHWEIK, 1999, p. 63). It moved him and made him ponder on our capacity for happiness, for good and evil independent of religious guidance, its promises of rewards and threats of punishments. As a novelist and poet, Hardy defended that art should never be considered under neither moral nor immoral lights, but “unmoral”, just like “the Cause of things”, because human judgement of right and wrong tends to be biased by personal interest. Always struggling to be intellectually free, in cases like the polemics involving *Jude*, Hardy blamed “the mentally warped” who twisted meanings in order to see attacks on religion, morals, and institutions, in what to him, in his final attempt at novel-writing, was simply “an honest picture of human nature” (HARDY, 1990, p. 125).

## 1 NATURE DOES NOT MAKE LEAPS

The English culture of the second half of the nineteenth century fed intensively from the theory of natural selection by naturalist Charles Darwin. Starting with *The Origin of Species*, it quickly reached high popularity among both a specialized and a non-specialized public. More than a biological study, Darwin's work proposed a complete reconsideration of history, society, religion, and the very essence of humankind. In the literary field, it provided writers with new insights that they could use: from human's animal past to the vast stretches of time, and the alteration in the whole perception of history; from a system of leaps and stagnations to the concept of slow, long, and permanent gradation. Along with George Eliot, another case of a major Victorian writer who drank from that fount is Thomas Hardy, who passed through a prolonged and seminal process of reorientation, creatively restructuring his imagination and pondering seriously on humanity's new roles and responsibilities connected to it. As a kind of scientific fiction for him, Darwin's book "became a mental habit which enabled the generation of a new type of literary fiction" (EBBATSON, 1982, p. x).

*On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* was first published in England in 1859 and was followed by several editions. In this breakthrough essay, Darwin explains what he calls natural selection: an evolutionary theory that offered a new interpretation on how life develops on the planet. The basic principle of natural selection is that "more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, and so there must in every case be a struggle for existence: among individuals of the same species, among distinct species, and with the physical conditions of the environment" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 50-51). The fight for survival means that only the best adapted individuals have chances to survive and reach reproductive age in a natural environment that changes fast and where competition is always fierce. The constant selection means that not only the environment changes, but species eventually change too: they adapt, slowly, across long stretches of time, often giving origin to new species and varieties. Species unable to adapt do not develop, tend to decrease in numbers, and face extinction.

A grandson of the naturalist Erasmus Darwin, Charles Darwin had been early disturbed by his grandfather's dictum "Omnia ex Conchis": something like *we come all from oysters*. Later, from Gottfried Leibniz's principle that "Natura non facit saltum" (nature does not make leaps) young Darwin drew the essential element for his own treatment of the continuity of life and the connection shared by living beings (BEER, 2009, p. 18). No leaps means that

everything, every animal and vegetable structure is inherited from ancestors, modified and adapted according to each species' needs and conditions, but that always links one to one's past and to other species that evolved from that same branch.

Newly graduated from Cambridge University, Darwin spent five years travelling around the world on board the vessel HMS Beagle, collecting, researching and discovering the pieces that would be years later part of the great puzzle he was about to put together. He slowly delineated his own theory on the development of species based on many of the recent scientific discoveries in the areas of biology, botany, astronomy and others that were bursting around in the busy Victorian age. The geologist Charles Lyell was one of his greatest inspirations, and his volumes of *Principles of Geology* accompanied Darwin on board the Beagle. Although Lyell still supported the fixity of species, he presented important evidence that the planet was much older than we believed. Lyell also contradicted the idea that the Earth had been repeatedly transformed through series of large-scale cataclysms, but instead is in a permanent cycle of eruption and decay, gradually changing, but where periods are essentially similar (RICHTER, 2011). This view of a slow, long-term accumulation of environmental change was fundamental for Darwin to build his idea on how living beings evolved. From outside the biological sphere, Darwin brought Thomas Malthus's argument on demographic growth of cities that relativizes sizes of populations according to the availability of natural resources. Then almost twenty years after accompanying Captain Fitzroy on that world journey, after many years of research among his pigeons and orchids, Darwin finally published his essay, his "long argument" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 338), presented in partnership with naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, with quick and noisy acceptance from the public, both inside and outside the scientific community.

Darwin's challenge and most polemic issue was his breaking with a long-accepted relationship of science and religion which supported that every natural element of the world is the intentional creation of God. Known as natural theology, this understanding of the world consisted of "the practice of inferring the existence and wisdom of God from the order and beauty of the world" (EDDIE; KNIGHT, 2008, p. ix). For centuries, nature has been part of the philosophical argument which sustains that creation cannot exist without a creator; therefore, every single detail of existence has been necessarily planned, engineered and executed by the deity. Furthermore, everything was created with the specific purpose of being beneficial to humankind, God's main creation and image, which justified that everything was, in core and essence, made to supply our necessities and pleasures; its complexity to supply our curiosity (PALEY, 2008). Natural theology developed over centuries and was especially productive in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, always adjusting scientific advancement to its scope.

Instead of rejecting the expansion of knowledge, famous exponents of natural theology such as Reverend William Paley, used it in ways to demonstrate how nature in all its forms fitted the creationist establishment, static and perfect from beginning to end (EDDIE; KNIGHT, 2008, p. x-xiii). In his famous analogy, Paley paralleled the complexity of living organisms to the mechanism of a watch, arguing that complexity could never be the result of chance, but proved the existence of an intelligent maker. In the same way that human produced watches with its complex mechanisms with the purpose of telling the time, so did God produce not only the human intelligence that makes watches but all the living complexity of a world that works basically as infallibly as a watch does. Darwin was a great admirer of Paley at college, and later would borrow much of his enthusiasm, his writing style, and his use of analogies to go beyond the reverend's conclusions (BEER, 2009).

To begin his refutation, Darwin pointed out that the similar corporeal structures found in the most diverse animals and plants showed that nature was not static but changed throughout time. The structures evidenced the links amongst them, that "each species had not been independently created, but had descended, like varieties, from other species" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 49-50). For Darwin, species develop from common ancestors in a tree-like model where change and adaptation are permanent, depending on each one's necessities and environment conditions, therefore living beings never reach a truly final shape or condition. Although the human eye does not live enough to witness those changes, there was no reason to believe that the living forms that we have now will be same in the future or that they were the same in the past. Darwin proposed a non-static, self-propelled model where progress and transformation are not synonyms of improvement in a sense that perfection can ever be attained. On the contrary, as the environment is always changing, in climate, resources, and in the relations among living beings, adaption never ends. The best adapted species increase in number; the worst adapted decrease and, if numbers become insufficient, species become extinct. While some species are in a process of disappearing, others find more favourable conditions, flourish, and attain dominant positions. This self-sufficient balance is what keeps life going, and the necessity of an orchestrator becomes less imperative as pieces are put together, and the imperfections appear. Darwin's system of natural selection did not invoke a source of authority outside the natural order itself, and so expressions like *purpose* and *beneficial* became displaced. Once individuals and whole species are driven by their own turbulent and risky search for survival, death and suffering lose their status of moral punishments and become necessary rings in the chain of events that propagates life. Plants too,

like animals, compete among themselves for pollinator insects, water, light, and territory considering, for example, the dangers of alien species being newly introduced.

“The key concepts for natural theologians [...] were *design* and *creation*. Darwin, on the contrary, [...] precipitates a theory based on *production* and *mutation*” (BEER, 2009, p. xviii). What was considered product becomes protagonist, and the idea of uniformity loses space as Darwin emphasises the importance of difference and of the individual for natural selection to happen. He observes that, for example, in a group of healthy animals of the same species, individuals are never exactly equal. There are differences, and slight as they may be, those differences can determine which individuals are more or less successful. The slightest advantage, anything that proves profitable in any aspect of the fight for survival can qualify one individual over another: a slightly better hearing, agility, or tone of body camouflage, can determine the best fighters, the ones who escape predators, the best finders of food, shelter and so on; whereas things like colour of plumage, singing and even dancing abilities can help in the procreation field. When the time for pairing comes, the capacity of attracting females or fighting for them can define which males will procreate and which will not. The females, in their turn, are assigned by Darwin to select the best, strongest partners, focusing on having strong offspring. Once the best fitted are the ones who tend to survive and produce the next generation, those are the traits that tend to go with them (DARWIN, 2008b). Natural selection is the “preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 64-65). It is natural because neither favourable nor unfavourable characteristics depend on the individual’s will; they are random and spontaneous. Although Darwin believed there were triggers of variations, related with environmental changes and its inhabitants, before the development of genetics with the discovery of the DNA, nothing could be proved and the subject remained mostly connected with chance (DARWIN, 2008b).

Natural selection was not the first evolutionary theory in history; however, it was the first one to detach evolution from the argument of intelligent design. Before Darwin, the French naturalist Jean Baptiste Lamarck was already bold enough to present the first theory on the genesis of life that considered the mutation of living beings, the accumulation of small changes resulting in new species, which would also be used by Darwin later. The difference was that Lamarck explained the appearance of variations as a result of individual will and habit. In the recurrent example of the giraffes, these animals would have developed longer necks along time because they felt the necessity of reaching higher leaves of trees in times of scarce food, and so as they stretched constantly, every generation would come with necks a little longer until they reached an ideal length. The Darwinian model emphasised the random variability of the

organism, although it did not discard the importance of habit. According to Darwinian reasoning, changes do not follow will, they appear independently of necessity. In the case of the giraffes, some would just happen to be born with longer necks, which luckily enhanced their chances of reaching higher vegetation and consequently of survival and reproduction under those particular adverse conditions (RICHTER, 2011). If otherwise giraffes lived in an environment where food were more easily attained, other features would be more valuable and individuals with those other features would be in advantage. As it was, the longer-necked ones were most likely to survive and pass that trait to future generations. Many years before the publication of *The Origin*, in 1844, Darwin already pondered on where Lamarck erred:

I am almost convinced (quite contrary to opinion I started with) that species are not (it is like confessing a murder) immutable. Heaven forbid me from Lamarck nonsense of a ‘tendency to progression’, ‘adaptations from the slow willing of animals’, etc.! But the conclusions I am led to are not widely different from his; though the means of change are wholly so. I think I have found out (here’s presumption!) the simple way by which species become exquisitely adapted to various ends (DARWIN, 1887, p. 23).

What most puzzled the first readers of Darwin was the specific place of humanity in all of this. Intentionally left out of *The Origin*, in order to avoid prejudice against the theory, humankind would only be Darwin’s subject twelve years later, with the publication of *The Descent of Man*, in 1871. But until then, much was debated, mainly by his greatest enthusiast, Thomas Henry Huxley, in *Evidence as to Man’s Place in Nature*, published in 1863. Huxley pointed out that the answers to doubts former sceptic men of genius left insoluble for centuries were finally within reach. “The question of questions for mankind – the problem which underlies all others, and is more deeply interesting than any others – is the ascertainment of the place which Man occupies in nature and of his relations to the universe of things.” (HUXLEY, 2009b, p. 57-58). He was bold to point human’s common ancestry with apes through physical evidence, habits, and instincts, including collected modern and historical accounts of amazing “ape-men” living in the most isolated places of the planet (HUXLEY, 2009b). Through anatomy, including the “mass of organic bricks” called cells, Huxley detailed the stages of development of living beings and how structures that are often the same at the embryonic stage turn into different body parts as the process of maturing unfolds, before and after the birth, similarly to what Darwin does later in *The Descent*. The structural affinity of the most varied species included humankind, whose “mode of origin and the early stages of the development [...] are identical with those of the animals immediately below him in the scale” (HUXLEY, 2009b, p. 65). Despite the still missing links, Huxley affirmed that “at the present moment, [...]



there is but one hypothesis regarding the origin of species of animals in general which has any scientific existence – that propounded by Mr Darwin” (HUXLEY, 2009b, p. 106).

Darwin broke with the necessity of explaining everything as the result of an intelligent design. His narrative unfolds without external intrusion, according to laws of no initiating intention and no ultimate objective (LEVINE, 1991). It broke with the necessity of perfection because it showed no perfection, but an on-going search, often clumsy, almost always violent, for balance. That life unfolds independently of creeds, and with no particular preference for anyone is apparent. Later Freud would place Darwin between Copernicus and himself as the inflictors of the three heavy blows the “naïve self-love of men” had had to submit to at the hands of science. First Copernicus had demonstrated that the Earth was not the centre of the universe “but only a tiny fragment of a cosmic system; scarcely imaginable vastness”; then Darwin’s blow fell when biological research destroyed man’s supposedly privileged place in creation and proved his descent from the animal kingdom and his ineradicable animal nature; lastly Freud’s own blow was his psychological research which showed to the ego that it is not even master in its own house (FREUD, 1976, position. 3362).

## 1.1 THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

*Jude the Obscure* contrasts from the beginning two different perceptions of life that can be easily associated with the traditional idea of a superior controlling power versus individuals left with their own luck. The opposing figures of aunt Drusilla and Mr Phillotson divide young Jude between past and present, superstition and secularism, being only some of the contrasts among many in a novel intentionally full of them, according to Hardy himself (2016a). Jude lives among coexisting perspectives that can hardly be separated from one another, where individuals grow under many influences, reflecting the post Darwinian mood of Victorian culture. Constantly haunted by his family history, Jude grows associating all his limitations – educational, cultural, social – with what he later calls his superstitions: everything related to faith, including his aunt’s curses, religion and the very idea of God. Jude wants to claim control over his life; to have the liberty to choose and to be free from the feeling that destiny is written.

The largely rural county of Wessex, in the south of England is the setting. We know little about young Jude Falwey’s history before he came to live in Marygreen with his great-aunt Drusilla. We know his parents are dead, that he came from Melstock, and he now has been living there for about a year. The aunt plainly states how inconvenient Jude’s staying there is, and how “it would ha’ been a blessing if Goody-mighty had took thee too wi’ thy mother and

father, poor useless boy!” (p. 7). With a “frowning pleasantry” she asks why Mr Phillotson, the teacher who has just left town, did not take him to Christminster, “and make a scholar of ’ee” (p. 7). She mocks the boy’s taste for books, and compares him to Susanna, the cousin whom he never met and whose love for poetry and books also made her an odd girl. The aunt tells him that while reciting *The Raven*, Sue “would knit her little brows, and glare round tragically, and say to the empty air, as if some real creature stood there” (p. 105). The old woman seems to truly believe that “she’d bring up the nasty carrion bird that clearly [...] as she stood there in her little sash and things, that you could see un a’most before your very eyes” (p. 105). Jude too, “had the same trick as a child of seeming to see things in the air” (p. 105).

For the superstitious woman, a taste for books makes people odd, and she cannot help associating such oddness with the tragic past of the cousins’ parents. A child’s simple dramatic reading of poetry impresses her as something supernatural; she cannot really tell whether Sue actually saw the “nasty carrion bird” or not. When Drusilla tells Jude those things about Sue, she is trying to justify why he should never have anything to do with his cousin. Both sides of the family were already ruined by an ominous doom that runs in it: marriages from both sides ended in separation and death, and so Jude is told never to marry, because “ ’Tisn’t for the Fawleys to take that step any more” (p. 8). Her ability to translate family accidents into family myth makes the aunt a kind of witch in the novel, someone strangely able to predict much of his future as if she wished him all the misfortunes he deserved (GARSON, 2000). She constantly reminds Jude of every painful memory associated with his family, making him feel, especially when he is still young, almost responsible for all the wretchedness. Drusilla illustrates a negative side of country tradition, associated with ignorance and prejudice.

In contrast to Drusilla, Mr Phillotson, the school teacher, produces a completely different impression in Jude’s mind. He is the boy’s male role model, perhaps due to the love for books they share. Despite not being among the regular day scholars, but one who attended the night school only in that teacher’s term, Jude is the only boy who helps Phillotson pack his things and the only one who is truly sorry to see him part. The master says he is sorry too and before leaving, tells the boy about his plans to join the university in the neighbouring city of Christminster to become a scholar. That day Jude decides he wants to follow the teacher’s steps; he resolves to study and become a scholar too. Joining the university at Christminster like his teacher is his goal now; and the teacher’s dreams become his own. Magic Christminster, “the city of light” (p. 20), contains everything Jude needs; it becomes his “Alma Mater” (p. 32), standing in for the mother and the family he does not have: “it had been the yearning of his heart to find something to anchor on to, to cling to; for some place which he could call

admirable” (p.19). The boy dreams about a place where he would live “without fear of farmers, or hindrance, or ridicule” (p.19); a place that would give him purpose, where he could “set himself to some mighty undertaking like the men of old of whom he had heard”; Christminster is the place where “the tree of knowledge grows” (p. 20).

Phillotson’s last words to Jude are “be a good boy, remember; and be kind to animals and birds, and read all you can. And if ever you come to Christminster remember you hunt me out for old acquaintance sake” (p. 4). He tells Jude that his scheme to obtain a university degree and be ordained is “the necessary hallmark of a man who wants to do anything in teaching” (p. 4). Although Phillotson needs to be ordained to complete the plan, his focus is clearly on his advancement as a teacher rather than in the religious training itself. By telling Jude to read all he can, he does not direct the boy to religious books but to knowledge in general; and in emphasising respect to animals instead of directing his love towards his fellow men, it can be inferred how different Phillotson is, at least in that beginning, from people like Drusilla. He wishes good, not death and pain. As a younger person and a teacher, Phillotson shows a more secularized view of the world and its values; his mind is open to different interpretations of life, instead of only reproducing confusing and forbidding beliefs. And if the aunt oppresses young Jude, the teacher on the other hand inspires with the opening perspective of knowledge, intellectual freedom, and social advancement.

*Jude*, more than any other Hardy novel, shows the old days of country life being overshadowed by the restlessness produced by modernization: “the debunking of the world of tradition and superstition; and the perpetual moral and intellectual uncertainty of modern life” (DOLIN, 2009, p. 334). His previous novels, stories and poems had been famous for remarkable and invaluable portraits of rural life in the southern counties of nineteenth-century England: the folk-lore, the dances and the oral tradition, as well as the sadness of seeing such things being lost in the new generations. Hardy’s affection for the culture in which he grew up was evident; he claimed all his ideas and the people’s portraits were based on observation or in stories he heard from, among other sources, mostly his mother, and said that every superstition or custom described in his work may be depended on as true records of the same, not his inventions (MILLGATE, 2006). However, the aspects of the country life that enriched the present through past history, such as the dances, the traditional music and the people, expected in Hardy, are absent in *Jude*. The hamlet of Marygreen is a place without roots or history, just like the boy who has been living there for only a year, as if he has existed for barely that long. In the architecture of Marygreen the oldest thing is the well-shaft, everything else had been pulled down and substituted for cheap, modern and unfamiliar erections. Even the eighteen penny cast-

iron crosses as the cemetery tombstones are made to last for only five years. There are no reflections of the past, neither in the city nor in the boy's life, whose future promises only suffering under the malignant influences of the family doom. As Goode (2000, p. 111) says, when Jude dreams of leaving that place, he is not really trying to escape it, because he never belonged to it. "He has no choice but to make a choice to improve himself and that is no choice at all [...] The only place for Jude is displacement".

Jude's displacement under the light of natural selection allows at first an optimistic perspective of open destiny, free from his aunt's beliefs, where he can be anything he pleases by following Phillotson's advice. Individual perceptions of right or wrong and fate lose strength in the face of the practical aspects of life-unfolding presented by Darwin, where natural aptness seems to be a mere consequence of random conditions, not of pleasing or displeasing a higher entity with specific behaviour, or worse, of being marked by previous family sins. In the natural world there is no right or wrong, only the war of nature (GRAY, 2009), which basically hints that following one's instincts should be enough to fight for one's survival.

However, the demand for following the best habits and strategies is what hinders the apparent freedom provided by this idea. In nature, individuals are free to choose by themselves only until their choices must be somehow directed in order to fulfil certain necessities. Predators must hunt, preys must hide, species of birds must fly long distances to procreate, certain insects kill their mate after copulation, others work their whole lives building huge structures where they live, and so on. The group behaviour defines the best individual behaviour according to what works for most of its members. The question that always remains is how much of it is voluntary, a result of decision, and how much is intrinsic and instinctive. According to natural selection in a broad sense, family descent is what defines evolution: it is what relates living beings to common ancestors like ramifications of a tree, evolving throughout millions of years of mutation and adaptation; it is how instincts are transmitted. And in a closer sense it is also what makes family relatives very similar because parents always tend to pass their traits to the new generations (DARWIN, 2008b). Darwin stressed the importance of inherited traits in the perpetuation of species, but the amount of physical traits and especially of mental traits that are inherited was still a matter of speculation, as was the amount of free choice left. When *The Origin* was published, readers obviously thought of the subject in human terms, instantly raising questions on how far family descent predetermined human character; how much inherited traits influenced personality and choices without obstructing independent will.

In Hardy's novel, Jude and Sue are permanently trying to understand to which point they are responsible for their decisions, or if their sufferings are to blame on "something

external” (p. 327) – and whether the external force is a sentient superior force in the form of God or what Jude calls “the artificial system of things” (p. 209), referring to the restricting social and cultural arrangement that prevents them from living according to their dispositions. Sue even considers a third alternative, that perhaps their misfortunes are “owing to [their] own dissatisfied, unpractical natures” (p. 249); which would mean in terms of natural selection that perhaps they were simply born unfit to their environment. Journalist and Hardy’s friend William Dean Howells expressed in his 1895 review that there is an aspect of indecision in *Jude* when it comes to the possibility of free will: “all the characters, indeed, have the appealing quality of human creatures really doing what they must while they seem to be doing what they will. It’s not a question of blaming them or praising them; they are in the necessity of what they do and what they suffer” (HOWELLS, 1979, p. 266). If adaptability is natural, then no one chooses to be adaptable or not, the very capacity to understand this conflict is due to natural gifts, not will. This confusion is well illustrated when Sue, questioned by Phillotson on who is to blame for her repulsion for him, if not herself, cries “I don’t know! The universe, I suppose – things in general, because they are so horrid and cruel!” (p. 213).

## 1.2 HAUNTED BY SUPERSTITION

Superstitions in Thomas Hardy’s fiction can take different forms, but most of the times it is the belief that unknown forces can interfere in human life in a negative way, like in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, when Michael Henchard is ruminating over the reckless crop selling, believing that “some power” must be working against him:

‘I wonder,’ he asked himself with eerie misgiving; ‘I wonder if it can be that somebody has been roasting a waxen image of me, or stirring an unholy brew to confound me! I don’t believe in such power; and yet—what if they should ha’ been doing it!’ Even he could not admit that the perpetrator, if any, might be Farfrae. These isolated hours of superstition came to Henchard in time of moody depression, when all his practical largeness of view had oozed out of him (HARDY, 1998, p. 190-191).

He tells himself that he does not believe in it, but at the same time he does. As in the case of Susan Nunsuch accusing Eustacia Vye of witchcraft in *The Return of the Native*, what at first is read as a residue of folkloric mythology, brings a sense of uncanny, of that internal power and the sensation of “eerie misgiving” (WOLFREYS, 2009, p. 308). Beginning with that first visit to Mr Fall to ask for weather forecasts, as Henchard’s misfortunes follow, he becomes a “man of moods, glooms, and superstitions” (HARDY, 1998, p. 250), which keeps him in this

maddening gap between real and unreal, believing and not believing that there is something or someone intentionally messing with his life through supernatural ways.

Wolfreys (2009, p. 308) says that when Hardy constructs his narrative to reveal Henchard as “haunted by superstition”, he plays with the possible residue of superstition in the reader himself, yet maintaining a distance from “such irrational sensations” by casting doubt over their existence. Wolfreys reminds us of how Freud acknowledges a writer who creates uncanny effects in a narrative world, otherwise predicated on “common reality”, through the use of events that cannot be proved, indeed appeals to the “superstitiousness” that we have allegedly left behind. In a novel so concerned with residual forms of haunting like *Mayor*, the trope of superstition residue is readable as the uncanny manifestation of the haunting trace.

Superstition in Hardy can also be related to religiosity, and the excesses the author saw in religious rites and dogmas which were part of the recurrent discussion over a reformed Anglican Church in his time. Hardy defended a “rational religion”, free from what he called “dogmatic superstitions”, but died fearing people still preferred “childish back-current towards a belief in magic rites” (HARDY, 1989, p. 359), as was confirmed when the reformed Prayer Book, proposed in 1927, was rejected by the House of Commons soon before his death (DALZIEL, 2009, p. 77-78). Instead of trying to explain mysticism logically, modern religion for Hardy should be the expression “of nobler feelings towards humanity and emotional goodness and greatness, the old meaning of the word – ceremony, or ritual-having perished or nearly” (HARDY, 1989, p. 358). Rationality should focus on the well-being of humankind, as opposed to mystic and unfounded or distorted readings of the world.

In *Jude the Obscure*, superstitions are beliefs that deceive one’s true self and prevent character’s from seeing and doing things clearly and rationally. Jude at first calls his pagan literature superstitious because he understands those books to be inappropriate, although he likes them better than the sacred ones. After speaking out loud a verse of “Carmen Sæculare” he muses “over his curious superstition, innate or acquired, in doing this; and the strange forgetfulness which had led to such a lapse from common-sense and custom in one who wished, next to being a scholar, to be a Christian divine” (p. 28). The “innate or acquired” leaves us in doubt whether Jude’s interests really lie in sacred texts or if he is distancing from his true self in order to fulfil an aim that does not agree with his nature.

Later, at Melchester, Jude’s superstitions take a religious optimistic form. As he walks the streets, he takes it as a good omen that they are full of stone blocks because it means the cathedral is under restoration and that he will have work there. “It seemed to him, full of the superstitions of his beliefs, that this was an exercise of forethought on the part of a ruling Power,

that he might find plenty to do in the art he practised while waiting for a call to higher labours” (p. 125). As time passes, Jude starts seeing such optimistic views as “cobwebs” that Sue, with her intellect, “could brush away with a word” (p. 388). Sue herself, on recollecting her decisions driven by her lack of experience and the social pressure, from hiding her pagan statues to marrying for appearances’ sake, protests: “When people of a later age look back upon the barbarous customs and superstitions of the times that we have the unhappiness to live in, what will they say!” (p. 206).

For aunt Drusilla, marriage in the Fawley family is the recipe for disgrace. After Jude marries Arabella, she still claims that “the Fawleys were not made for wedlock: it never seemed to sit well upon us. There's sommat in our blood that won't take kindly to the notion of being bound to do what we do readily enough if not bound. That's why you ought to have hearkened to me, and not ha' married.” (p. 65). She says the family history proves it: Jude’s mother was “ill-used” by his father, left both him and the boy and one day drowned herself out of despair. Jude’s father “was took wi’ the shakings for death, and died in two days” (p.65). Things did not work for Sue’s mother either; she was Jude’s father’s sister: “Her husband offended her, and she so disliked living with him afterwards that she went away to London with her little maid” (p. 65). The idea of something wrong with family blood brings back that Freudian sense of uncanny of something (un)familiar, very abstractly. Still, it hints at inheritance, at bringing back something hidden (bad in this case) from the previous generation.

Aunt Drusilla and the cousins belong to different times of history and have different perspectives of life. They are a repetition of Tess and her mother in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, where the two women together are as “Jacobean and the Victorian ages juxtaposed”:

Between the mother, with her fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter, with her trained National teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code, there was a gap of two hundred years as ordinarily understood (HARDY, 2005b, p. 29).

While the superstitions of the mother stand for the past, Tess’s studies under National teachings are revised, standardized and free from the folk-lore and superstitions in the elder’s mind. The gap of two hundred years between direct generations implies education and the access to it had advanced quickly, and so a significant line is drawn between mother and daughter. Yet, overcoming folkloric culture through education does not necessarily mean that children were under any kind of modern scientific teaching by the end of the Victorian age. We can see this in *Jude* when Phillotson becomes a National teacher after the failure of the

university scheme. He used to “sit in his parlour during the dark winter nights, and re-attempt some of his old studies – one branch of which had included Roman-Britannic antiquities – an unremunerative labour for a National schoolmaster” (p. 154). That is because National schools were of Anglican orientation, just like the University of Christminster, differently from British schools which were Nonconformists (INGHAM, 2002). Phillotson’s studies had attracted Phillotson for being a “comparatively unworked mine, practicable to those who, like himself, had lived in lonely spots where these remains were abundant, and were seen to compel inferences in startling contrast to accepted views on the civilization of that time” (p. 154). But interests different from the “standard knowledge” are useless and “unremunerative”.

Most of the times Hardy’s characters are rather limited when compared to the author’s own miscellaneous and various interests. The words of John Stuart Mill which Sue uses to convince Phillotson to free her from their marital contract are the closest we have in terms of characters directly mentioning the same books that formed Hardy’s impressions. Even full of indirect literary influences, especially in the Christminster voices that receive Jude, the novel never mentions Darwin, nor Huxley or any other name of contemporary natural science. For the most part, for a novel so concerned with education and its sources, characters’ access to modern thinking is very restricted. There is, of course, the studies carried out within the walls of the University of Christminster, the educational centre of the novel, which follows very conservative lines, but the access to that formal knowledge is denied to Jude or Sue, as well as to the reader, who never glances inside those walls to see what people there are reading. Sue can still be considered a kind of exception because she had access to a broader range of reading choices, probably due to her life in London, and so is intellectually closer to the Hardy who wrote *Jude*. Phillotson, amazed by the things Sue says, abides to her wishes: “I can’t answer her arguments – she has read ten times as much as I. Her intellect sparkles like diamonds, while mine smoulders like brown paper... She’s one too many for me!” (p. 221). Sue’s education, although self-taught and fragmented, is more diversified in its religious and profane corpus, which makes her more confident about what she says: “my life has been entirely shaped by what people call a peculiarity in me. I have no fear of men, as such, nor of their books” (p. 141).

However, when it comes to Jude, instead of giving his hero a progressive background, Hardy puts him in a similar spirit he himself started his autodidactic program when young: conservatively with the classics and theology – a curiously out of date course of reading for a time when Jude’s ambitions could have been turned to science or engineering (PAGE, 1999). But while Hardy’s own natural interests developed to be much more towards eclecticism and encyclopaedism than a real model of a university syllabus, Jude is kept to his program without



any orientation or development, reading forever only the books he can obtain, old and shabby editions, often mixing religious and pagan, and acquiring an unsystematic body of knowledge which may not be as useful as he wants to believe it is. He did what Phillotson told him to, he reads everything he can. His problem is not only the lack of access to books in general, but the lack of a study program to guide his readings according to his aims.

Jude then grows between the eminence of tragedy and hope. When Christminster begins to be a real next step for him, his aunt's warnings on the evil consequences of falling in love with Sue do not seem to impress the young man anymore. His wish to follow the teacher is now mixed with a new wish to find the "pretty girlish face in a broad hat with radiating folds under the brim, like the rays of a halo" (p. 72) in the photograph on his aunt's mantelpiece. But he is married to the absent Arabella, so he tries not to think romantically of Sue by reminding himself that even if he were free, "in a family like his own, where marriage usually meant a tragic sadness, marriage with a blood-relation would duplicate the adverse conditions, and a tragic sadness might be intensified to a tragic horror" (p. 84).

Sue eventually substitutes Phillotson as the anchor for Jude's heart; she becomes an irresistible attraction for him, a magnetic source. The university dream does not seem to be the main focus anymore. Jude writes to his aunt and asks for the photograph of Sue; the aunt sends it, though still requesting that "he was not to bring disturbance into the family by going to see the girl" (p. 79). Jude finds where Sue works and begins watching the girl whose mere presence stimulated him. For some time, "she remained more or less an ideal character, about whose form he began to weave curious and fantastic day-dreams" (p. 83). When they finally meet, their affinity is quickly perceived, reawakening in the reader an ominous feeling. Phillotson himself later remarks on the "extraordinary sympathy, or similarity, between the pair. They are cousins, which perhaps accounts for some of it. They seem to be one person split in two!" (p. 221). For Penny Boumelha, the cousinship serves to highlight their similarities, "besides contravening the exogamy rule and so adding an incestuous frisson to their sense of impeding and hereditary doom" (BOUMELHA, 2016, p. 399). Their resemblance is not only physical, they are perfect "true comrades" (p. 261), intellectually similar too, reinforcing the idea that as they share the same family tree, they consequently share characteristics from that tree, whichever they may be. Whether appealing to the reader's residue of superstition or to the possibilities of inheritance brought by Darwin, it seemed plausible at the time that since Jude and Sue can share the same passions, inclinations and virtues, they can also share weaknesses and vices, making a match between the two more dangerous than with unrelated people.

The cousins' fear of confronting the assumption that there is a superior power deciding their destinies for them, prone to be against them, can be perceived in simple situations such as when, newly married to Phillotson, a tearful Sue asks Jude "how can a woman be unhappy who has only been married eight weeks to a man she chose freely?" When Jude repeats "chose freely?" she asks back, as if she did not understand, "why do you repeat it?" (p. 202). The sense of denied freedom intensifies gradually in Sue because she cannot control the outcome of her decisions, nor her feelings, and so she always holds in the back of her mind that the fact that they are cousins and also lovers might have to do with it. When she abides to the idea of a supernatural power hindering their path, she turns back to the image of a punishing God, who castigates them because, although they knew about the family doom from the beginning, they consciously insisted on defying it.

Darwinian natural science breaks with this idea of divine interference, but it does not mean individuals have full control over their lives. On the contrary, everything had to be re-evaluated: the relations of families and the transmission of family traits acquire new and serious importance, especially when it comes to direct or almost direct relatives. The chances that transmitted traits interfere in one's life, either helping or hampering it, to an indefinite degree, are as real as ever. The similarities among living beings is the basis of Darwin's theory of common ancestry, but it also tends to limit our range of choice. Darwin points out, for example, how seemingly distinct mammals like humans, monkeys and bats share similar bone structure and organs, and how adaptability to the environment is responsible for those species to take diverted paths in terms of development (DARWIN, 2004). When it comes to family members of a same species, the similarities are naturally more evident with closer relatives, both in physical and mental terms. It highlights the effects of parents' slight variations on the formation of the offspring, and also calls attention to how quietly variations emerge, considering they exist between individuals who are practically identical.

In human history blood and descent have been strong symbols of family lineages, and with Victorians it was no different. The inheritance of characteristics both physical and mental was attested through family lines, those characteristics being celebrated or not; the family lineage often provided enough evidence of one's character, from simple physical traits, health, to psychological tendencies like hidden mental illnesses. The idea that Jude and Sue are somehow likely to repeat family history does not sound absurd, or at least, did not for Hardy's contemporary readers, but could be actually a sign of alert. The novelty brought up by Darwin in terms of inheritance was that instead of specific lineages in rather limited ranges of time, the focus changed to the general history of survival recovered from humanity's animal past before

it could go back to the individual. To understand natural selection is to understand how characteristics appear, accumulate, develop or disappear.

### 1.3 INHERITANCE IN DARWIN

First, it is important to remember that Darwin's theory on descent and the mechanism of natural selection is based on observation and practical experiments, since at the time the laws of genetics had not been established, and the discovery of DNA would take another hundred years to happen. As Beer explains:

The descent of characteristics and their distribution within a family, tribe, or species could be observed, but not technically accounted for. Gregor Mendel's 1866 paper on plant hybridism did not become generally known until 1900, well after Darwin's death. In the 1920s, population geneticists such as Ronald Fisher, J. B. S. Haldane, and Sewall Wright, put together Darwin's work on natural selection and Mendel's genetics to produce the 'modern' or 'neo-Darwinian' synthesis. That movement took Darwin's work forward into the present day, particularly in molecular genetics and the work that has flowed from the elucidation of DNA. With our hindsight the extraordinary importance of Darwin's thinking is manifest (BEER, 2008, p. vii-xxv).

A genial empiricist, Darwin was eager for the smallest minutiae of fact and pieced his theory together, like a detective, through fragments and traces, building vast structures from seeds and spores and fossils. "His theory was only possible because Darwin had seized it imaginatively before he could prove it inductively. He had the power to imagine what wasn't there and what could never be seen" (LEVINE, 1991, p. 1). According to his evolutionary theory, the correlations between species and the environment are too complex and difficult for anyone ever to reach a level in which no more adjustment is necessary. The struggle is permanent, and as individuals of a species are never exactly equal, the tendency is that the ones who possess advantageous traits are those who procreate. As generations succeed each other, the process of adaptation inevitably entails "the accumulation of infinitesimally small inherited modifications, each profitable to the preserved being" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 74), which eventually, depending on modifications persisting through a course of many generations, can result in the emergence of sub or whole new species. Inherited traits are to Darwin the evidence that refutes explicitly the creationist principle of individual creation. He affirms that "as modern geology has almost banished views of the excavation of a great valley by a single diluvial wave, so will natural selection [...] banish the belief of the continued creation of new organic beings, or of any great and sudden modification in their structure" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 74).

In short, evolving is a matter of adapting; adapting is a matter of accumulating advantageous traits for survival. There is no alternative to adapting, other than extinction:

Though nature grants vast periods of time for the work of natural selection, she does not grant an indefinite period; for as all organic beings are striving, it may be said, to seize on each place in the economy of nature, if any one species does not become modified and improved in a corresponding degree with its competitors, it will soon be exterminated (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 79).

Differences between direct generations or among individuals of the same generation are minimal, or just not perceptible. Profitable variations, even if they do not appear in a whole generation, or only in few members of that generation, tend to pass to the next, and perpetuate randomly and slowly, often skipping generations before becoming permanent and apparent. Sometimes the offspring does not replicate certain characteristics, profitable or not, of the parent; sometimes only the male or only the female offspring inherits a certain trait, and even a “child often reverts in certain characters to its grandfather or grandmother or other more remote ancestor” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 13). Darwin uses examples of domestic husbandry to illustrate how attributes such as hair, thickness of skin or feather colour can often skip generations and reappear further on or simply be lost, and how breeders developed techniques of cross-breeding to reproduce desired characteristics and repress the undesired by allowing certain individuals to reproduce and others not. Darwin himself was famous for his breeding studies with his pigeons and orchids, from which he took many of the examples described in *The Origin*. But he made clear restrictions to results obtained in domestic environment because they do not reproduce the same conditions of the natural: “Artificial selection” is not the same as natural selection because it not only involves the agency but the interests of the breeder, who usually aims at financial profit. When the selection happens naturally, it concerns solely the interests of survival of the species. Moreover, in the domestic environment there is neither the pressure nor the competition found in the natural (BEER, 2008).

Both in domestic and natural environments, dramatic differences between parent and child are generally unfavourable. Species adapted to their environment tend to suffer with radical change. In nature, to be noticeably different than others of the same species can represent anything from rejection to a threat to the group by calling the attention of predators. “Reversions to the perfect character”, as Darwin called it, such as “albinism, melanism, deficiency of tail or horns, or additional fingers and toes; [that] do not relate to characters which have been slowly acquired by selection” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 203) characterize aberrations and occur more likely in mongrels due to the differences between parents. Albinism, for instance, is a great

disadvantage for animals that need camouflage for protection. Their inability to propagate their condition is due to both the fact that they are easily seen and consequently killed by predators and the rejection of their normally coloured potential partners (DARWIN, 2004, p. 471).

Less marked variations can still leave members of a group at a disadvantage in relation to others. Seemingly allegorical features such as colourful feathers, when different may hinder the conquering of a partner; lack of horns to fight for females or fight enemies can provoke similar results; slower, less vigorous and older members are always at a disadvantage. From the tiniest insect to plants and whole ecosystems, injurious variations do not necessarily mean the death of individuals, but may represent obstacles in their lives up to different degrees. As those individuals reproduce less, such traits do not tend to turn into permanent ones, becoming recessive and simply disappearing in time (DARWIN, 2008b).

Darwin never draws a clear line to separate the inheritance of physical and mental traits, and reinforcing that variability is governed by many still unknown and complex laws (DARWIN, 2008b). He believed that instincts and even habits were inherited, and could be adjusted to life conditions, in time and according to levels of species development. For instance, if members of higher species, such as wolves, are exposed to different environments with different demands to obtain food and shelter, they are able to adapt their skills and eventually develop new habits that not only prove to be useful for their survival, but also can be transmitted to future offspring (DARWIN, 2008b). Instincts are more basic behaviour patterns, actions that can be observed from the first stages of life, such as motor reflexes as in the simple case of suckling young animals. These actions are automatic and performed independently of reasoning, while habits are behaviours that can be learned and reworked quickly when necessary. Darwin sustained that animals like apes and dogs have remarkably simpler instincts when compared to animals considered lower – such as insects – which allow them a wider range of decision-taking. While ants' lives are ruled by instinct and every member of the group needs to follow predetermined roles, apes are less predictable creatures, making it more difficult to say what is instinct and what is learned in their behaviour (DARWIN, 2004).

Intelligence as the capacity of independent reasoning was a delicate subject for Darwin. Some contemporary currents of thought favoured that intelligence and instinct stand in an inverse ratio to each other, reserving intelligence and reasoning for humans alone, while animals were driven by instincts. Others supported, like Darwin, that intelligence is gradually developed from instincts, and so the more complex living beings are, the more intelligent they are, which still isolates mankind on the highest scale of development and reason, but under an angle where change is possible. Darwin sustained that intelligence is demonstrated when new

actions are performed. After being performed throughout several generations, new actions become habit, and later can turn into instinct. When actions are no longer performed through reasoning or experience, it means they have become instinctive. Darwin considers that the more complex instincts of even the lowest animals, such as a sterile worker bee, might also involve degrees of intelligence and learning because permanent adaptation is demanded from every single individual. He affirmed that “it is not improbable that there is a certain amount of interference between the development of free intelligence and of instinct – which latter implies some inherited modification of the brain” (DARWIN, 2004, p. 84). This topic will be further discussed in chapter four.

#### 1.4 HARDY AND FAMILY LINEAGE

Thomas Hardy’s fascination of the rich subject of inheritance, both in social and scientific terms, can be seen in his personal interests and in his literature. Artistically he liked to ponder over the possibilities of family lineage, as he revived in 1923, in “an old note”: “A story (rather than a poem) might be written in the first person, in which ‘I’ am supposed to live through the centuries in my ancestors, in one person, the particular line of descent chosen being that in which qualities are most continuous” (HARDY, 1989, p. 452). Historically, his descent line was less interesting than his art, at least to outsiders for whom his parents were little better than peasants, which made him often touchy on the subject of origins (MILGATE, 2006). He avoided exposing his family and modest background by not answering questions and leaving the matter obscure, unless he could exert complete control over the accounts of his family that entered public domain. This reserved attitude rendered Hardy accusations of romanticizing and even lying about his past, of making people think that he had come from a more respectable middle-class family than he actually did. But the truth was that Hardy in many respects took some pride of his humble origins, especially because of virtues like self-sufficiency and the decency he attributed to it (PITE, 2004).

Regarding his talents as an author, there was nothing in Hardy’s immediate ancestry that offered the remotest hint of what he would become, and this contrast of humble origins and the fame he eventually achieved gave him the pride of a self-made man:

[...] and he retained to the very last a wry fascination, compounded of an artist’s vanity and a child’s sense of wonder, with those quirks of heredity, human affection, social history, and the class system that had combined, or collided, in the conception and birth of a man who could come from rural obscurity and live to be celebrated as the most famous man of letters of his day (MILLGATE, 2006, p. 8).

With regards to his genealogical tree, Hardy liked to think that the “Dorset Hardys”, including his own family, were descendants of the ancient Le Hardys, a late fifteenth-century family from Jersey, as could be seen in the anonymous genealogical account in his library, among several other works of the same kind. Such links, however vague, were important to the author because they fed his sense of belonging to a family that had come down in the world, in a way that he did not need that to be who he was: “To have a family crest but not to use it was intricately pleasurable in itself” (MILLGATE, 2006, p. 8).

Hardy played with this idea in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, significantly the novel in which, according to Ingham (2003), Hardy fully explores questions of ancestry and inherited characteristics in a Darwinian sense. In the context of ancient families, he places the poor Tess Durbeyfield as the supposed descendant of the dead and gone d’Urbervilles, a family originated from violent Norman knight warriors. When they discover this, her parents send Tess to claim kinship to the better-off d’Urbervilles nearby. However, the attachment of nobility to the Durbeyfields has only negative consequences for Tess, turning her into easy prey for Alec, the son of the man who was never a d’Urberville, but simply bought the name because it “looked and sounded well” (HARDY, 2005b, p. 45). The difference between original and counterfeit seems apparent because while Tess’s fine features invoke certain nobility, Alec is clearly a vulgar type, with his “almost swarthy complexion, with full lips, badly moulded, though red and smooth, above which was a well-groomed black moustache with curled points” (HARDY, 2005b, p. 45). Curiously, the reader soon learns that Tess’s fine and delicate face is actually inherited from her peasant mother, not from the father’s noble side. The d’Urbervilles’ physical features are spotted on her when Tess visits the old family manor with Angel Claire, and the expressions of the women on the portraits hanging on the large walls are “unquestionably traceable” in her face. But instead of beauty, they invoke the aggressive family past: the “long pointed features, narrow eye, and smirk of the one, so suggestive of merciless treachery; the bill-hook nose, large teeth, and bold eye of the other, suggesting arrogance to the point of ferocity” (HARDY, 2005b, p. 235-236).

As the story unfolds Tess begins associating her lineage with the sexual abuse by Alec and every disgrace that came after she discovered herself a d’Urberville, from the death of her baby to the loss of Angel. She starts thinking that the lives of her ancestors must have been as unfortunate as her own, and therefore she must be inevitably repeating their misfortunes. When Angel suggests that she reads history to improve herself she asks “what’s the use of learning that I am one of a long row only – finding out that there is set down in some old book somebody just like me, and to know that I shall only act her part; making me sad, that’s all” (HARDY,

2005b, p.142). The thought that her history must be already written spoils any reaction that could be expected from her. For Ingham (2002), the implications of heredity here are contradictory, as well as the causality of Tess's actions throughout the novel. Ingham says Hardy tries a number of possibilities, from mathematical precision to magic to justify the consequences of Tess's choices, and it is difficult to point where the girl's lineage really defines anything. What is certain is that Hardy challenges the idea that there is always virtue in the old blood of ancient families by contrasting the "treachery" and "ferocity" of Tess's female ancestors with her own beauty and enduring purity. On the other hand, considering the legend of the family coach, Tess indeed seems to have inherited something from that ferocious and violent family. Ingham (2002, p. 174) uses the episode when Tess hits Alec with the heavy leather glove to exemplify a moment when the protagonist transforms herself into a "violent male d'Urberville". Well, she eventually kills him later.

Nonetheless, Tess remains pure to both the narrator and Hardy because purity marks her true self; it cannot be taken away. More than noble by blood, she is noble by nature. Tess's defence rests "on things willed not things done, on intention not on the raw deed" (INGHAM, 2003, p. 175), which means that although her violent actions can be reconciled with hereditary violence, her will cannot. But in spite of her will, she has little or practically no free choice against circumstances. Much of what leads Tess to her ruin is not the result of her decisions: she never wanted to claim kinship with Alec, neither to accept his advances after her mother took his offer of a home. The lack of control comes from the fact that the environment is uncontrollable, as much as other people's actions, and results come from the interrelatedness of factors. The high complexity of the "mutual relations of all organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 63) accounts for the multiplicity of outcomes, the unpredictability of nature and of the future.

"The extension of the idea of heredity to the transmission of traits other than physical fascinates Hardy because it involves the question of free will, an aspect of causality which preoccupies him" (INGHAM, 2003, p. 170). The possibility that our will may be determined by heredity as much as the form of our face, aligned with the new perspectives of unrestricted family connexions, influenced changes of common restrictive Victorian theories of class or gender. Things like alcoholism, sexual promiscuity, and criminal tendencies were suddenly not exclusivities of the undeserving poor, but could manifest in the *best* families. It is not clear in the novel how much Tess is aware of this conflict between will and denied freedom. When she dies, she seems resigned to her fate, in paying for murdering Alec, and leaving Angel to marry her sister. Hardy teases his readers stating that now the "President of the Immortals" has ceased



to sport with her and so she can rest (HARDY, 2005b, p. 420). Tess dies reconciled with the idea that she cannot fight circumstances; she is not revolted, but at peace. Later with Jude, things are different. Here the protagonist, when death comes closer, does not feel at peace, but revolted at his own impotence, at the unjust systems, both social and natural, that, despite his and Sue's clear nobility of character, never allow them to be happy.

In *Jude the Obscure* there are no noble families or crests. Characters do not come, neither remotely or falsely, from remarkable clans. Like Hardy, Jude must write his own story from scratch; this is why believing he is able to choose is so important to him. Jude's revolt does not involve unfulfilled promises on the part of destiny, such as what happens with the Durbyfields. On the contrary, Jude has only expectations of defeat. He cannot depend on family roots, or try to follow family tradition, but needs to achieve things through his own merits, and discover the world his own way. In a first attempt to figure out how that would work, he prays to see Christminster because "people said that, if you prayed things sometimes came to you, even though they sometimes did not" (p. 15). That prayer does not signify much to him, he tries it because it is a common accepted form of obtaining difficult things – which sometimes did not work. Religious faith, although part of the future he chose in the university, never really feels more than part of the common fabric of life for Jude, whom, like Phillotson, yearns more for knowledge and social ascendance than for a religious life. Nonetheless, later Jude feels betrayed and gradually turns against the Church as he acknowledges the randomness and lack of sense of events that should be meaningful and compatible to his efforts. This happens because he is aware, perhaps more than Tess, that his intentions are honest and that he never does any harm to anyone to attain what he wants. This awareness, if in the beginning helps him to insist, later makes things look even more unfair and revolting. One remarkable moment when he feels his candour is responded with cruelty is when he chooses the most "benign" faces among the headmasters of the colleges to write to and tell about his dream of becoming a scholar. Ignored by almost all of them, when one answer arrives, it says that "as a working-man", Jude has "much better chance of success in life by remaining in [his] own sphere and sticking to [his] trade than by adopting any other course" (p. 110).

Years later, back to Christminster, Jude shows a more mature (if not fully honest) view of things. He admits he failed because "It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one" (p. 316), demonstrating sensibility to the slow pace of change, that "the individual life span is never a sufficient register for change or for the accomplishment of desire" (BEER, 2009, p. 6). It almost seems Jude had read Darwin's words: "How fleeting are the wishes and efforts of man! how short his time! and consequently how poor will his products be, compared

with those accumulated by nature during whole geological periods” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 65). The stretches of time necessary for evolutionary changes to be noticeable are vastly longer than a human life; but despite the completely different proportions, those few decades between human birth and death inevitably reflects the way humanity measures historical times. Once man acknowledges how short his lifespan is in comparison with the time of everything else, his arrogance is finally touched. The human eye never sees evolution; we never see gradual changes, not even in our own species because they happen too slowly to be noticeable. As Jude’s hopes fade, the more they sound like illusions, but although he seems resigned to his own sphere, it does not mean the college master was right. The passivity Jude tries to foster contradicts his ability to see beyond his own position and he finds strength in the belief that it was not him who misunderstood his aptitudes, only that the time was not ripe.

As for Sue and me when we were at our own best, long ago—when our minds were clear, and our love of truth fearless—the time was not ripe for us! Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me! (p. 388).

The resistance is found in institutions such as the university, the prejudiced society, the social environment – “the artificial system of things” (p. 209) – that change too slowly for him. At least now Jude does not blame supernatural powers anymore for hindering his plans.

Being ahead of one’s time can be a serious problem from the perspective of natural selection. Variations, when too evident, can provoke rejection from the group. The cousins seem radical when they try to rise socially, or live together without marrying, or raise children that are not theirs. If their behaviour does not help them survive, even considering that they could be pointing to a possible next step of human evolution, definitely “the time was not ripe” and the consequences can be very negative. In this sense, Jude and Sue remind us of Darwin’s “reversions of character” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 203): individuals displaying injurious traits that threaten both themselves and those around them. It takes exceptional circumstances to turn natural disadvantages into advantages, especially in one generation. It can be said that Hardy did that in real life. He overcame a humble background and rose socially and professionally and became a very well-off and famous man, even considering his own university scheme had to be abandoned. Still, this is something few can do.

While Jude dreams of Christminster, Sue wants to have the right to live with a man without becoming his wife or mistress. She wants to be recognized as intellectually equal to men, and to be free to choose whether or not she wants to be sexually available to a partner.

Her attitude was so absurd for Victorians that Sue was often accused of being frigid, a lesbian, and responsible for Jude's ruin. Sue enjoys individuality, but she resents being considered odd because even this has become commonplace. She tells Phillotson: " 'I hate to be what is called a clever girl – there are too many of that sort now!' answered Sue sensitively. 'I only meant – I don't know what I meant – except that it was what you don't understand.' " (p. 102). Her intellectual path is inverse to Jude's, and so the woman who had previously rebound the New Testament in chronological order and belittled the importance of Jerusalem in comparison with Athens, Rome and Alexandria, is then driven into religious submission, or "fanatic prostitution" (p. 349) on the account of her despair: "There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!". Meanwhile Jude, who abandoned religion to embrace her freethinking, says their fight is "only against man and senseless circumstance", to what the momentarily embarrassed Sue answers "True! [...] What have I been thinking of! I am getting as superstitious as a savage! . . . But whoever or whatever our foe may be, I am cowed into submission. I have no more fighting strength left; no more enterprise. I am beaten, beaten!" (p. 331). She agrees they are fighting a "senseless circumstance", and although still able to see the superstitious tone of her words, she cannot help but personifying the problem into a foe.

Sue recedes into a mental state expected in Hardy only from earlier generations or in less educated people, like Drusilla, widow Edlin or Tess's mother. She denies both her reason and sense of proportion by seeing herself and Jude as deservers of the prejudice that makes them move constantly from city to city, or of the death of their children. Her attitude seems ludicrous because Sue used to be as much aware as Jude of their honesty, of them never injuring anyone on purpose. Again here, like in *Tess*, characters' noble character and intentions retain readers' sympathy, although they will not spare the cousins from the consequences of breaking with both the social and natural orders. Sue's final resignation into religiousness sounds incredible to Jude because what made her special was exactly her capacity to understand beyond the religious discourse of punishments and rewards. Now she is so desperate to convince herself that there is no alternative but to "mortify the flesh – the terrible flesh – the curse of Adam!" (p. 333) that Jude almost believes she has truly lost her mind.

In *Jude*, as in *Tess*, there is a difference between what characters want and what they can do; between how they understand their lives and wishes and how they deal with circumstances that go beyond their control. Perhaps here, a little differently from *Tess*, the purity of Jude and Sue is not so marked because they are consciously trying to figure out the way to conciliate will and actions. What makes their choices often so contradictory is the fact that they are continuously aware of making decisions; trying as much as possible not to be led

by circumstances. The cousinship that unites them also enhances the problem because they are prone to display similar reasoning and “dissatisfied natures” (p. 249), which makes their choices seem easily predicted to a point that they look predetermined.

### 1.5 “FATEDNESS” AND CHANCE

When it comes to tragedy and punishment in *Jude*, it is difficult not to think of Little Father Time, the child whose parents are the vigorous Arabella and the virile Jude, but who is born feeble and completely destitute of the expected vitality and strength to survive. Aunt Drusilla’s opinion of him is unknown because she dies before he arrives, but from a superstitious perspective, the boy could easily represent the final penalty for Jude and Sue. He appears out of the blue to consolidate tragedy by killing his half siblings and committing suicide, finally convincing Sue of the superior power above them as a mean God. But besides symbolic aspects, Father Time illustrates how Darwinian science worked in Hardy’s mind, how concepts like chance and fate have important roles in the lives of characters.

For DiBattista (2000, p. 173), Hardy’s “rhetorical genetics” and cross-matching in the case of Little Father Time go beyond Darwin’s biological affinities, and make the boy, instead of a biological figure (the mere child of a mother and a father), the personification of all the dire circumstances characters are not able to fight against. “Little Jude, both as diminished replica of his father and as harbinger of the coming universal wish not to live, is the necessary end term that gives decided, if morbid, direction to Hardy’s sexual allegory of Unfulfilled Intention” (DiBATTISTA, 2000, p. 174). By the “Unfulfilled Intention”, DiBattista refers to a passage from *The Woodlanders*, written by Hardy eight years before *Jude*, which helps us understand a little more about how the author experiments with the difference between pre-determined events, corroborating ideas like family dooms, and random, unplanned events, pointing to views more in tune with Darwin’s system of natural selection.

The passage appears in the novel when Grace and her father are walking in the woods, as if observed by the eyes of an anthropomorphised nature, where trees spread their roots

like hands wearing green gloves, elbowed old elms and ashes with great forks in which stood pools of water that overflowed on rainy days and ran down their stems in green cascades. On older trees still than these huge lobes of fungi grew like lungs. Here, as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling (HARDY, 2005c, p. 48).

Nature works independently of fulfilling expectations or planning, or the idea that the natural world is perfect, because it is not. Darwin breaks with the necessity of perfection and moral meaning, once plain survival and perpetuation of the species become the main goals. The deformed leaf, the interrupted taper, the strangling of the promising sapling are examples that show how life is also coloured by decay and death as part of its permanent circle of renovation. Grace and her father are part of that circle, as important as any other elements, and nature continues its course regardless of those small figures walking amidst it.

The scene challenges, according to Boumelha, the humanism that determines the world by individual choices and motives; the human sense that conscious choices result in predictable outcome. In *The Woodlanders* the sexual and romantic interactions among characters result in the most unpredictable and ungovernable responses, showing that the struggle for survival cuts across individual self-determination, creating “a world heavy with consequence, dense and sticky with unfulfilled intentions and unintended fulfilments” (BOUMELHA, 2005, p. xii-xiii). We can easily see similar results in *Jude*, which was described by Hardy himself as a “tragedy of unfulfilled aims” (HARDY, 2016a, p. 5). In the children, whose character are not a direct reflexion of their parents, as well as in the permanent frustration over controlling feelings, actions and their consequences, the world shows itself uncontrollable. The sexual factor DiBatista mentions clearly points to romantic and sexual instincts – representing irrationality – taking over characters, especially the protagonist, in moments they think they should be guided by reason. Every time Jude looks back and sees he changed his course first because of Arabella and later because of Sue, he thinks he is not in charge of his most important decisions, but his more primitive, animal self is.

The lack of control over one’s life may give the impression that something or someone else might be controlling it. For Boumelha, this impression relates more than it seems to the way Hardy reads the unpredictability of life in Darwin: “such dislocation of motive from consequence is pervasive and striking, and, in a sometimes irrational world of disembodied malice, impersonal violence, and compelling obsession, it creates the illusion of a certain fatedness” (BOUMELHA, 2005, p. xiii). This “fatedness” is what many critics pointed out in Hardy as what makes his characters seem like puppets, made only to suffer the most horrible things anyone can suffer, merely for the sake of showing them as the victims of some malign superior and inhuman power that sports with them (the President of Immortals in *Tess*). However, this impression could also be resulted from the fact that Hardy did not offer those meaningful causalities readers usually expected from the popular Victorian novel, with its deserved rewards and punishments, things should make sense in the end, and provide the needed

moralties. Readers still look for this kind of significance in Hardy today, the fulfilment of human expectations of meaning which can hardly be separated from the idea of a benign God and His intentions. The frustration can provoke this sensation that Hardy conceives God in his fiction as mean and careless.

Boumelha (2005) affirms, still with regards to *The Woodlanders*, that the idea of predetermination which corroborates the theory of the mean God is refuted when we notice how Hardy employs the word *destiny* in his text, for example, when it comes to Marty South's manual labour:

As with so many right hands born to manual labour, there was nothing in its fundamental shape to bear out the physiological conventionalism that gradations of birth show themselves primarily in the form of this member. Nothing but a cast of the die of Destiny had decided that the girl should handle the tool; and the fingers which clasped the heavy ash haft might have skilfully guided the pencil or swept the string, had they only been set to do it in good time (HARDY, 2005c, p. 10).

Here the word *destiny* could easily be replaced by the word *chance*. There is nothing in Marty's hands that indicates she was born a manual worker, still "a cast of the die of *Destiny*" placed her in that situation, as if by accident. "Fatedness" comes from the narrowing of possibilities that ensnare characters in the natural and social organizations where they were born and where they live, as each event or choice – including those beyond individual choice – entails its own sweeping and uncontrollable consequences (BOUMELHA, 2005).

*Fate* and *destiny* are also interestingly related with *chance* in *Jude the Obscure*. *Destiny*, for instance, appears as a possible outcome of the future when the protagonist thinks of the poor Christminster graduate whom Sue had dealt with some years before: "he saw himself as a possible second in such a torturing *destiny*" (p. 232). That could happen to him, but it is avoidable, if he chooses. In another passage, Jude reflects on the day he realized his views of Christminster were based on illusions: when he enters the University library, while gazing at "the varied spires, halls, gables, streets, chapels, gardens, quadrangles, which composed the ensemble of this unrivalled panorama" he sees that "his *destiny* lay not with these, but among the manual toilers in the shabby purlieu which he himself occupied, unrecognized as part of the city at all by its visitors and panegyrists" (p. 109). At that moment, Jude is desolated because things did not work the way he had planned, and he will never be more than the manual worker that restores that place; never a student there. He thinks of *destiny* – and can pass the idea to readers as well – as something that was written beforehand, only he could not see it, but sees now. However, this could be interpreted in a different way. Once more, as in the case of Marty

South, *destiny* could easily be replaced by *chance*: the random luck that placed Jude where he was born, where he grew and lived, all the factors that converged to make him the manual labourer he is now, but that do not necessarily match with his inner self. His tragedy is nothing more than the result of the “opposing environment” that traps people little by little, instead of an elaborately divine and meaningful enigma to be deciphered. Hardy’s concept of tragedy throws some light on how the author understood this opposition:

Tragedy may be created by an opposing environment either of things inherent in the universe, or of human institutions. If the former be the means exhibited and deplored, the writer is regarded as impious; if the latter, as subversive and dangerous; when all the while he may never have questioned the necessity or urged the non-necessity of either (HARDY, 1989, p. 290).

Hardy refers here to some early reviews on *Jude* which speculated much on its sources of tragedy. He says the opposition on the part of the environment can either come from things in the universe (including what is beyond our comprehension) or from human institutions (the way we shape our society over time), but the plight of the author is that he will be attacked by choosing either one or the other to blame for tragedy. Hardy questions whether the separation is really necessary, whether it can actually help. Characters in *Jude* frequently fret over obstacles that pull them back from reaching their goals, but they cannot really name the obstacle because they do not know what it is: supernatural, natural, artificial, all get entangled. Concrete and non-concrete become mixed and it is not difficult to see the characters blaming God for something society denies them, or blaming the universe for the outcome of their own choices. Then Hardy asks us whether it makes any difference whose blame everything is. Perhaps what creates the problem is the search for explanations that do not exist.

On the other hand, rendering oneself to the hands of the unknown, stopping fighting and accepting the lack of control may have irreversible consequences. The protagonist of *Tess* finds herself trapped among the consequences of both her decisions and the things she never decided. She resigns, embraces the responsibility for the murder she committed and dies. However, Jude cannot feel resigned. Losing Sue is a “maddening torture” (p. 110). The narrator says that “But for this blow he might have borne with his *fate*. With Sue as companion he could have renounced his ambitions with a smile. Without her it was inevitable that the reaction from the long strain to which he had subjected himself should affect him disastrously” (p. 110). The future does not matter anymore, Jude becomes careless, as his physical and mental health decline. The “long strain” that affects him disastrously is both the result of the lung disease, which eventually kills him, and the effects of losing Sue.

## 2 SEXUAL INSTINCT VERSUS REASON

Thomas Hardy is at his boldest in *Jude the Obscure* when it comes to discussing characters' sexuality. Far from veiled or disguised as love, sexuality is displayed as a natural drive, working independently of emotions or rational will, and often spoiling plans that do not involve biological aims. Jude's sexual impulses disrupt his scholarly pursuit and later compromise his relationship with Sue. In her turn, sex and the consequent child-bearing interferes in her plans, changes her life forever, messing with her intellectual pride. The story Hardy described as "a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit" (HARDY, 2016a, p. 5), shows the ideological tensions which energise the novel and which derive from Hardy's personal experience of class conflict and injustice, of religious aspiration and disillusionment, of the moral hypocrisies and double standards in late Victorian England. A war "within the evolutionary hybrid, man: a creature so often divided between noble idealism and demeaning desire" (WATTS, 1999, p. 13). Sexuality in *Jude the Obscure* is often what reminds characters of their brute origins, demonstrating that being superior to their fellow creatures may be much more a matter of struggling with rational will than imagined before Darwin.

As opposed to the intellect, the flesh represents humankind's natural roots, the closeness to nature, as much as other basic instincts that the child brings from birth and are determinative for adaptation and survival. For Darwin (2004), instincts are inherent drives, triggered independently of intelligence and that cannot be ignored. But as certain animal species, including humans, attained higher evolutionary stages than others, reasoning began to compete with innate instincts and reflexes. The conflict between sexual instincts and reason in the novel is evidenced by Jude's disastrous marriages, first with the sexy Arabella, who "makes a man" of him (D. H. Lawrence *apud* WATTS, 1999, p. 29), and later with the ethereal Sue, whom he ends up blackmailing into a sexual relationship. When important decisions are driven by sexual desire, when characters give way to their instincts over reason, sexuality gains airs of vulgarity and primitivism. Jude tries to prove "himself superior to the lower animals" (p. 56) but his instincts seem to pull him backwards, to the baseness expected from him as a poor uneducated manual worker, a creature considered, by that society, less evolved and less mentally capable than his social superiors.

Sexual selection was for Darwin the second most important character of natural selection, complementing the struggle for survival as the means of passing one's traits to the next generations. The subject was briefly and rather superficially discussed in *The Origin of*



*Species* and then later in more detail in *The Descent of Man*, where humankind became the focus. So if in the former, sexual selection was defined merely as “a struggle between the males for possession of the females” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 68) in a very broad sense, in the latter Darwin stopped emphasising only productivity and discussed sexual desire, will and culture (BEER, 2009, p. 116). He explained how sexual instincts aim directly at granting the preservation of the species through reproduction, and how it is fundamentally one of the basic senses humans share with other animals, along with “that of self-preservation, [...] the love of the mother for her new-born offspring” and others (DARWIN, 2004, p. 87).

The evolutionary success of a species depends on adequate birth-rates; the number of offspring must always be higher than the necessary number of adult members because many individuals die before reaching the age to reproduce. Once they do, sexual selection “will give its aid to ordinary selection, by assuring to the most vigorous and best adapted males the greatest number of offspring” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 98). It is also in the selection through sex that certain traits, most noticeably physical, become useful, most of the times to the males alone in their struggles with other males in order to obtain the best females to couple with. For example, spurs or long and hard antlers are essential for fighting, while colourful plumage and other adornments are essential to stand out from the crowd and catch the eye of the intended. Sexual selection is not the hardest part of the fight for existence, it rarely results in the death of the unsuccessful competitor; however, in the struggle between males for possession of females, less successful competitors have fewer or no offspring, compromising their family lines. “Sexual selection is, therefore, less rigorous than natural selection”, but no less important or competitive (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 69).

In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin presented sexual selection as a sub-category of the central process of natural selection, along with another sub-category, called artificial selection (selected by the human, under domestication). For Beer (2008, p. xxiv), the intriguing partition of *sexual* from *natural* selection displays the recognition of a category that is also a form of social selection, which “works at its fullest in two-sex systems, and such systems produce the greatest degree of variation in offspring”. More than evident proof of physical fitness on the part of the male when competing with other males, finding a sexual partner is nonetheless a matter of aesthetic choice, of more subjective preferences, not always simple or easy to understand. In nature, for instance, many male birds dispute the attention of females by producing the most beautiful feathers and colours or by singing. Others depend on similar tricks that include dances and the construction of large elaborate nests. The final choice, however,

according to Darwin (2008b), is the female's, whose preferences will reward one or some among perhaps several beautiful, talented, and vigorous males.

This shared responsibility between male and female becomes more problematic when it comes to human terms and so the equivalence of power proposed by Darwin may have been influenced by the Victorian marriage market and the sexual economy of the period. In a social environment where aptness did not necessarily depend on physical vigorousness, but had much to do with financial fitness, even Darwin's insistence in focusing strictly on the biological field might have suffered some influence. Characters in *Jude the Obscure* are far from being members of the high Victorian society, but their lives are also moulded by social conventions of class and gender of the period which were inevitably being reconsidered under the light of the popularity of Darwin's evolutionary theory. A Darwinian reading of sexuality in *Jude* confirms some and refutes other Victorian common sense and understandings on how love, marriage and sexual relations happened (or should happen). An analysis of the ways Jude, Sue and Arabella deal with their sexuality says much about how the Victorian society worked and how Hardy saw it in relation to the delicate and heavily taboo subject of sex.

## 2.1 THE "FEMALE ALLURE" OF ARABELLA

On a memorable day of his life, Jude Fawley is returning to Marygreen in "fine, warm, soft summer weather" with tools on his back, enthusiastically listing his scholarly accomplishments and planning his future as a deacon at Christminster. Then suddenly, he is hit in the face by a pig's penis from the other side of a hedge. Girls' voices make him look over the hedge to see that "three young women were kneeling, with buckets and platters beside them containing heaps of pigs' chitterlings, which they were washing in the running water" (p.33). One of the girls, quickly selected as the culprit, presents herself as Arabella Donn, daughter of a pig-breeder. She is "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". Her "round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and the rich complexion of a cochin hen's egg" quickly calls the young man's attention, as he cannot fail to see in all his inexperience that "she was a complete and substantial female animal – no more, no less" (p. 33). The conversation that follows leads to a first date. The "no more, no less" marks how things are simple here, no complex emotions nor calculations, basically physical compatibility and attraction.

From that day on Jude's books stay open at the same page more time than they used to; his Greek Testament waits for him while he spends the afternoons with Arabella, and his plans

to go back to it late at night fail utterly. While Jude has his scholastic plans, Arabella's plans are different: she wants to marry him. Warned by her friends that he is "a nobody", Arabella is driven by a blind attraction: "I've got him to care for me; yes! But I want him to more than care for me; I want him to have me; to marry me! I must have him. I can't do without him. He's the sort of man I long for. I shall go mad if I can't give myself to him altogether! I felt I should when I first saw him!" (p. 44). Although the novel does not focus on Jude's physical appearance as it does with Arabella's, he seems to be attractive enough. Described as "a young man with a forcible, meditative, and earnest, rather than handsome, cast of countenance [...] of dark complexion with dark harmonizing eyes, [...] a closely trimmed black beard of more advanced growth than is usual at his age" (p.71), combined with a "great mass of black curly hair, [that] was some trouble to him in combing and washing out the stone-dust that settled on it in the pursuit of his trade" (p. 71).

Elaine Showalter calls "the biological trap" (SHOWALTER, 2016, p. 418) in *Jude* this difficulty to escape "the inexorable laws of nature" (p. 134) and inheritance. At that moment Jude was not looking for a girlfriend, but he seems doomed to follow a path assigned by natural laws that aim at procreation, as if commanded by a high force. Showalter reminds us that in Jude's specific case this episode is remarkable not only as a matter of following natural urges, but it also represents his return to a prescribed social path, the one he was trying to escape by studying. Many late-Victorian psychiatrists supported the idea that on nurturing intellectual aims above their social class, working-class people risked their sanity by trying to handle intellectual work their brains were not equipped to. Running after Arabella is simply Jude doing what he was supposed to do from the beginning; it is him obeying both the natural and the class systems. Eventually he and Arabella part and he leaves Marygreen, but instead of being incapable of his intellectual ambitions, it is his sexuality he is not able to control, which remains the chief reason for his future frustrations (SHOWALTER, 2016).

Showalter supports that the emphasis on the characters' sexuality in the novel is perhaps a sign, considering the carnivalesque details such as the pig's penis, of Hardy being influenced by the effects of sexual transgression of the period, with Oscar Wilde and Stevenson in his mind. Interestingly, while male sexuality in the book leads to drunkenness, fighting, disease and transgression; female sexuality, instead of working similarly for the women, appears in the novel as the trigger to male temptations: a threat to male sexuality in the form of castration, marriage; like a biological trap "baited by female allure" (SHOWALTER, 2016, p. 418).

It becomes easy reading to blame both Arabella and Sue for inhibiting Jude's nobler aspirations; always preventing him from studying and progressing in life by putting sensual

thoughts in his head. This is illustrated in Jude's first date with Arabella when they enter "an inn of inferior class" (p. 41) to drink something. As they look round the room, there is a picture of Samson and Delilah hanging on the wall, the very warning of threatened male sexuality. It is felt again, years later at Shaston, when Sue kisses him, Jude feels the moment to be a turning point in his career, and reflects on how it was "inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love was regarded as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation" (p. 208). He then reflects on how strange it is that "his first aspiration towards intellectual proficiency had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration— towards apostleship— had also been checked by a woman" (p. 208). He asks himself whether "the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?" (p. 209).

Through this view, sexuality represented by the women in the novel is what prevents the protagonist from defying the system he intended to defy. Yet, he considers the possibility that it is "the artificial system of things" (p. 209) that corrupts everything, by which Jude means society and institutions, like the very university or the educational system as a whole: the artificial rules created by human society which often go against what Jude considers spontaneous, natural dispositions. This artificiality is represented by the period's class structure and the premise mentioned by Showalter that poor men do not have mental capacity for intellectual work, and therefore are not expected to break with the brute impulses that characterize them in the eyes of higher classes. The poor are expected to act sensually, to be animalistic, and to end exactly as Jude does. He would only be a remarkable individual if he had *not* missed his way because of women, drinking and fighting. As it is, Jude becomes just a regular kind among working-class men, who briefly thought he was special.

For Boumelha (2000, p. 63), "Jude's sexuality is a disruptive force in a way that it has not previously been for Hardy's male characters" which is "in itself disturbing, partly because it is so largely beyond the conscious progress of decision and intention". Jude changes his focus so quickly from Christminster to Arabella it almost seems as if he is not himself when doing it. In the manuscript of the novel the Darwinian influence was even more evident. When the couple first meet and Jude's reason is being overmastered by sexual desire, the phrase written by Hardy was "in the authoritative operation of the natural law", which later was substituted by the less scientific "in commonplace obedience to conjunctive orders from headquarters" (p. 34), however, this conveys practically the same lack of control. From then on, Jude's life is constantly interrupted by similar situations, wavering between Arabella and Sue, enacting an

alteration of dominance within himself, and leaving much more room for dissatisfaction than the contrary (BOUMELHA, 2000).

Sex before marriage was just one of the polemic points that forced Hardy to cut or alter many parts of the 1894 instalments of *Jude*, which were later restored in the 1895 book version. Jude and Sue living together, having a sexual life and having children without marrying were other postponed polemics. Opposition came from major publishing houses and circulating libraries of the period, which defended a household literature, suitable for the whole family, and consequently broadly marketable (LANGLAND, 2002). Their strict control was often injurious to many authors whose novels were considered improper, and therefore were either banned or suffered rigorous changes. Overall, the Victorian household literature left a false sense of purity and chastity attached to Victorian literature, that lasts until today, among readers who cannot spot the few popular authors who dodged those restrictions. Thomas Hardy, among few other novelists, was bold enough to question the excessive puritanism in literature and not only presented situations of sex before marriage, but did it without labelling characters with immorality or depravity; without condemning them because of what could have been a careless moment or even something worse, as with Tess, who is raped, but continues pure. She is defended until the end, never labelled as a fallen woman, despite of how girls like her were treated by society and literature. Hardy despised the hypocrisy of what he called the “lack of sincerity” in English fiction, which deceived the young and veiled reality (HARDY, 1990, p. 126). He defended that in representations of the world, the passions ought to be proportioned as in the world itself, instead of reductive.

In *Jude*, the sexual act committed by the young couple in the beginning does not compromise nor condemn neither of them, not even Arabella, whose respectability among her community does not change. She marries, leaves, disappears and reappears, but more than any other of the main characters, preserves her dignity. Hardy’s views here might have been influenced by the fact that he also came from one of those small communities where normal behaviour was not the same as in London society. According to registers of marriage and birth, Jemima Hand, Hardy’s mother, was already pregnant with him by the time she married Hardy’s father, rather forcing the arrangement of the marriage, against the inclinations of both parties, but without major consequences as far as it is known (MILLGATE, 2006).

After the wedding Arabella’s allure fades. The dimples she produced by sucking in her cheeks disappear, and even that “long tail of hair”, to the husband’s surprise, was not her own but false. She explains she had enough hair, but only as far as country notions go. “In towns the men expect more” (p. 53). She tells Jude she had been a barmaid in Alderbrickam, and this new

piece of information gives Jude the feeling that his wife is more “finished” (p. 55) than himself. Perhaps she is one of those girls who have an “instinct towards artificiality in their very blood, and became adepts in counterfeiting at the first glimpse of it” (p.53).

When Darwin points out the importance of ornaments to attract the opposite sex, he mentions basically males doing this to attract females, rather than the other way around. When he introduces human behaviour, he needs to contradict himself a little:

When we behold a male bird elaborately displaying his graceful plumes or splendid colours before the female, whilst other birds, not thus decorated, make no such display, it is impossible to doubt that she admires the beauty of her male partner. As women everywhere deck themselves with these plumes, the beauty of such ornaments cannot be disputed (DARWIN, 2004, p. 115).

Here it is the female who wears the plumes, a description of artificiality that fits Arabella because her plumes, although fake, are extravagant. Men’s plumage in this context becomes obviously related to social matters, also rather artificial when compared to physical aptness. In the novel, Jude’s physical attributes are soon not enough for his wife, who complains: “an apprentice’s wages are not meant to be enough to keep a wife on, as a rule, my dear”, to which Jude responds “then you shouldn’t have had one” (p. 61). After arguing over the books Jude insists on reading instead of helping with the heavy work, they fight and Arabella goes outside “perversely pulling her hair into a worse disorder than he had caused, and unfastening several buttons of her gown” and crying so everyone can hear: “See how he’s served me! [...] making me work Sunday mornings when I ought to be going to my church, and tearing my hair off my head, and my gown off my back!” She continues, now directly to him: “Going to ill-use me on principle, as your father ill-used your mother, and your father’s sister ill-used her husband? [...] All you Fawleys be a queer lot as husbands and wives” (p. 64).

However, Arabella is quick at her game and as far as sexual selection goes, she survives beautifully the adversities of class and the limitations of her sex. Leaving Jude, she moves to Australia and has no scruples in securing her financial survival by marrying Cartlett, a hotel manager in Sidney. She then leaves him too, comes back to England and considers taking Jude back. Then Cartlett comes to England and asks her to legalize his marriage in that country, and conduct his new public house in Lambeth. Although Arabella never says why she left him in Australia in the first place, in a conversation with Sue she suggests the husband was violent: this time “he isn’t going to knock me about when he has had a drop, any more after we are spliced by English law than before!” (p. 259). After Cartlett’s death, Arabella wants her first husband back; she admits to liking him, but agrees with her father that “it is the rummest thing

I ever heard of – marrying an old husband again, and so much new blood in the world! He’s no catch, to my thinking” (p. 366). Apparently, Jude has the power of making Arabella forget about the necessity of money, at least for a while. Towards the end of the novel, feeling Jude will die soon, she invests in Dr Vilbert, thinking to herself: “Well! Weak women must provide for a rainy day. And if my poor fellow upstairs do go off – as I suppose he will soon – it’s well to keep chances open. And I can’t pick and choose now as I could when I was younger. And one must take the old if one can’t get the young” (p. 389-390). In a Darwinian perspective, Arabella is the most successful of the main characters, being not only alive in the end, but the less psychologically damaged of all.

While discussing human sexual selection in *The Descent of Man*, Darwin had to exert himself much more than when he treated nature as a whole in *The Origin of Species* because he was aware of his popularity and the public’s curiosity on what he had to say about humankind specifically. Owing to a fear of provoking scandals, the book was not only postponed as much as possible, but also strenuously revised in order to avoid any impropriety and to discuss sexual selection in a strictly scientific way. When it was published, twelve years after its predecessor, most of the critics praised the naturalist’s attempts to render his evolutionary account of human origins as largely successful, respectable, and free from offensiveness, with British gentlemanliness all over it. Nonetheless, some commendatory and adverse reviewers drew attention to the book’s large preoccupation with sex and its supposed explicitness of language with words like *cloaca*, *uterus* and *mammae*. Although Darwin’s latest monograph had come when the debate on human descent was already on fire, the major concern was on the moral consequences of a text that would test the limits of Victorian acceptability (DAWSON, 2007). *The Descent* is clearly less spontaneous than *The Origin*, which does not mean that Darwin concealed any thoughts or changed any of his convictions, but still, he noticeably cared more about not exposing himself against the system in which he was inserted in a way that would injure the circulation and popularity of his book.

To deal with sexual selection in the Victorian context was to consider a complex and capitalist organization that would often value economic competition over natural fitness. In *The Descent* Darwin explains that in sexual selection, males fight among themselves for females, but the final choice of partner is the female’s, whose power to decide puts males in a double struggle to attain the final goal of procreation. Besides using strength and intelligence to defeat other males, they also have to call the female’s attention, often based on features rather subjective in comparison with the ones used for fighting, like beauty and charm:

Sexual selection depends on the success of certain individuals over others of the same sex, in relation to the propagation of the species; whilst natural selection depends on the success of both sexes, at all ages, in relation to the general conditions of life. the sexual struggle is of two kinds; in the one it is between individuals of the same sex, generally the males, in order to drive away or kill their rivals, the females remaining passive; whilst in the other, the struggle is likewise between the individuals of the same sex, in order to excite or charm those of the opposite sex, generally the females, which no longer remain passive, but select the more agreeable partners (DARWIN, 2004, p. 683).

As part of a general summary and conclusion, the passage above is intended to be very broad in terms of human and animal behaviour; still, “excite or charm” and the emphasis on the agreeability of the partner leave a large margin for interpretation in a book so concerned with humanity. It seems to go beyond a mere question of plumage and pose. According to Nancy Armstrong (2002), Darwin allows human contemporary factors of fitness such as economic power into the equation when he acts like that. Armstrong believes that on focusing on the subjective agreeability of the partner, Darwin is making a concession to his own theory and abiding to a common Victorian understanding that their capitalist economy was a “machine that worked according to its own version of nature’s law” (ARMSTRONG, 2002, p. 102). Here the rich man is fittest for social domination than the poor and uneducated. Moreover, for her, the passage translates a false equivalence between genders that did not correspond to the role of Victorian women who were in the situation of, the higher their social class, the less power to choose freely.

Gillian Beer states (2009, p. 173) “Darwin’s latter emphasis on this aspect meant that a new shaping influence was accorded to ideas and values, the action of the individual or communal will, as opposed to the apparent randomness of natural selection”, so evidenced in *The Origin*. In order to include humanity openly in the evolutionary debate, it was important to highlight the kind of selection that is not only natural, i.e. unwilled, but also sexual, in which individual will and internalised values of a community also play their part in the process. Biology and sociology became closer from then on, raising questions, as discussed in the previous chapter, on how much values, emotions and personality could be transmitted from generation to generation; how specific cultures and races could be shaped by them; and of course, how much power of choice individuals had left after all (BEER, 2009). Just like Armstrong, Beer does not agree with Darwin’s saying that “in civilised nations women have free or almost free choice” (2004, p. 653), and calls attention to some other passages of the book in which the naturalist emphasises the dominance of civilized man over women, both physically and intellectually, such as “Man is more courageous, pugnacious and energetic than



woman, and has a more inventive genius.” (DARWIN, 2004, p. 622). In the end, the power of choice is invariably male:

Civilised men are largely attracted by the mental charms of women, by their wealth, and especially by their social position; for men rarely marry into a much lower rank. the men who succeed in obtaining the more beautiful women will not have a better chance of leaving a long line of descendants than other men with plainer wives, save the few who bequeath their fortunes according to primogeniture (DARWIN, 2004, p. 653).

Women are the choosers only as far as they act accordingly to what is expected of them, in order to attract specific kinds of partners. By displaying wealth and social position, women are allowed to choose among a determined set of suitors. Darwin does make allowances for human affairs when he includes factors that exist only in human society, but in fact, human society *is* unique in many aspects, therefore allowances have to be made. Even factors like the partner’s physical appearance, so important in sexual selection in nature, matter less here, since either beautiful or plain women have the same capacity to produce descendants.

The observation concerned with bequeathing fortunes is openly about money and the struggles of the social human. Regarding women, he continues, “their choice is largely influenced by the social position and wealth of the men; and the success of the latter in life depends much on their intellectual powers and energy, or on the fruits of these same powers in their forefathers” (DARWIN, 2004, p. 653). This last part reminds us that when it comes to biological inheritance Darwin is not only talking about physical but the inheritance of mental traits as well. The intellectual power and energy that come from forefathers reinforces the idea that intelligent parents tend to produce intelligent children, which eventually supports the natural fitness of the successfully rich. The only drawback is that such flow of power and energy seems to run exclusively on the male side.

## 2.2 MOTHERHOOD

Arabella attracts Jude with her dimples, hair and prominent bosom. The pig’s penis thrown at the young man’s face was intentional, and she never pretended to be aloof from Jude’s charms as much as he from hers. Even so, talking about female choice in a time when the lives of women were so restricted is just the beginning of a discussion about how much women were in charge of their bodies, their sexuality, pregnancies and the raising of children.

Arabella plays with her sexuality according to the rules, differently from Sue, whose sexuality is destructive and who deals antagonistically with the established social role of women. Arabella is clear-sighted about her means of economic survival and uses her charms to smooth her way as much as possible towards her goals. Her coarse education, carried basically by her workmates, parallels and undercuts the more formal education of Jude and Sue and highlights the contrast between their intellectual search for improvement and the complexities and contingencies of personal experience (BOUMELHA, 2000). The constant emphasis on Arabella's breasts and the egg hatching between them point to fecundity and motherhood. She is a kind of surrogate mother to the orphan Jude, who feels "as if it had whisked him back to his milk-fed infancy" (p. 173) when they meet years later. Yet, Arabella never embraces the role of motherhood. While she marries, abandons husbands, torments and is tormented by them, becomes temporarily religious, moves back and so on, it is Sue who becomes the mother of three, and ends up adopting Arabella's rejected son. Arabella feels comfortable about using her sexuality as a natural means of survival, but at the same time she does not feel bound to follow the moral implications of motherhood because her life strategy is to never allow anyone to be more important in her life than herself. On the other hand, Sue, whose pregnancies both injure her body and throw the family into dire poverty, cannot prevent leaving herself and all her convictions aside for the sake of the children.

Readers are never sure if Arabella's first pregnancy was indeed real, if she miscarried or if the whole story was a lie. On one occasion, before meeting Dr Vilbert, "Arabella had been gloomy, but before he left her she had grown brighter" (p. 51). This may mean the suspected pregnancy had simply been confirmed by the quack doctor and now she can demand marriage, or perhaps that she was pregnant but did not want the child and so grew brighter after buying some of the doctor's famous "female pills" (p. 22), the same pills he earlier wanted the young Jude to offer to the women of the city. Such pills are, according to Patricia Ingham (2002), clearly abortive, commonplace in those times. The fact is that Arabella needs to have a good control over what happens to her body and her appearance, and so she learns as necessities show themselves. Becoming a mother was perhaps not part of the girl's plans, although she later tells Anny she was only "mistaken" (p. 54) about the pregnancy. Motherhood is an important issue for the female characters of the novel. As the natural main goal of sexual selection, pregnancy and procreation are not approached as sacred, and receive a rather secular treatment. Children become a means to an end for some like Arabella, or innocent burdens for others like Jude and Sue, whose inability to plan their family is reflected both in their personal frustrations and in their guilt of not being able to provide for the children properly.

Births control methods were not a novelty by the end of the Victorian period, but the subject was still controversial and highly taboo. In latter part of the eighteenth century, the demographic explosion of large cities, especially London, had already startled the intellectual sphere, and generated several theories on the dangers of overpopulation. The English economist and demographer Thomas Malthus became famous for his theory on population growth by explaining that the number of individuals can never outrun the food resources, and that to prevent restriction of food supply and consequently hunger among the poor, population checks were imperative (RICHTER, 2011). Malthus's famous *Essay on the Principle of Population*, originally published in 1798, draws its insights from natural economy, and was one of Darwin's main inspirations to shape his evolutionary theory: it starts with the same premise that struggle exists because more individuals are born than the environment can maintain. As humanity abandoned nomadic traditions and established fixed dwellings, techniques to the make the most of the land became essential and were still evolving, nonetheless, even the best soil has its limits when over or badly used.

By the end of the nineteenth century, encouraging people to emigrate to the former British convict colony of Australia, as Arabella and her parents do, was a popular alternative for England to dispense with some of its less desirable citizens. Attracted by the promise of adventure and cheap land offered by colonial governments and emigration societies, often aided by free ship passages, not only workers, but also many unmarried women were persuaded to emigrate. This policy helped solve a so-called *redundancy crisis*, pointed out by the British census on the problematic surplus of single women who would never marry, and that it could solve the gender unbalance in places like Australia to where many men had emigrated and now were in need of wives (STEINBACK, 2017). Sociologist Herbert Spencer maintained that migration was advantageous to the Empire in every perspective: it reduced the density of population "when the resources of every region have been fully explored; and when the productive arts admit of no further improvements", producing balance "both between the fertility and mortality of each society, and between its producing and consuming activities". Moreover, it also helped the rise of civilization: "by the supplanting of inferior races by the superior races they beget" (SPENCER, 2009, p. 468).

Malthus warned that there would be a day when familiar impediments such as wars, diseases and famine would not be enough to control human population at the rate it was growing, and suggested further checks like the encouragement of chastity and later marriages (DAWSON, 2007). By the second half of the century these suggestions were considered too mild by a group of free-thinkers self-declared Neo-Malthusians, who supported rigid birth

control, among other practices such as the poor-laws that separated families in poor houses, and even the endorsement of prostitution, trusting that fewer children would be produced this way. Nevertheless, “Despite the apparent similarities to the more Malthusian checks to overpopulation, Darwin, as well as Huxley and others, vehemently opposed any attempts by radicals to appropriate evolutionary theory to justify their support for contraception” (DAWSON, 2007, p. 119). Nevertheless, their names were always associated with radical propaganda for the creation of all kinds of extreme methods for controlling population growth, because it was not difficult to use their words on natural balance and their critics to human arrogance and interference to defend such ideologies. Darwin himself, although restraining marriages sounded like a naïve method for population control in the middle of the busy nineteenth century, never dared go beyond that. He vaguely touches the subject in *The Origin*:

It is the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms; for in this case there can be no artificial increase of food, and no prudential restraint from marriage. Although some species may be now increasing, more or less rapidly, in numbers, all cannot do so, for the world would not hold them (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 51-52).

In *The Descent*, probably after being questioned about it, he reinforces that in civilized nations, the “primary check acts chiefly by restraining marriages”, and besides this, “the greater death-rate of infants in the poorest classes is also very important; as well as the greater mortality, from various diseases, of the inhabitants of crowded and miserable houses, at all ages” (DARWIN, 2004, p. 51). The cruel reality of the poor, as always, serves as natural means to control the surplus population, as society would never be able to improve their position at the rate they grow. Poor people were expected to live less anyway, and many of their numerous children to die young, so Darwin, strangely and at the loss of a better response, trusts the harshness of natural laws to justify how morally wrong it would be to interfere further.

Dr Vilbert’s pills are an example of the artificial contraceptives that became popular and were disseminated both by word of mouth and by cheap publications, sold in large numbers, that gave women advice on methods for which they were responsible. One of the fears shared by medical authorities was that popular contraceptive methods detached sexual intercourse from the responsibilities of procreation, therefore promoting promiscuity, especially among unmarried women (DAWSON, 2007). For Arabella, this kind of control provides her with a liberty she would not have otherwise. We cannot be sure of any of her pregnancies, except that she claims to be the mother of Little Father Time, however, she remains sexually active with her husband in Australia and later again with Jude. She is the kind of woman whose rudimentary

education would not prevent her from being aware of the latest methods of contraception available, not because she feared the responsibilities of motherhood, (her son was raised by her parents and later sent to Jude like a package) but because she needed to keep control over her body shape, escaping as much as possible the terrible “enslavement of forms” (p. 388).

To finish with Arabella, she may be vulgar, less civilized and even animalistic, in comparison to the other main characters, but at the same time she is the one who reads life most objectively and openly when it comes to guarantee her survival. Arabella is adapted to her environment, and gifted with quite an animal knowledge: a capacity of telling things not from knowing, but feeling. She knows, for example, Sue’s marriage has not been consummated just by looking at her. With the authority of an oracle, Arabella is given the last words of the novel: while looking at Jude’s body, she affirms that Sue “may swear that on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she’s hoarse, but it won’t be true [...] She’s never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she’s as he is now!” (p. 397). According to Widdowson (2007), by giving Arabella a dominant voice at the end, Hardy presents us with his “ultimate satire” in the novel: “as the Carnivalizing degrader of Jude’s idealism and Sue’s asexuality, and from within it – [Arabella appears] as a ‘heroine’ who mocks the intellectual pretensions of readers obsessed by the humanist-realist ‘tragedy’ of Jude’s and Sue’s story. Arabella degrades us too” (WIDDOWSON, 2007, p. 71). Her sensual behaviour and closeness to natural instincts degrades the intellectual ambition and the perspective of improvement of others. Arabella is everything Sue abhors, and Jude fears; as if she represented the past, the dangers of moving backwards on the evolutionary scale.

### 2.3 SUE AND THE REFUSAL OF GENDER ROLES

In terms of sexual selection, Sue Bridehead is a more complex character to discuss than Arabella. Sue is complicated because she denies the basic instinct of sexuality in order to defend her intellectual freedom; she goes against the natural order of sexual selection. Differently from Arabella, Sue abhors the idea of becoming a wife, a mistress, a mother; of being sexually available for a man and financially dependent on him. Even so, she cannot prevent her story from turning exactly towards these directions. Unintentionally, she calls Jude’s attention in sexual terms too and is often blamed for teaming up with Arabella to ruin his life by preventing him from following his studies. If we look for divine justice in Hardy’s novels, we could say (as Sue herself does) that she is punished in the end for defying God, for denying her sacred role of woman and mother and going against the prescribed path. But a Darwinian reading of

Sue's sexual rejection in the name of intellectual ideologies tells us that defying the laws of nature can be just as damaging.

Considering the evolutionary process described by Darwin, Sue's denial of sexuality is suicidal. She is killing her lineage off by ignoring that the perseverance of the fittest only matters in the long run if one procreates, otherwise survival is meaningless. On the other hand, Sue's emphasis on sensibility and reason points to a higher evolutionary stage of the human species: thinking rationally over human procreation widens the gap between humankind and other animals who procreate driven by instinct alone. Her behaviour makes her less animal than Arabella; it makes Sue more mind than flesh. Moreover, in her wish to be intellectually free, as she believes men are, Sue calls the attention to the inferiority of women in English society, a matter which natural science presented the tools for debate, but in the face of heavy stereotypes of gender, could do but little yet. Sue's boldness to challenge the status quo of gender roles links her to the New Woman movement which fought not only for women's rights but for a change of perspective on the part of the patriarchal society, often with strong criticism towards legal marriage (STEINBACK, 2017). But whether Sue's odd likes and dislikes help her in the actual fight for survival is another matter.

Sue's refusal to have sexual relations with neither her husband nor Jude makes the latter ask himself whether she has any problem peculiar to her, or common to the whole female sex. She eventually feels forced to abide Jude's advances and they even have children, but the dread of being forced to anything drives her practically mad. Sue's moral ideologies are suffocated between sexual repression and conjuncture of class; she struggles with natural as well as with social demands, which require her to be legally married and sexually available to her partner. From the perspective of natural selection, Sue's behaviour towards sexuality can be considered either a variation or a defect; from a fictional perspective, it can turn her into either a villain or a victim in the story.

Before Hardy decided on the painting of Samson and Delilah on the wall at the inn where Jude and Arabella drink, his idea was to have a version of Susannah and the Elders, showing a naked young woman bathing while observed by lusty old men. The clear display of female sexuality under threat was replaced by Hardy in the final version of the book by the image which showed male sexuality under threat (BOUMELHA, 2016). The unprotected naked girl facing the desire of men would have alluded to the future in the novel, either when the older Phillotson marries the young Susanna, or when Jude himself makes her the victim of his lust. After being teased by the reappearance of his ex-wife, Jude blackmails Sue into giving up her chastity and consummating their union at the risk of losing him back to Arabella. Later he

regrets this and curses himself for belonging “to that vast band of men shunned by the virtuous – the men called seducers” (p. 332). Jude had never thought of himself this way before, Arabella was always the sensual one, never himself, he was the student, the worker, the future Christian divine.

The whole novel presents a recurrent movement between the paths of education and carnality, of characters wishing to show themselves as improved beings or abiding to instincts that debase them to themselves. What John Goode (2000, p. 106) calls “polarities of evolution” is the separation of evolution on the one hand as the crude struggle for survival, and on the other the recognition of the development of species, distinctly of mankind, which needs differentiating in order to define to itself what it is to be human. Goode points out that the power of choice, so desperately fragile in the face of the still unknown human nature and all the causes that resulted in our relevant disparity in comparison to the other forms of life, is of vital importance to defend that differentiation. With this in mind, it seems easy to see Arabella as the representation of coarseness, degradation and brute instincts, and Sue as the improved being, with the superiority of her intellect and culture. However, Goode explains, when confronting the two female protagonists, Arabella is eventually more representative of Darwinian nature because her working, middle class expectations are realistic while Sue’s are aspirational. While for Arabella natural and sexual selection are summarized in the simple binary form of what “tis nature and what do please God”, to Sue the world is the field of the self: self-fulfilment, self-discipline, privileging feelings over anything else. Sue represents *culture*, opposing Arabella’s *nature*, in “the illusion of free will and equality and the superior choice of spirituality respectively” (GOODE, 2000, p. 106).

The spirituality attributed to Sue by Jude and Phillotson is problematic because it is an attempt to give her a deeper nature, to differentiate her from the shallow Arabella, but which actually reflects the male characters’ inability to access her, to define her in simple terms. This spirituality has to be at least averse to religiosity, since Sue shows herself pagan from the very beginning, both by her actions (adopting the statues of Apollo and Diana) and her discourse for equality and criticism towards religion. When Hardy (2016a, p. 5) describes the novel as a “war between flesh and spirit”, he refers to spirit as the opposition to the instinctive: it is the mind, the self-consciousness that claims independence from the flesh. Nevertheless, the vague spirituality related to Sue in many moments of the novel rather creates a sort of ethereal character within the character instead of focusing on this conflict. It creates expectations about Sue’s person and behaviour she is not even aware of, and so should not be responsible for not fulfilling, but which partially accounts for her being considered an enigmatic and strange

woman. For example, while Jude watches her at Christminster, before even speaking to her, he already believes he has found the “anchorage for his thoughts which promised to supply both social and spiritual possibilities” (p. 86). In another moment, her letter, written with anxiety, creates a new kind of human interest, “spiritual and self-sacrificing” (p. 123). Jude’s religious training, as well as his hunger for affection, help to associate Sue with an angelic, pure image. Her slight figure and lack of sensuality contributes for nurturing an almost childish concept of innocence and detachment from the material world, which has actually very little to do with her discourse for independence and rationalism.

If this whole spiritual expectation is mostly unfair with Sue, at least in the aspect of her sexual innocence, then Jude is right. When she is about to marry Phillotson, Jude thinks “She does not realize what marriage means!” (p. 165). After refusing to have intercourse with her husband, she finally leaves him, and joins Jude with the intention of avoiding his sexual advances the same way. She tells Jude about the “friendly intimacy with an undergraduate at Christminster” (p. 141) she had had some years earlier as an illustration of the perfect relationship between man and woman. They were best friends; this young man taught her a great deal, lent her books, walked and read with her, they were “like two men almost” (p. 142), but when he asked her to live with him in London, she found out that he wanted her to become his mistress and the friendship ended. This ideal of a sexless relationship based on equality demonstrates how Sue feels diminished as a woman, how offended she feels at being “licensed to be loved on the premises” (p. 249) either under a Government stamp or not. Sue wants to be in control of her body, but differently from Arabella, she does not want to be reduced to it.

It is worth noticing that Sue never appears to struggle to repress sexual desire, she does not seem to feel it at all, neither for Phillotson (which could be explained by the lack of beauty in the older man), nor for Jude, who is her age, good-looking and whom she truly loves. To consider her repulsion natural is to say that she does not choose to feel this way, and so it could be read as a variation, or most likely, a natural defect in her. Darwin said that in natural selection it was impossible to explain what caused variations to appear or disappear; there were only hypotheses. But he believed the interactions between species and environment were some of the most important factors, and yet the random appearance of individuals that were not fit for those relations was normal (DARWIN, 2008b). Being born without sexual instincts seems an exaggeration but could be possible in this light.

Sue’s sexual repulsion is not merely physical, but it is also the result of the way she understands the social implications of sex, pregnancy and marriage of her time. She is as adamant as she is honest in her resolve of being above sexual desire and the “torture [...] of



being responsive to this man whenever he wishes” (p. 204), or when referring directly to marriage as a contract: “The intention of the contract is good, and right for many, no doubt; but in our case it may defeat its own ends because we are the queer sort of people we are—folk in whom domestic ties of a forced kind snuff out cordiality and spontaneousness” (p. 276). Sue believes contracts kill spontaneity and Jude feels unable to contradict this. Considering all, Sue’s reasoning results from the combination of natural and cultivated feelings, which overwhelms those around her because it is too advanced: “at the framing of the terrestrial conditions there seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity” (p. 331). The “tomboy”, the “odd little maid” who could “see things in the air” (p. 105), whose experiences and education add to her personal traits, is as much a fruit of her environment as any other character in the novel. Yet, she does not feel part of it, she cannot adapt to the very environment that produced her. This problem relates closely with how Richardson understands Hardy’s perception that:

[...] the human mind – or spirit – was, as Hardy elsewhere noted, habitually at odds with the material world – ‘this great & eternal incongruity of man’s existence – the conflict of a spiritual nature & such aspirations as man’s with conditions entirely physical’ – but mind over the course of the century is also increasingly seen to be at one with matter, constituted by the same stuff, and subject to the same laws (RICHARDSON, 2004, p. 170).

The novel’s reception among contemporary critics demonstrated how Sue’s actions seemed odd for many of them. An “experienced German reviewer” wrote Sue was the result of the growing feminist movement of the end of the century: the “slight, pale ‘bachelor’ girl – the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing, mainly in cities as yet; who does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession” (HARDY, 2016b, p. 8). She was easily associable to the New Woman novel character, “typically portrayed as self-reliant, adventuresome, outspoken, and intelligent – clearly affronted conventional notions of femininity” (ARATA, 2014, p. 62). Along with Henry James’s *The Bostonians* and George Gissing’s *The Odd Women*, *Jude the Obscure* could be found in the New Woman literary list of the end of the century, despite Hardy’s denial of having written for the genre. In a letter to Edmund Gosse, Hardy also denied he had created a lesbian character, and argued that there was “nothing perverted or depraved in Sue’s nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion, not inversion, her sexual instinct is healthy enough as far as it goes, although unusually weak and fastidious” (HARDY, 2016a, p. 352). He finished

by saying that she is a woman of painfully alert sensibilities, such as they are in the natures of such women like her.

At the same time William Dean Howells (1979, p. 266) turned Sue into a villain and Jude into the victim of her allure. According to Howells, Sue is as much a fool as Arabella, “though of such exaltation in her folly that we cannot refuse her a throe of compassion, even when she is most perverse”. Edmund Gosse (1979, p. 280), in his turn, called Sue “a poor, maimed degenerate, ignorant of herself and of the perversion of her instincts, full of febrile, amiable illusions, ready to dramatize her empty life, and play at loving though she cannot love”. D. H. Lawrence (*apud* WATTS, 1999, p. 29) also compared both women and rather defended the first wife: “Arabella was, under all her disguise of pig-fat and false hair, and vulgar speech, in character somewhat of an aristocrat”; she “makes a man of Jude”, while Sue is not true to what she appears to be: she “was not the virgin type, but the witch type, which has no sex”’. Watts interprets this as Lawrence’s criticism against the dubious moralities embraced by Hardy in *Jude*: while the text intends to denigrate the body and the physical, it actually reveals a deep sensuous understanding which subverts that intention. Sue is almost pure consciousness; she awakens Jude to a full mental being, but cannot extinguish his sexual nature because she also arouses it. She is a witch type because her lack of sexual desire makes her unnatural. When Jude demands a sexual response, which is alien to her nature, he effectively violates her (WATTS, 1999, p. 29), but curiously, to Lawrence, *he* (Jude) is the one drained rather than fulfilled as a result. The idea that Sue forces Jude into violating her is ludicrous; plus, worrying about the evil effects such violence had on him, instead of her, shows how early criticism influenced the idea of Sue as a problem in the protagonist’s life.

Sue is unacceptable because she does not provide for the male counterpart as a true woman should in that perspective. Jude’s misinterpretations, as when he charges Sue with feelings opposite to what she is desperately trying to demonstrate, eventually provide material to support her abnormality and her defective womanliness in the views of contemporary criticism, as well as to transform Jude into a victim: “Jude felt much depressed: she seemed to get further and further away from him with her strange ways and curious unconsciousness of gender” (p. 143). Sue is not unconscious of her gender, on the contrary, she is perfectly aware of the limits imposed by it, and her strange ways are not more than her trying to escape them.

But not everybody was against Sue. An unsigned review of 1896 calls the attention to how problematic it was to try to understand Sue by reducing her to sexuality:

Sue, however, is no mere figure of sexual affection, as Arabella is of passion; she is the feminine counterpart of Jude's intellectual side, clearer minded, unimpassioned, an exceptional but a possible woman. She points the moral of the Christminster defeat with her acute modern-spirited comments, and participates so far in the main theme of the story, in addition to her rôle as a detracting feminine influence. But her cold-bloodedness seems, for some incomprehensible reason, to have roused the common reviewer to a pitch of malignant hatred (Unsigned, 1979, p. 294).

According to this review, the prejudice that caused a "malignant hatred" against Sue and "her cold-bloodedness" was not raised against the male character fighting the same limiting social system based on supposed natural traits. The poor boy looking for a chance in the upper classes, despite all disadvantages, did not cause as half as much commotion.

Although Darwin emphasises in *The Descent of Man* the evolutionary gap that has grown between humankind and other animals, little is questioned by him on the differences between human genders. On the contrary, as natural and sexual selection depend much on the engagement of every individual with their natural roles of producing descendants, it often happened that contemporary natural studies confirmed many stereotypes of gender under the cloak of science. Women from considered civilized nations were still more defined by their instincts than men, more linked with nature and lower animals, especially because of women's active part in birth. "[T]he love of the mother for her new-born offspring" (DARWIN, 2004, p. 87) and the child's first reflexes to suckle and seek the mother's body comfort were considered some of the clearest proofs of the purely instinctual behaviour shared between humankind and animals, evident in those rudimentary stages of life.

Desmond (1998) states that when discussing civilized nations, Darwin scorned intellectual women as bores, and differently from Huxley, was intimidated instead of fascinated by them. His sexual selection was actually a cult to masculinity that drove deep into Victorian science, with males increasing in perfection while fighting over submissive females: "Men's intelligence increased further as they struggled to provide for their families, while the woman's stagnated. Darwin's was an image of ineradicable sexual difference. His science turned the stereotypes into seeming hard knowledge" (DESMOND, 1998, p. 447). According to Desmond, Darwin's influence reinforced the barriers that excluded women from the Victorian sources of knowledge, turning things into a vicious circle, and declaring the Woman Question, the fight for equality, to be unnatural, dangerous and overall pointless.

It is not difficult to find passages in Darwin that confirm the clear distinctions made between male and female humans. The sense of beauty, for example, in women seems to aim solely at pleasing the tastes of intended partners; "in man, however, when cultivated, the sense

of beauty is manifestly a far more complex feeling, and is associated with various intellectual ideas” (DARWIN, 2004, p. 408). He continues comparing mental power:

The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shewn by man's attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands. If two lists were made of the most eminent men and women in poetry, painting, sculpture, music (inclusive both of composition and performance), history, science, and philosophy, with half-a-dozen names under each subject, the two lists would not bear comparison. We may also infer, from the law of the deviation from averages, so well-illustrated by Mr. Galton, in his work on 'Hereditary Genius,' that if men are capable of a decided pre-eminence over women in many subjects, the average of mental power in man must be above that of woman (DARWIN, 2004, p. 629).

Nowadays it is easy to point out several problems in Darwin's comparisons. He does not consider any of the social circumstances involving class, access to education and many others that would not allow women to reach the same intellectual aims as men. Most of all, he does not seem to consider why women in this sense could only be as good as men if they *were* men, since the parameter is always male. Nonetheless, despite apparently candid, Darwin's attitude on the subject seems at least cautious here – perhaps to avoid polemics and diversions from the subject as whole – because it does not match his usual way of reasoning. When comparing humans and animals he trusted that the attested inferiority of animals was a consequence of having humans as a parameter, and that levels of development were merely a matter of favourable circumstances and specially of time (DARWIN, 2004). However, making the same distinction between the two sexes of the same species, as if women were at a different stage of development when compared to men, leaves Darwin in a situation where he can hardly be absolved from being carried away by established stereotypes of gender.

If for Darwin it was too soon to rethink women's natural and social roles, John Stuart Mill's essay on the *Subjection of Women* “pulled culture away from nature [...] and refused to make women's biological ‘limitations’ the basis of a discriminatory educational policy” (DESMOND, 1998, p. 447). Supported by the emancipating socialists of the period, Mill acknowledges the prejudicial yardstick of gendered “strength”, but wonders, like Huxley, why careers “open to the weakest and most foolish of the male sex should be forcibly closed to women of vigour and capacity” (HUXLEY, 2012, p. 140). Mill's essay *On Liberty* is on Sue's lips when she supports an argument on freedom: “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” (p. 215). The British philosopher was a recurring name in the reading list of the *New Woman*, more because of *The Subjection of Women* than *On Liberty*, yet it shows Sue

does not mention him by chance (BOUMELHA, 2000). For Mill (1984, p. 302), the “mental differences supposed to exist between women and men are but the natural effect of the differences in their education and circumstances, and indicate no radical difference, far less radical inferiority, of nature”. Mill defied established standards of fixed character and believed education had the power to perfect the character, to the point of changing natural (or perhaps considered natural) traits. He criticised how the teachers of women turned all their forces to keep girls submissive: “All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others.” (MILL, 1984, p. 271).

Mill’s ideals encourage Sue not to be limited by her gender, but to trust her intellect to be free and to demand for individualism that leads her through an exploration of the limits of liberationist impulses. In spite of this, Sue is frustrated in her quest almost from beginning to end. She faces throughout the novel what Boumelha (2000, p. 62) calls “the impossibility of the free individual”: presented as a potential radical feminist at first, Sue’s destiny contradicts some of most popular feminist novels of the period because she never succeeds; she never breaks with the oppression. Instead, she is broken by it, broken by the “inexorable laws of nature” (p. 134) that casts her as a female before casting her as a rational thinker. One of the drawbacks of a time when sexuality moved from the area of social discourse to that of the biologic was that there was a relative downgrading of the mind and the intellect in relation to the physical and instinctive, which gave support to forms of irrationalism and pessimism, as in Schopenhauer, whose philosophy convinced Hardy that human consciousness and the laws of the universe were at odds (BOUMELHA, 2000, p. 57). Although Darwin always reinforced the importance of the individual as the catalyst of change, translating it into the Victorian social mechanism was a different and complicated matter. In society, odd people or groups of odd people like new bachelor girls, who belonged to minorities, trying to change the status quo which happened to work so well so far, were regarded by most as at least nonsensical.

Not only does Sue wear Jude’s masculine clothes and demand equal respect, but she is the first Hardian heroine who receives the same attention as the hero, enhancing the sense of double tragedy of man and woman. Both protagonists rival for the centrality of the novel, both deal problematically with their sexuality, but Sue’s sexual nature causes more damage in her than Jude feels about his (BOUMELHA, 2000). The two stories run in parallel: both escape first marriages that produce sexual insecurity, both become parents, suffer from poverty, lose their children, and marry again to the former partners, but after all Jude is lucid enough to die “game” (p. 337) and willing to take Sue back, while Sue is nearly mad: “the blow of her

bereavement seemed to have destroyed her reasoning faculty” (p. 349) as if nature were reclaiming her back after too much brain effort. For Boumelha (2000, p. 60), Sue’s final breakdown partially answers Jude’s question on whether her logic was peculiar to her or common to women in general. Sue is the representative of her sex in the sense that “her sexuality is the decisive element of her collapse”; as she has no other choice but to suffer the penalty of her sex that is “injustice, loneliness, child-bearing and bereavement” (p. 135). The part that is peculiar to her is that she is conscious of it. When Jude also breaks in the end, he can still separate the professional and educational losses from the personal ones, and so still has hopes; but when Sue collapses, she has nothing left because everything is personal to her, every problem converges into the main problem of being a woman.

Sue’s refusal of the sexual dimension of a relationship is her rational response to the dilemma of the flesh; it is her way to avoid being reduced to the contemporary stereotypes associated with women. Sue is the true field of the “deadly war between flesh and spirit” (HARDY, 2016a, p. 5), the intellect fighting the limitations of the body which puts her at odds with her environment. However, considering that societies, like natural environments, change throughout time, and also considering that Sue’s sexual repulsion is possibly more than a birth condition, but a result of her interaction with that society, this relation could be totally different in a different context. Sue, as well as other “bachelor girls” and “bundle of nerves” may have a place in a less hostile future because, after all, despite her rebellion, Sue does have children, she performs her natural role, precariously as it was, but giving continuity to her family line, as others did. Whether some of her personal traits can be considered injurious structures, as Darwin defines, “some considerable deviation of structure [...], either injurious to or not useful to the species, and not generally propagated” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 37), it leaves us to observe the following generation and see how it turned out.

## 2.4 INTERBREEDING

The following discussion on sexual selection with focus on the second generation of *Jude the Obscure* complements the previous topic on inherited traits. Sexual selection is aimless in the fight for survival if strong, fit offspring are not produced to continue one’s lineage, naturally equipped to adapt as best as they can to their environment. But instead of a simple combination of their parents, the child is a much more complex blend of both family lines and may replicate or not physical and mental traits of earlier generations (DARWIN, 2008b). Following closely to Darwin’s theory on breeding, Hardy makes the children of Jude, Sue, and

Arabella cases as curious as they are unpredictable, at least as far as readers are allowed to know them during their short appearances in the novel.

Relatively early in the novel, when Sue is about to marry Phillotson, Jude broods over how her children are likely to be a merge of both parents, and abhors the idea:

He projected his mind into the future, and saw her with children, more or less in her own likeness, around her. But the consolation of regarding them as a continuation of her identity was denied to him, as to all such dreamers, by the willfulness of Nature in not allowing issue from one parent alone. Every desired renewal of an existence is debased by being half alloy. 'If at the estrangement or death of my lost love, I could go and see her child – hers solely – there would be comfort in it,' said Jude. And then he again uneasily saw, as he had latterly seen with more and more frequency, the scorn of nature for man's finer emotions, and her lack of interest in his aspirations (p. 170).

Jude demonstrates that he knows children cannot be the fruit of one parent alone, but have to be the combination of both. Yet, he still sees things very simplistically, the child being half mother and half father. Thinking of this blending of Sue and Phillotson sickens Jude because he wished it were possible to see her child as “hers solely”, as if Sue could be restored back to youth and have a second chance in life. And he blames nature for that, not God – either because he feels uncomfortable for blaming God for his selfishness or because he is already questioning whether such “scorn [...] for man's finer emotions” is or not a sign that there is actually no ruling God at all. Jude demonstrates here how his expectations after years of efforts are decreasing because things are never the way he wants. This new proof of nature's indifference only adds to “all that has been spoilt by the grind of stern reality” (p. 380).

Sue never has children with Phillotson; they never consummate the marriage. Later, with Jude things are different. The cousins reappear after an absence of two years and a half with two children and a third on the way. But despite the number of children, the narrator highlights that Sue's “intimacies with Jude have never been more than occasional, even when they were living together” (HARDY, 2016a, p. 352), which makes them a very fertile couple. In addition, they raise Arabella's son with Jude, whom they call Little Father Time. Poverty-stricken, the family leads an “almost nomadic life” (p. 298), going from town to town every time Jude hears of freestone work to be done, trying to avoid the discrimination they all suffer because the couple are not legally married. For the reader, Jude and Sue' children are faceless and nameless, and seem to be more like collateral damage of those occasional intimacies than the happy fruits of their union. Little is known about them, only that the elder is a girl and the younger a boy, and then they die in a tragic way, killed by their half-sibling, in a blunt attempt to solve the problem of so many “mouths to fill” (p. 315).

Were aunt Drusilla alive to see it, she would surely say that the wretchedness was caused by the inconsequent union between the cousins, who were aware of the incompatibility of family members with marriage; who knew the tragic history of both their own parents. And at that point of the children's death Sue finally falters. After desperately trying to dismiss all the superstitions and irrationality, she gives in to the idea that there is something wrong with her union with Jude; something beyond that which they can handle. But while Sue takes a way back into religious fanaticism to find answers in her despair, contemporary natural science led by Darwin was already looking into the recurrence of defective traits that could corroborate the existence of limits to members of the same family to breed among themselves.

Breeding among relatives, as is the case of Jude and Sue, was a real source of preoccupation to Darwin, especially the eventual negative effects on the offspring. He calls "close interbreeding" the reproduction between direct family members, a subject first discussed in *The Origin*, but mainly regarding pollination of plants. Darwin states that among plant breeders, including himself, it is common to recur to self-fertilization in order to keep or highlight certain characteristics, refine species or even create new. However, it has been observed that in the case of domestic plants, repeated self-fertilization, for a course of many generations in a row, tend to decrease "vigour and fertility" of species (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 75). The problem can be fixed when individuals are again crossed with distinct or different varieties, increasing fertility again. With domestic animals, the reasons for crossing direct relatives are the same: increasing traits such as colour, size or whatever is valuable, usually for commercial purposes. But although being a common practice, breeders agree that "close interbreeding continued during several generations between the nearest relations, especially if these be kept under the same conditions of life, always induces weakness and sterility in the progeny" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 197). In *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, published in 1868, Darwin resumes the subject and warns that although interbreeding between close relatives may seem advantageous to retain certain characteristics, the results vary from species to species, consequently making it difficult to determine how much close interbreeding is too close in each case. He also adds that hidden undesired characteristics can be retained as much as the desired, and traits that are often unperceptive or invisible can eventually cause injury in the future. Furthermore, retaining anything too much is overall unnatural and problematic because it prevents development and spoils diversity.

In the natural environment, the social organization of species is a consequence of the way they breed. Darwin points out that reasons connected with reproduction lead certain animal species to live in herds and others not. Gregarious animals, those that live in close communities,



are probably rendered less susceptible to the ill effects of close interbreeding. In these communities, such as lions, it is common for the dominant male to expel other males and pair with its own daughters with apparent no damage. On the other hand, in non-social species, the ill effects of close interbreeding may be both the reason and the consequence of them evolving into not living in herds (DARWIN, 2010).

When it comes to the effects of interbreeding on humankind, Darwin admits the subject is delicate and speaks little. He states that it could only be known with certainty whether consanguineous marriages cause any injury in the case of humans when a census is taken in England with this object in view (DARWIN, 2010). Darwin himself was married to his first cousin, Emma Wedgwood, which, according to biographer Tim Berra (2009), caused him much uneasiness that their children might have inherited any weakness that would not manifest in a non-related couple. Darwin's mother and grandfather also were Wedgwoods, and his mother's parents were third cousins. Darwin and Emma had ten children, which may not account to the infertility problem at least in their generation; however, three of the children died before the age of ten, two from infectious diseases; and out of the seven remaining, three never had children themselves. A recent study published by Ohio State University (BERRA, 2015) reports that the "inbreeding coefficient" for the children in the Darwin/Wedgwood families may have had an influence in such history. The study highlights that susceptibility to infectious disease and unexplained infertility are included in list of risk factors of consanguineous marriage, and so the fact that the parents were closely blood-related enhances the chances that they matched damaging genetic traits.

Thomas Hardy did not marry his cousin, although some biographers think he wanted to, and so he might have had thoughts on the subject. Hardy had a cousin called Tryphena Sparks, eleven years his junior, with whom much has been speculated he had a passionate affair, and some even speculated they had an illegitimate child together. This was caused much because of a poem written by Hardy decades later when she died called "Thoughts of Phena" in which he echoes not only affectionate cousinship feelings but also some suspicious self-reproach. Michael Millgate (2006) notices that although Tryphena seems to have been an intelligent pretty and lively girl, there is no evidence of the love affair, especially because she and Hardy were not actually cousins but uncle and niece, which should have been objectionable to the family. He believes the awakened feelings towards "Phena" on her death were aroused by difficulties Hardy was experiencing in his own marriage by the time, causing him to regret past failures and to claim Tryphena, as well as other women whom he idealized, as lost prizes. Whether he imagined a family with her, or pondered on eventual difficulties with their children we are not

likely to know. Hardy never had children, neither with his first wife Emma, with whom he had a long and, some say, not very happy marriage, or Florence, the second wife, with whom he married when he was over seventy years old.

Consanguineous marriages were not prohibited in considered civilized nations like England, although a taboo subject. In the novel, the fact alone that Jude and Sue are cousins does not seem to provoke serious preoccupation in anyone besides Drusilla. However, Darwin calls attention to many cultures in the world, mainly uncivilized, where marriage between relatives was forbidden. Those prohibitions often involved fears of child malformation, yet, depending on the culture, rules could be applied differently to males and females, could differ according to degrees of family relationships, and account much more for questions of property descent than of real repugnance. Definite reasons are difficult to find. Some aboriginal tribes from Australia and South America abhor incestuous marriages, despite having “no property to bequeath, or fine moral feelings to confuse, and who are not likely to reflect on distant evils to their progeny” (DARWIN, 2010, p. 103). Darwin concludes that feelings against degrees of incest are not instinctive in mankind any more than in other animals with communitarian habits. He theorizes that prejudices or feelings can easily rise to abhorrence, and so “it seems possible that men during primeval times may have been more excited by strange females than by those with whom they habitually lived; in the same manner [...] deerhounds are inclined towards strange females” (DARWIN, 2010, p. 104), which may explain something.

Perhaps it is because the children of Jude and Sue die very young, but the book does not provide any suggestion that they had peculiarities about them, neither physical nor mental. According to DiBatista (2000), this lack of negative information allows us an interesting conclusion regarding the two younger ones in comparison with Little Father Time: while the fruits of the problematic, sexually tense couple seem healthy enough, “afflicted by any pathological morbidity”, the offspring of the “substantial Arabella and the virile Jude”, who would be expected to be the fittest and strongest among them, is the one who shows himself weak from body to soul. She believes it demonstrates that Hardy’s “rhetorical genetics” go beyond mere cross-matching of parents’ affinities of Darwin’s logic (DIBATISTA, 2000, p. 173). When it comes to Father Time, DiBatista is right to affirm that this character does not follow any kind of expectation; and this is why he cannot be reduced to material science of breeding alone. However, considering all the three children, and thinking especially of the defenceless dumb siblings, we can contradict DiBatista by saying that Hardy’s genetics does not oppose Darwin’s logic. On the contrary, by not following predictable and simplistic combination of couples, Hardy delivers an attentive reading of Darwin’s natural theory. He

demonstrates what Darwin considered our profound ignorance of the laws of variation: “Not in one case out of a hundred can we pretend to assign any reason why this or that part differs, more or less, from the same part in the parents” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 127). Crediting every trait of children to parents, as if every aspect of them could be flawlessly spotted in one of the progenitors, leads to mistakenly easy interpretations of a much more complex equation. The offspring can display traits from both family lines, from further generations, further branches perhaps, which neither of the parents possess. Although specific triggers for the appearance and disappearance of variations were unknown, Darwin suggests that circumstances such as use and disuse of mental and physical capabilities, climate and environmental conditions, as well as the correlation among traits themselves and among species were factors that contributed for the necessity of as much variety as possible in the natural environment.

Aunt Drusilla never mentions the fates of older generations, grandparents or great-grandparents, who could perhaps provide a more balanced family picture. Although her logic of reproducing injurious traits does not deviate very far from possibilities considered by contemporary natural science, her justification to forbid Jude and Sue’s marriage is restricted to subjective aspects of temperament and stubbornness of family members. Despite her mentioning that there was something wrong with the family blood, this reference is more symbolic of her superstitions than a tangible argument to the family curse by pointing to factual illnesses, physical or mental. With regards to their health, neither of the cousins nor their children together display any pathology, they seem sound and beautiful enough (Jude dies of a lung disease provoked by his profession). Based on Darwin and the unpredictability of the laws of inheritance, Hardy felt free to release his chief characters and their children from any obligation of confirming the prejudices of the previous generation. Without final reasons or moral explanations, through the perspective of natural selection, the deaths of the children can be seen as merely the result of their interaction with their environment; the hostile and competitive environment (often unfair from a human perspective), where within its complex relations and constant search for balance, children do not always live to an adult age.

### 3 THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

Suddenly there came along this wind something towards him; a message from the place – from some soul residing there, it seemed. Surely it was the sound of bells, the voice of the city; faint and musical, calling to him, ‘We are happy here’ (p. 17).

The eleven-year-old Jude Fawley stares in the direction of where the city of Christminster is pointed at. From a distance he is able, or imagines so, to spot through the thinning mist, the faint outlines of spires, domes and roofs of buildings. His frail position, alone and helpless, forbids him to do anything but dream of the city he wants to live in one day. His teacher has just left town to join the university there, and the boy asks, whoever passes, about that magical place, where everything is possible, where happiness is possible, as the wind tells him. Even when it rained, Jude could not believe that the rain in Christminster, the “wonderful city of scholarship and religion” (p. 21), could be so dreary. The boy needs a refuge from a meaningless life, and so builds an image of a “Heavenly Jerusalem”, as he begins to call the place, nurtured from every light, every sound, every sensation that comes from there, or he imagines that does. “The voice of the city; faint and musical” saying “We are happy here” denounces, from the first pages of Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*, the deepest yearnings of its protagonist’s heart: “to find something to anchor on, to cling to” (p. 19).

In that first glimpse of hope, Jude’s young mind builds a Christminster where knowledge and religion, everything he understands as the good and positive things in life complemented each other perfectly. Yet, he understands very little about what he yearns for; religion is to him a vague subject, like praying: when told the direction he should look to see the city, his first thought was that “perhaps if he prayed the wish to see Christminster might be forwarded. People said that, if you prayed things sometimes came to you, even though they sometimes did not” (p. 15). Everything Jude knows is based on random pieces of knowledge gathered from scattered places, processed with his immature understanding, which is confirmed by the many misplaced religious quotes and images within the first pages. For example, when he distinguishes lights coming from the indicated direction, Jude imagines Phillotson in “Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace” as though it were a good and warm place, demonstrating that he does not really know what he is saying. According to Ingham (2002), such passages contribute from the beginning to a relationship between Jude and Christminster that is mostly illusory; the forms and shining spots he thinks he sees at the distance are never more than “a small dim nebulosity, hardly recognizable save by the eye of faith” (p. 68). Christminster is never

clearly distinguished, it is always “miraged in the peculiar atmosphere” (p.16). Years later, when Jude arrives there, his reception by the ghosts of knowledge is the final trace of that illusion that soon disappears, leaving a new and concrete relationship with the place, promisingly disappointing as the stone buildings and walls have to be physically faced, stripped of all that magic created by expectation.

Jude’s search for happiness is marked by a gradual process of disillusion and disbelief of those first beacons of education and religion. What begins with sparkling childish hope soon fades into scepticism and rejection after everything he hoped for is spoilt “by the grind of stern reality” (p. 380). But while his boyish hope is not religious or pagan or defined by any creed, except for the yearn to be loved and to find answers for the missing harmony of the world, his later scepticism results from the disappointments of the ambiguous mixture of unfulfilled ambitions he starts nurturing from that first glimpse of the city. From loneliness, and doubt to social and financial urgencies, Christminster seems to be the answer for every question, the means to every end. However, as his hopes are dashed again and again, Christminster gains new lights, becoming the symbol of his shattered dreams and provoking in Jude a hostile attitude towards both the institution and the faith it represents. Considering that Christianity, at least formally, with its Latin, memorized sermons, dogmas and rites, only enters Jude’s life when he starts preparing for the university, there comes a moment when he cannot separate anymore religion and faith from that particular institution that rejected him.

Diverging from the many forms of belief present in the novel, including folklore and aunt Drusilla’s superstitions, Christianity, when represented by the university of Christminster, stands for the English/Anglican Church as an institution that complements the social environment of the novel. In Hardy’s time, despite the Victorian era’s bewildering range of educational institutions and systems, the Church was still socially very powerful, and administered ancient universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, which were Anglican institutions (STEINBACK, 2017). Christminster University, inspired by those of real life, institutionalizes the relation between knowledge and faith by regulating knowledge according to its standards, and allowing access only to its selected members. According to Sue, whose scepticism quickly spots hypocrisy over faith, preventing Jude from joining the university goes against the very principles upon which it was built. Jude is “one of the very men Christminster was intended for when the colleges were founded; a man with a passion for learning, but no money, or opportunities, or friends”; and yet he is “elbowed off the pavement by the millionaires’ sons” whose social influence and money became better qualifiers (p.144).

The inaccessibility of Christminster extends to the reader, whose acquaintance with it is limited to those same glimpses the characters have throughout the novel. There are dialogues about it, some appearances of teachers and students, parades, and few episodes of interaction that produce extremely opposite perspectives: at first the university fits the idyllic image of harmony; later it produces estrangement and revolt because what was initially intended for the poor is wrongly given to the rich. The changing of perspective results in making religion, as a whole seem, hypocritical, a feeling that grows in Jude, even when he is far from the university, because Christminster hovers in every corner of his mind and of the novel. Jude's dream of finding the missing harmony of the world in the marriage of knowledge and religion provided by an academic career becomes especially complicated in such context because instead of complementing each other, as he formerly believed, the two seem to undermine each other. Again, according to Sue, "at present intellect in Christminster is pushing one way, and religion the other; and so they stand stockstill, like two rams butting each other" (p. 144). This antagonism reminds us of the efforts of natural theology to adjust modern biology and geology into the arguments of creation and intelligent design previously discussed here. With the independent perspective of the evolution of species brought by the theory of natural selection, science and religion began pushing different directions, creating a challenge to religious institutions where knowledge was produced. The educational system of Christminster is presented as self-centred and corrupted from its original purpose, trying to protect itself from this dismantling process that was throwing doubt over both religion and the religious organizations. In its contradictory and mean exclusiveness, the university pushes outsiders as far as it can in order to maintain the cracking social status quo created by it.

Thomas Hardy uses Christminster to engage with two of the strongest forces of late-Victorian society with which he reaches readers through his "series of seemings" (HARDY, 2016a, p. 5): one is "the middle-class stranglehold on access to the most prestigious university education and on its content" and the other "the unresolved tension evoked by an established Christianity which for many had lost rational justification, but which was still socially and imaginatively powerful" (INGHAM, 2002, p. xi). Although crudely sociological and reductive, the scheme calls attention to how the novel struggles to express essentially hostile attitudes to these forces. The access to prestigious educational institutions is forbidden to people from working classes like Jude, so once he conditions his happiness to it, he imposes a level of difficulty that leaves him with little but the resource of faith to turn to. Yet, from that first prayer to see Christminster amidst the fog, faith is always an uncertain element for Jude, which sometimes gives you what you want, and sometimes does not. Despite the desire to become a

deacon, religious faith is never a strong trait of his character, perhaps because of the uneven background of his childhood, which allows Hardy to give Jude a viewpoint very different from the typical Christminster student. As an outsider, Jude feels the incongruences, the lack of rational justification of the faith represented by the established Christianity, and its emptied power like the delusion of past days.

The hypocrisy of the university reflects in the society of the novel, extending Hardy's criticism to the whole Christian moral system which for him was overdue for reconsideration and reformulation, to make it more rational, accessible and more related with the real necessities of people and coexistence of living beings (CHAPMAN, 1987). Hardy defended that even the word *religion* should have its meaning changed and used entirely as the expression of "nobler feelings towards humanity and emotional goodness and greatness" because, as he felt, "the old meaning of the word – ceremony, or ritual – [had] perished or nearly" (HARDY, 1989, p. 385). Influenced by the natural science of his times, Hardy thought "the days of creeds are as dead and done with as the days of Pterodactyls" (HARDY, 1989, p. 385). He suggested abandoning old concepts and obsessions:

Men endeavour to hold to a mathematical consistency in things, instead of recognizing that certain things may both be good and mutually antagonistic: e.g. patriotism and universal humanity; unbelief and happiness. There are certain questions which are made unimportant by their very magnitude. For example, the question whether we are moving in Space this way or that; the existence of a God, etc (HARDY, 1989, p. 229).

Considering the negative angle of which the novel presents the social and religious environment that surrounds the main characters, Hardy's renunciation of the common combination of happiness and belief demonstrates not only that he was dissatisfied with the religious culture of his days but also that he saw better prospects elsewhere. The opposing paths Jude and Sue follow, respectively one from religious faith to scepticism and the other from scepticism to religious faith, and how both end, suggest that abandoning old creeds and seeing things afresh was imperative to draw a clearer and more effective apprehension of the world. Through a Darwinian perspective, the rational views defended by Hardy included the consideration of the environment without illusions or dreams because the natural mechanism was not consciously planned, much less consciously planned for human pleasure. Circumstances are not intentional modes of teaching or punishing, but simply a result of the ruthless competition among living beings. With this in mind, humanity should be able to draw more practical and realistic life strategies, thinking of both physical and emotional angles.

Yet, surviving and being happy still sound like two very different things, especially taking into account high demands for personal fulfilment, including aspects of faith related with comforting promises of an after-life, which are, for many, essential to justify any kind of altruism. When presenting a world empty of divine purpose, Darwin and his supporters were accused of disenchanting life, of turning it into meaningless suffering, an association easily made with Hardy too, the gloomiest of Victorian writers (LEVINE, 2009). However, a closer look at, both Darwin's theory and Hardy's fiction, demonstrates that their so-called pessimism can also be interpreted as the opening of possibilities to explore and develop human existence in different ways. Both naturalist and fiction author were able to find human flourishing in the interaction with the natural world, in that same crude and uncontrollable world of natural selection, where only the fittest survive and death is commonplace. The search for happiness in *Jude* discussed here involves the acceptance of the lack of control over life and the fact that the environment and its interactions define us more than we sometimes like to acknowledge. Nonetheless, the challenge of seeing happiness in a Darwinian world does not mean going back to the belief that happiness is the innate state of human and animal affairs, but rather involves the recognition that solace can be found among unpredictability and randomness. If creeds and superstitions are hindrances to an authentic appreciation of the world, then satisfaction must come in different forms that humanity is used to. Instead of trusting a moral system based on promises of rewards and punishments, the terrestrial plane itself, and making the best of circumstances, become all that matter.

### 3.1 HAPPINESS IN DARWIN

To discuss the concept of happiness in Darwin proposed in this chapter, first we must return to Rev. William Paley, in 1802, who affirmed that happiness was the prevailing state of human and animal affairs. The appearances of nature and its vast pluralities proved that Providence orchestrated a harmonious system of purpose and benevolence:

The proof of the divine goodness rests upon two propositions, each, as we contend, capable of being made out by observations drawn from the appearances of nature. The first is, 'that, in a vast plurality of instances in which contrivance is perceived, the design of the contrivance is beneficial.' The second, 'that the Deity has superadded pleasure to animal sensations, beyond what was necessary for any other purpose, or when the purpose, so far as it was necessary, might have been effected by the operation of pain.' First, 'in a vast plurality of instances, in which contrivance is perceived, the design of the contrivance is beneficial.' (PALEY, 2008, p. 237)



The logic was simple: contrivance is perceived in the pluralities of nature; therefore, the pluralities prove contrivance is beneficial. Anything is done by force because the Deity wisely added pleasure to the accomplishments of each being's role in the natural order of things. Paley declared that all sentient parts of nature fulfil their roles because they feel pleasure in doing so; it makes them happy. For example, the chicken sits on the eggs because it feels comfortable; their hatching being merely consequential. Animals' limbs and senses are "instruments of perception" which allow them to draw pleasure from the simplest activities like eating or sleeping, consequently "by these that we are to prove that the world was made with a benevolent design" (PALEY, 2008, p. 237-238). Bees among spring flowers, young animals delighted from the mere exercise of their limbs, purring cats, and even the comforts of old age prove the diversification of animal enjoyment:

It is a happy world after all. The air, the earth, the water, teem with delighted existence. In a spring noon, or a summer evening, on whichever side I turn my eyes, myriads of happy beings crowd upon my view. 'The insect youth are on the wing.' Swarms of new-born flies are trying their pinions in the air. Their sportive motions, their wanton mazes, their gratuitous activity, their continual change of place without use or purpose, testify their joy, and the exultation which they feel in their lately discovered faculties (PALEY, 2008, p. 238).

Pain and privation exist as exceptions, "accompanied with proofs of intention", but we can never allow those few instances to overshadow the predominance of the positive aspects, at the risk of being unjust: "when we cannot resolve all appearances into benevolence of design, we make the few give place to the many; the little to the great; that we take our judgment from a large and decided preponderancy" (PALEY, 2008, p. 242). Paley turns specifically to humanity at this point to support that although Evil exists, it is not the object of contrivance: the proof that the Deity cares especially for our happiness is that human senses are instruments of enjoyment and gratification, and we are placed among objects and sceneries suited to our perceptions to continuously provide refreshment and delight.

Today Paley's name is mostly remembered because of his famous admirer Charles Darwin. Paley's vivacity and excitement over his subject shows a deal of passion that can be perceived in Darwin, whose delight in the process of discovery and in the material with which he worked also sometimes made him represent as benign processes which were not necessarily so. One strain in Darwin's temperament and major premise of his theory "emphasised the tendency towards happiness in living creatures" inherited from Paley (BEER, 2009, p. 62). However, in his recognition of "the appetite for joy" (to use Hardy's phrase) in all creatures, Darwin was also capable of seeing beyond Paley's view. He saw the extent of suffering which

any individual organism might at any time undergo, and this was one of his reasons for rejecting the idea of a benign Orderer (BEER, 2009, p. 62).

Life entails considerable amounts of pain, and death is a permanent part of the equation. In *The Origin of Species* Darwin explains that surviving is a matter of species being in a permanent struggle to increase in numbers, although, most of the times, the efforts serve merely to keep numbers the same because just as some individuals are born, others die. “Each at some period of its life, during some season of the year, during each generation of at intervals, has to struggle for life, and also suffer great destruction” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 62), that is, even if the struggle is not constant, without it there is no sequence of life. Destruction is part of the circle, either in youth or in old age, and it keeps the functioning of the whole scheme. For example, the numbers of sea turtles that are born on the beach are much larger than the numbers that reach reproductive age to grant the survival of the species; many of them never even reach the ocean, others do, but die young. Yet, all of those little creatures have their role in the maintenance of life, as birds, fish and other predators that eat those individuals, who seem to be born only to die, depend on them to grant their own survival.

Curiously in this same chapter three of *The Origin* where Darwin explains how the balance of life and death works, he also tries to soothe readers’ anxieties over such a scheme that might seem too violent and bleak: “When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief, that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 62). He means there are pauses between moments of struggle: the efforts although constant, are not necessarily constant on a daily basis. For instance, if finding food is an everyday task for the majority of species, other tasks, such as finding sexual partners, procreating or migrating are not done all the time, they take place once a year, more or less, depending on the species, the season, and so on. The passage echoes Paley by resuming things to the *happy* survival and the painless deaths, which makes it sound abstract and unprecise for a work that, despite being inspired by natural theology, intentionally breaks with its tradition. Darwin’s consolation seems at odds with the rest of the mechanism he describes, and it is due to both his reasoning and the language employed to describe it.

It is important to have in mind that when it comes to Darwin’s writing, mid-nineteenth century scientists still shared a common language with other educated readers and writers of their time: a non-mathematical, almost literary discourse which was readily accessible to readers in general without scientific training. There was nothing hermetic or exclusive in the writing of Lyell or Darwin (BEER, 2009). As an avid reader of fiction, Darwin shared with his

favourites Charles Dickens and William Wordsworth, not only a similar style, but also the wish to please his readers as much as disturb them, which may throw some light over the *happy* passage. Nevertheless, in giving a privileged place to pleasure and happiness in his hypothesis, Darwin indicates an initially unresolved concern in his mind about his concepts of struggle and extinction. According to Beer (2009, p. 35): the “ ‘We may console ourselves’ does not quite square with the implication of ‘full belief’ and he has recourse to biblical allusion to enforce his conclusion: ‘survive and multiply’ ”. As it was characteristic of natural theology to profess that the organisation of things tended to produce happiness, this kind of linguistic memory shows how much Darwin’s language to describe the natural processes of selection – more than the reasoning itself – was still very much attached to the language of natural theology, at least by the time of the first edition of *The Origin*. In further editions and in his more mature work, Darwin sought to refine his writing and repudiated inconsistencies reminiscent of natural theology as much as he could. But the belief in a happy world in face of the dark flood of insight into suffering which accompanies it somehow remained, creating a frequent movement in his prose, allowing both an optimistic or a pessimistic selection from *The Origin*. “This poignant tension between happiness and pain, a sense simultaneously of the natural world as exquisite and gross, rank and sensitive, constantly subverts the poise of any moralised description of it” (BEER, 2009, p. 94-95).

Later, in his autobiography, Darwin pondered on whether happiness or pain prevailed:

But passing over the endless beautiful adaptations which we everywhere meet with, it may be asked how can the generally beneficent arrangement of the world be accounted for? Some writers indeed are so much impressed with the amount of suffering in the world, that they doubt if we look to all sentient beings, whether there is more of misery or of happiness, – whether the world as a whole is a good or bad one. According to my judgment happiness decidedly prevails, though this would be very difficult to prove. If the truth of this conclusion be granted it harmonises well with the effects which we might expect from natural selection (DARWIN, 1958, p. 73-74).

Facing the problem of measuring pain and pleasure, difficult enough with people, and simply impossible with animals and plants, Darwin judges that happiness must prevail after all. For him, it harmonizes with the effects that we might expect from natural selection because each species and each individual are led instinctively to pursue the most comfortable course of action to survive, by avoiding disagreeable things like pain, hunger or fear. Otherwise, individuals could refuse to fulfil their roles or do it ineffectively:

[...] Now an animal may be led to pursue that course of action which is the most beneficial to the species by suffering, such as pain, hunger, thirst and fear, – or by

pleasure, as in eating and drinking and in the propagation of the species &c. or by both means combined as in the search for food. But pain or suffering of any kind, if long continued, causes depression and lessens the power of action; yet is well adapted to make a creature guard itself against any great or sudden evil. Pleasurable sensations, on the other hand, may be long continued without any depressing effect; on the contrary they stimulate the whole system to increased action. Hence it has come to pass that most or all sentient beings have been developed in such a manner through natural selection that pleasurable sensations serve as their habitual guides (DARWIN, 1958, p. 74-75).

Differently from Paley, Darwin did not think of suffering as an exception, but a permanent counterpoint to pleasure. He did not generalize individual behaviour as the unchanging mirror of the whole but gave a margin for choice-making and consequent development. Although aiming at a wide picture of the evolutionary mechanism, Darwin always focused on the perspective of the individual to spot the minor details that ignite change, making each and whatever creature unique and average at the same time. Darwin's theory dismissed the necessity of a superior guidance, and therefore the human point of view that considers relevant only what can be seen, felt, enjoyed, or explored by human senses, as if the purpose of every fragment of nature was to complete our pleasant world. Instead of merely deconstructing creationist concepts and natural theology, Darwin struggled for independence. According to Levine (2009), he hardly thought his vision as gloomy as his most pessimistic contemporaries and non-contemporaries made it over time. Where many saw the end of the meaning of life, Darwin saw a change of perspective, a sense of natural coexistence based on the recognition that humankind and other forms of life shared common histories, environments, experiences.

### **3.1.1 Enchantment and Fulfilment**

Darwin had a particular way of looking into the natural world and its tiniest details; an almost instinctive reading of history into apparently static elements, which never fully disguised a wish to find feeling and moral energy in nature, which is reflected in the literature of Thomas Hardy. Both naturalist and fiction writer shared a "mutually loving, meticulous, and ethically intense attention to the whole range of nature, organic and inorganic, in their discovery of narratives latent in all things" (LEVINE, 2009, p. 37). This is at the root of Hardy's aesthetically self-conscious and risky engagement with literary forms; he was more in love with life in Darwinian ways than most typical readings of his work suggest: "through all the darkness of a chance-driven, mindless world against which thought-endowed animals like humans have to struggle hopelessly, there glimmers steadily a strong moral vision and even a life-affirming Hardy" (LEVINE, 2009, p. 37). He was capable of regarding individuals above the crowd, and

cared about them, even if those individuals were never able to rise above the surrounding circumstances. He sympathised with the solitary search for fulfilment, with the clashing of human will against the indifference of nature.

The work of George Levine (2009) is very important here for a necessary definition of the concept of happiness discussed in this chapter. Firstly, although Darwin himself uses the word *happiness*, Levine suggests *fullness* as possibly a more adequate term, for it being much richer, subtler, and various to submit to easy definitions. Based on the work of Charles Taylor (2007 *apud* LEVINE, 2009), he explains *fullness* is the condition to which humans have historically and universally aspired and of which religion has traditionally satisfied. The great question in times of Darwinian natural science was whether it was a condition that could be achieved through secularity.

Imagining how Thomas Hardy would answer that question, Levine introduces another concept, the idea of *enchantment* based on the modification of Max Weber's claim that the world had been disenchanted by science. Even admitting that a more overt and aggressive Darwin is more easily found in Hardy than the life-affirming one, Levine uses Jane Bennett's concept of *enchantment* to call attention to that feeling provoked by Hardy's books which makes them still worth reading after so much time. A feeling which "redeems him from his often relentless exploitation of chance, not, as in most other earlier Victorian writers, to bring hero and heroine to comic fruition, but to guarantee their frustration, their pain, and their deaths" (LEVINE, 2009, p. 38). Sometimes Hardy's stories seem to be written only to confirm Weber's claim that the rationalization and intellectualization of the world, largely by the way of science, has disenchanted it, has made it seem as though there are no mysterious incalculable forces (WEBER, 1958 *apud* LEVINE, 2009). However, just like a sympathetic reading of Darwin makes clear that the world remained enchanted for him, the same is true for Hardy: "For both Darwin and Hardy the naturalization and rationalization of the world did not disenchant it, did not close out the pursuit of 'fullness', did not exclude the possibility of an ethics not grounded in religion" (LEVINE, 2009, p. 38).

Hardy struggled against a widely Victorian view of disenchantment which held as true that once religion is lost morality, value, hope, and *fullness* simply disappear from the world; that no secular alternative could possibly fill these needs; that "without some all-inclusive religious or mythic scheme, the 'enchantment' that infused all aspects of one's life with spiritual significance, with meaning, would seem to be unattainable" (LEVINE, 2009, p. 38). Bennett criticises this dependence upon a transcendent power to attribute meaning, ethics and value to our lives. She warns of the dangers of invalidating different forms of attachment because of the

lost religious reference: “The depiction of nature and culture as orders no longer capable of inspiring deep attachment infects the self as a creature of loss and thus discourages discernment of the marvelous vitality of bodies human and nonhuman, natural and artifactual” (BENNETT, 2001 *apud* LEVINE, 2009, p. 38). It sounds extremely Hardian when she says that “to be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday” because it easily reminds us of the communion with nature, the people, the folklore, the small things of country life we see in his work. She concludes that “the overall effect of enchantment is a mood of fullness, plenitude, or liveliness, a sense of having had one’s nerves or circulation or concentration powers tuned up and recharged” (BENNETT, 2001, *apud* LEVINE, 2009, p. 39).

Hardy knew very well how to both explore the dark possibilities of Darwin’s ideas and to inspire deep attachment in the intensely full and marvellous vitality of nature and of the human body. Bennett’s definition of enchantment amounts almost to a “description of Hardy’s ‘realist’ enterprise and a description as well of Darwin’s repeated ‘wonder’ and awe at the ordinary ways of nature, the variety of growth in a cup of soil, the woodpecker adapting to life outside of the woods, or the extraordinary efficiency of bees” (LEVINE, 2009, p. 38-39). When religious experience cannot provide meaning to the world anymore, “enchantment, however, loads it with feeling and value and encourages love and attachment to life itself, without which, [...], there can be no attachment to anything” (LEVINE, 2009, p. 39).

### 3.2 HARDY’S NATURE

The enchantment inspired by nature in Hardy is intensely present in his fiction. Virginia Woolf remarked on the author’s precocious ability to observe nature in its minute details, including in his first novel *Desperate Remedies*, where nature is not even the focus: “the rain, he knows, falls differently as it falls upon roots or arable; he knows that the wind sounds differently as it passes through the branches of different trees”. Even then he was in a larger sense aware of “nature as a force”, and “feels in it a spirit that can sympathize or mock or remains the indifferent spectator of human fortunes” (WOOLF, 2003, p, 141-142). Hardy’s Wessex is full of colours, smells, vitality and violence; it is permeated by underlying visions and countless possibilities of human flourishing and fullness, but it is also a place where human aspirations are rarely fulfilled. There is little margin for interference, even for prioritizing human aims over the aims of others. In his early pastoral novels such as *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the author drew from biographical

elements to represent rural communities he knew well, combining, for example, church restoring and sheep farming, with everyday problems of poverty, insecurity and the many changes that modernity was bringing into country life. This blending of simplicity, modernity, unhappy endings and worst possible turnarounds, result in what Keith Wilson (2009, p. 2) describes as “a surprisingly celebratory affirmation of the intensity of life’s pleasures in Hardy: love, community, music, dance, humour, and, perhaps above all, wonder in the face of nature’s incandescent beauties and mysteries”. Instead of invalidating life’s pleasures, their ephemerality intensifies their significance and makes them much more valuable than they would be if they were eternal. Later novels continue to explore this relationship between humans and nature, the impossibility of predicting or controlling things, always showing that the reason why certain Hardian characters are happier than others involves mostly their capacity to see the beauty of life as it presents itself and to enjoy it despite its brevity and inconstancy.

In the first pages of *The Return of the Native*, the interaction of elements composing the moods of Egdon Heath demonstrate how nature is independent of human existence.

The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it. And so the obscurity in the air and the obscurity in the land closed together in a black fraternization towards which each advanced halfway. The place became full of a watchful intentness now; for when other things sank blooding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen. Every night it Titanic form seemed to await something; but it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries, through the crises of so many things, that it could only be imagined to await one last crisis--the final overthrow (HARDY, 2006, p 8-9).

An anthropomorphised nature repeats its cycle night after night, infinitely: the evening gloom meets rounds and hollows in sympathy, the heath exhales and the obscurities fraternize as the place becomes “full of a watchful intentness”. The apparently sleeping heath is awake and listens, seemingly waiting for something, “the final overthrow”.

It was a spot which returned upon the memory of those who loved it with an aspect of peculiar and kindly congruity. Smiling champignons of flowers and fruit hardly do this, for they are permanently harmonious only with an existence of better reputation as to its issues than the present. Twilight combined with the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic without severity, impressive without showiness, emphatic in its admonitions, grand in its simplicity. The qualifications which frequently invest the facade of a prison with far more dignity than is found in the facade of a palace double its size lent to this heath a sublimity in which spots renowned for beauty of the accepted kind are utterly wanting. Fair prospects wed happily with fair times; but alas, if times be not fair! Men have oftener suffered from, the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings oversadly tinged. Haggard Egdon appealed to a subtler and scarcer instinct, to a more recently learnt emotion, than that which responds to the sort of beauty called charming and fair (HARDY, 2006, p 9).

The idea that the natural elements behave like people is a misunderstanding. The harmony of nature is based on its simplicity, and its majesty does not match human symbols of dignity. The place makes sense by its own rules, and it works by its own pace, which may seem like mockery to those who do not possess a subtler and scarcer instinct, who observe its passiveness expecting a response to their troubles.

The geologist Charles Lyell, greatly admired by Darwin, was one of the first scientists to bring to a broad public the notion that the world was much older than we thought, and consequently there was history in which humans did not take part. He affirmed in his highly influential work *Principles of Geology* that great portions of the terrestrial system that team up with life “have no immediate relation to the human race”: portions of the terrestrial system that were never taken and will never be by humankind, “so that the greater part of the inhabited surface of the planet may still remain as insensible to our presence as before any isle or continent was appointed to be our residence” (LYELL, 2009a, p. 158). According to Beer (2009), what Lyell stated and Darwin later reinforced was that there was life plot without humanity, both previous and regardless of it; and that our perspective was not only limited, but biased by our egocentrism. For Lyell, humanity’s assumed centrality in history had obscured the laws underlying occurrences by distorting past records of the earth:

It is only within the last century and a half, since Hooke first promulgated, in 1688, his views respecting the connection between geological phenomena and earthquakes, that the permanent changes affected by these convulsions have excited attention. Before that time, the narrative of the historian was almost exclusively confined to the number of human beings who perished, the number of cities laid in ruins, the value of property destroyed, or certain atmospheric appearances which dazzled or terrified the observers (LYELL, 2009a, p. 399).

In Hardy, nature’s plots do exist and develop without humanity; nature is independent and free, often frightening and reminding us of our littleness in the face of the vastness of time and space. In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Henry Knight faces “nature’s treacherous attempt to put an end to him” when he suddenly sees himself about to fall from a cliff. His eyes suddenly meet an embedded fossil in the rock opposite to him: “It was a creature with eyes. The eyes, dead and turned to stone, were even now regarding him [...] Separated by millions of years in their lives, Knight and this underling seemed to have met in their place of death” (HARDY, 2005a, p. 199-200). In the same way, in *Two on a Tower*, Swithin St Cleeve and Lady Constantine observe the stars through a telescope from the top of a tower and feel small in comparison with the sky above. Human problems become insignificant in the face of everything else that exists now, had already existed before, and will exist after us. And it is in the recognition of all the



awe and even horror at the vastness of the universe that the drama in the little world of the novels starts and gains importance (LEVINE, 2009, p. 39).

In *The Woodlanders*, the woods and the village are continuations of each other; the shifting interactions between trees and the human inhabitants are evident. For Boumelha (2005), the most fatal and obsessional Darwinian parallel in the novel is old John South's life intertwined with that of the tree that he sees from his window, which, he believes, "sprouted up when he was born on purpose to rule him, and keep him as its slave" (HARDY, 2005c, p. 93). When the tree is cut, he dies. The novel is full of such images of a powerful and almost sentient nature. As Giles and Fitzpiers fight over Grace Melbury's love, trees sigh, "stretch out their naked arms" or hit the roof of Giles's hut "in the manner of a gigantic hand smiting the mouth of an adversary" (HARDY, 2005c, p. 277). Nature is not only present physically; it connects to all aspects of life, it defines life. Tomalin (2012) believes that the death of the good-hearted Giles at the end of the novel is a good example of Darwinian competition which Hardy's contemporaries did not easily notice, but which seems clearer now. It represents the inevitability of the process that was destroying old-fashioned rural workers and replacing them with people like Fitzpiers, the handsome and educated doctor from the city. Indifferent to the place, Fitzpiers represents the impeding modernity that eventually creates a gap between people and nature.

After *The Woodlanders* the relations between characters and nature grow more complicated. Hardy's final novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, display a greater concern with dramatizing the antagonism between human society and the impersonality of nature. While in novels like *Under the Greenwood Tree* communities were characterized by two or three generations of families living under the same roof and sharing the same cultural background, in later novels characters are detached from their origins; they have less and less contact with the natural world, and the comfort provided by their homes become rarer and less meaningful. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the few moments of fulfilment provided by the interaction with nature are not reminiscent of older times and memories; on the contrary, the superstitions of previous generations only spoil any kind of relief. After being raped by Alec d'Urberville, Tess returns home pregnant and, in her community, becomes a fallen woman. One day, walking alone in the forest, she feels oppressed by the very gloominess of the night, as if it displayed the expression of grief at her weakness, "of reproach in the mind of some vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood" (HARDY, 2005b, p. 97). Then Tess realizes the oppression does not come from the place itself, but from the way she was taught to interpret things. Nature does not oppress her, on the contrary, she feels like "a piece with the element she moved in" and her figure blends as part of the scene:

[...] this encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy— a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out of harmony with the actual world, not she. Walking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly (HARDY, 2005b, p. 97).

Tess feels comforted by nature, differently from how she feels at home. Yet, her past still makes Angel ashamed of her and justifies his leaving. Not even her alleged purity protects Tess from the tragedy that awaits her. Nature may provide a feeling of belonging, of comfort, but any expectation that it somehow provides further benefits will be frustrated. Nature does not act upon human concepts of justice, and is especially in those final novels that Hardy “plangently renders the condition of those who futilely aspire to happiness, or fruitlessly strive to achieve ethical ideals, or struggle with painful feelings of moral obligation in a universe otherwise indifferent to such aspirations or feelings” (SCHWEICK, 1999, p. 63). Instead of promises of happiness, those moments such as described above or the years at Talbothay's were precious to Tess because they represented all the happiness she would get, as the narrator already knew: “Tess had never in her recent life been so happy as she was now, possibly never would be so happy again” (HARDY, 2005b, p. 144).

*Jude the Obscure* continues exploring the fading bond between people and nature, yet even more ironically than before because nature's logic becomes as deceiving and cruel as human moralities. The enchantment is over; there seems to be no relief in nature, family or in country life; the natural world does not count as an option anymore or as a retreat from suffering and emptiness. Jude's hamlet is a sad, poor place, and the little contact he has with nature mostly brings suffering rather than relief, it is never a source of fulfilment. For instance, his interaction with the hungry birds or the dying rabbit are disproportionately more significant to him than moments of joy that could be remembered for the present nature, such as when he and Sue spend the afternoon at Stoke-Barehills. Since childhood, Jude perceives unfairness in nature, a “flaw in the terrestrial scheme” (p. 10) that rewards the guiltless with misery. Natural scenes hurt him because he sees only the side of pain and death, never of happiness. Specific experiences taught him that the logic of nature was cruel; the fact that not everyone has something to eat and not everyone survives, seems unjust to him, and this feeling makes him avoid the natural world and look for meaning in the dreams of education, religion and the stone walls of Christminster. His needs for fulfilment are detached from what the soil can provide;

his necessity to rise socially becomes imperative over everything else, entailing even a religious faith that he does not feel, but which helps him avoid contact with that disharmony so associated in his memory with those unhappy childhood years.

### 3.3 READING THE WORLD IN *JUDE*

Jude first appears in the novel as a disoriented child, disconnected from his origins and unwanted by an aunt who does not care to assist him in any way. His knowledge of the world is poor and fragmented, he “had attended the night school only during the present teacher’s term of office” (p. 4) and collects information from random people who are willing to tell him anything for their own amusement or advantage. It is clear from the beginning that although “his dreams were as gigantic as his surroundings were small” (p.16) Jude is incapable of establishing realistic life strategies; he builds dreams on illusions, like when the wind itself starts talking to him and saying, “we are happy here” (p. 17). However important it is for the boy to cling to that hope, readers can soon notice that there is something very wrong with the way he perceives the world and that he will pay a heavy price for it in the future.

The narrator, who generally sympathises with Jude, is aware of the ironic irrelevance of the protagonist’s quest (INGHAM, 2000). The first hint that Christminster is not what Jude thinks is given in the paragraphs when we learn that the fancy place, likened to the New Jerusalem, has “perhaps more of the painter’s imagination, and less of the diamond merchant’s in his dreams thereof than in those of the Apocalyptic writer” (p. 16). What Jude sees only with his imagination is a real place, beheld “through the solid barrier of cold *cretaceous* upland to the northward” (p. 16, my italics). The awkwardly technical piece of information points to a conception of time and space completely at odds with the religious allusions that the boy associates with Christminster, spoiling the moment with a geological history of the place. The ancient, cretaceous formation, resulted of millions of years, stands between Jude and the city, and subtly undermines any idealizations. The narrator goes on and seems to mock the boy with the same kind of language when explaining how the city became a permanent hold of his life, “mainly from the one *nucleus of fact* that the man for whose knowledge and purposes he had so much reverence was actually living there; not only so, but living among the more thoughtful and mentally shining ones therein” (p. 16, my italics).

Perhaps the problem is his lack of connection with nature. Before Jude, characters like Gabriel Oak and Dick Dewy had stronger bonds with their home places. Even Eustácia Vye, whose dislike for Egdon Heath was declared, belonged to it, and was familiar with its elements.

Jude is detached from his background, he does not know anything about it or any other place, as if he did not belong anywhere, naturally and historically. When he goes to scare birds at farmer Troutham's, Jude only sees a place he finds very ugly: "the brown surface of the field went right up towards the sky all round, where it was lost by degrees in the mist that shut out the actual verge, and accentuated the solitude" (p. 8). Besides the hay-rick standing aside as the symbol of last year's produce, the only marks on that uniform scene are the rooks approaching and the "path athwart the fallow by which he had come, trodden now by he hardly knew whom, though once by many of his own dead family" (p. 8). The field is reduced to a utilitarian air, erasing the gradations of time, erasing its history:

Every inch of ground had been the site first or last of energy, gaiety, horse-play, bickerings, weariness. Groups of gleaners had squatted in the sun on every square yard. Love-matches that had populated the adjoining hamlet had been made up there between reaping and carrying. Under the hedge which divided the field from a distant plantation girls had given themselves to lovers who would not turn their heads to look at them by the next harvest, and in that ancient cornfield many a man had made love-promises to a woman at whose voice he had trembled by the next seed-time after fulfilling them in the church adjoining. But this neither Jude nor the rooks around him considered. For them it was a lonely place, possessing in the one view only the quality of a work-ground, and in the other that of a granary good to feed in (p. 8-9).

The farm follows the pattern of the whole hamlet of Marygreen in its abandonment of the past, where "the well-shaft was probably the only relic of the local history that remained absolutely unchanged" (p. 5). Hardy offers in Marygreen a projection of his own concerns in relation to knowing one's origins. It is a community that has, mostly because of poverty, cut itself off from its historical roots and lost all sense of cultural origins (PETERSON, 2000).

Many of the thatched and dormered dwelling-houses had been pulled down of late years, and many trees felled on the green. Above all the original church, hump-backed, wood-turreted, and quaintly hipped, had been taken down and either cracked up into heaps of road-metal in the lane, or utilized as pig-sty walls, garden seats, guard-stones to fences, and rockeries in the flower-beds of the neighbourhood. In place of it a tall new building of modern Gothic design, unfamiliar to English eyes, had been erected on a new piece of ground by a certain obliterator of historic records who had run down from London and back in a day. The site whereon so long had stood the ancient temple to the Christian divinities was not even recorded on the green and level grass-plot that had immemorably been the churchyard, the obliterated graves being commemorated by eighteenpenny cast-iron crosses warranted to last five years (p. 5-6).

Jude does not carry memories from his earlier home, nor of his parents, neither nature nor history have any claims on him. By the old well, in "the melodramatic tones of a whimsical boy, he remembers that the schoolmaster had drawn at that well scores of times on a morning like this, and would never draw there any more" (p. 5). He remembers having seen the teacher

looking down into it “when he was tired with his drawing just as I do now, and when he rested a bit before carrying the buckets home” (p. 5). The recent memory of a person with whom he relates in their sadness is the farthest Jude seems to go into the past, there is nothing more. A tear falls from his eye into the well before he is interrupted by a cry of his aunt asking for the water and then he goes inside.

The adult Jude who finally moves into Christminster has no romantic past, but much hope accumulated throughout the years. When he finds himself “actually on the spot of his enthusiasm” (p. 80), and sees the college buildings for the first time, Jude is impressed by their magnitude: “Only a wall divided him from those happy young contemporaries of his with whom he shared a common mental life; men who had nothing to do from morning till night but to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Only a wall – but what a wall!” (p. 80). He still believes happiness is inside that place of knowledge and religion where his “happy young contemporaries” (p. 80) are allowed, nonetheless the massiveness of the walls impress him.

For many years Jude evades anything that goes against his illusion, despite the several signs that he is making the wrong decisions. According to Saldivar (2000, p. 34), Jude’s desire to see Christminster as an ideal world must necessarily involve a rejection of reality: “for his own sporadically controlled, partially understood world, he substitutes the image of a unified, stable, and understandable one”. From childhood Jude tries to control an environment he does not know well by imposing simple terms on the disparate variety of experience, therefore making it meaningful. In his desperate desire to transform disorder into order and make sense of his world, young Jude first turns to language learning. Again, through fragmented information from occasional passers-by Jude is told that to be admitted to the university he has to know Latin and Greek, as “the very sons of the old women who do the washing of the colleges can talk in Latin” (p. 22). He knows he needs books, grammars more specifically, to learn those languages, and so draws a strategy. He first tries doctor Vilbert who promises to give him grammars if he sells his “female pills” and other products to the hamlet people. The experience is unsuccessful because the doctor never remembers to fulfil his part of the deal. Jude takes courage and writes to Phillotson at Christminster who sends him old grammars. However Jude’s excitement quickly dies out because he cannot find in the grammars the expected formula his innocence had supposed existed to transform English into the dead languages:

A rule, prescription, or clue of the nature of a secret cipher, which, once known, would enable him by merely applying it, to change at will all words of his own speech into those of the foreign one. His childish idea was, in fact, a pushing to the extremity of mathematical precision what is everywhere known as Grimm’s Law, an aggrandizement of rough rules to ideal completeness. Thus, he assumed that the words

of the required language were always to be found somewhere latent in the words of the given language by those who had the art to uncover them; such art being furnished by the books aforesaid (p. 24).

Jude is dismayed because there is no “law of transmutation” from one language to another. He discovers that “every word in both Latin and Greek was to be individually committed to memory at the cost of years of plodding” (p. 25). This episode demonstrates his wish for a serene and immobile text whose content can be transported harmlessly from one form to another, alluding to Hardy’s (2016b, p. 7) postscript in which he writes, “the natural law should be the enunciation of the civil law”, that one instance should be simply transposed into another instance. This is problematic because the novel itself contradicts this idea from beginning to end. Not only can languages not be transmuted, but nothing that seems easily translatable ever is; from Christminster’s wind of happiness to Jude and Sue’s natural marriage and improved moral laws, nothing really works (SALDIVAR, 2000).

At the moment of the incident with languages Jude truly believed that nature could be simply read, translated and understood. The problem according to Saldivar (2000) is that Jude does not learn his lesson from that frustrating experience with the dead languages and continues throughout the novel to try reading things more easily than they are, such as when he meets Sue and projects onto her “untranslatable eyes” (p. 83) a combination of keenness and tenderness and mystery. A big blow to Jude’s illusions comes when he finally visits Phillotson. The teacher’s “homely complexion destroyed at one stroke the halo which had surrounded the schoolmaster’s figure in Jude’s imagination ever since their parting” (p. 95). Phillotson’s grand university scheme had been a failure and Jude knows that acknowledging it will depress himself very much. In the same way the teacher’s plans to be a university graduate influenced Jude until then, once they turn into ashes, it is most likely that Jude’s own dreams made into schemes will also assume their unsubstantial form and crumble. The result however, is that instead of reevaluating things, Jude still refrains from doing anything concrete, like contacting the university, and prefers to keep a thin hope that prevents him changing course, afraid of facing the end of the illusion.

From a basic Darwinian perspective, Jude’s lack of perception and direction are very dangerous because they threaten not only the success of his dreams but his very survival. In Darwin, surviving is about knowing and adapting to a given environment; using the tools one has naturally to find the best ways to overcome related problems in the quickest and most efficient possible way. Instead of a romantic literary device, as it could have been in someone else’s novel, in Hardy, Jude’s slow capacity to learn from experience, allied to the previous lack

of material and emotional support, is fatal. When he finally changes his perspective, it is too late; too late for him whose health has deteriorated; too late for Sue who gives in to old superstitions and too late for the children who are dead. From this view, considering that Hardy's imagination worked within the Darwinian theory, there is no room for mistakes. With the decentralization of humankind in relation to other living beings, there can be no bending of the laws of nature to help anyone. Luck is not negotiable, solutions do not magically appear in the end, and good intentions alone have no weight. Each one is left, either animal or human, with their own capacity to understand life's alternatives and demands; what counts are natural abilities to learn and adapt, however unclear the extension of individual choice is.

The conclusion of the episode of the grammars shows how dependable Jude felt on the adults around him and how the fact that those adults let him down influences his future. When he needed guidance the most and when he needed the orientation that could change his life forever, he simply found that "nobody came, because nobody does" (p. 25). For Goode (2000, p. 99), that moment indicates a shift in Jude's condition from boy to man, when he understands that "the field is the ontology of the unnecessary life", and establishes his goals of leaving that place and people. Even then, Jude does not think the languages are the actual problem, on the contrary, "in fact his disappointment at the nature of those tongues had, after a while, been the means still further glorifying the erudition of Christminster" (p. 26). Latin and Greek were so difficult to learn that only the very intelligent and industrious could do it. They become obsessions, contributing for Jude's overall ignorance of everything else:

To acquire languages, departed or living, in spite of such obstinacies as he now knew them inherently to possess, was a herculean performance which gradually led him on to a greater interest in it than in the presupposed patent process. The mountain-weight of material under which the ideas lay in those dusty volumes called the classics piqued him into a dogged, mouselike subtlety of attempt to move it piecemeal (p. 26).

Jude's aloofness being marked by the study of languages is significant because language is the greatest triumph of human intellect upon which our culture and civilizations are built. In times when the theory of natural selection was reaching high popularity, the complexity of human language was what many clung to in order to draw a clear line between humankind and animals. Although Darwin believed animals could eventually reach levels of development similar to humankind in favourable circumstances, the consensus among contemporary scientists followed Charles Lyell's assertion in 1863 that humans alone were capable of progressive improvement; that we alone can use tools, possess property and have the capacity to domesticate animals. As to language, "other animals may be able to utter sounds more

articulate and as varied as the click of the Bushman, but voice alone can never enable brute intelligence to acquire language” (LYELL, 2009c, p. 468). At least they all agreed that at present, humans were the only ones with the power of abstraction, of forming general concepts, of being self-conscious and self-comprehension: “No animal employs language, and man alone has sense of beauty, is liable to caprice, has the feeling of gratitude, mystery, etc.; believes in God, or is endowed with a conscience” (DARWIN, 2004, p. 101).

### 3.3.1 Diverging Communication

Impressively enough, after years of self-study, the persistent Jude “acquired quite an average student’s power to read the common ancient classics, Latin in particular” (p. 32). However unclear how good he truly was, what remains very clear is that the doors of the colleges are as closed to him as before. Pressing practical distractions of life, such as working to earn a living and his love life, allowed Jude to postpone recognizing not only the university rejection he already predicted but the irrelevance and even absurdity in the eyes of that society of a stone worker speaking Latin. The irony is evident when Jude is drunk at the bar with his fellow workmen and some university students pressure him to say something in Latin. Jude recites the complete Nicene Creed and an undergraduate cries “Good! Excellent Latin!” although the undergraduate had “not the slightest conception of a single word” (p. 115).

One of the most painful ironies of *Jude*, says Boumelha (2000, p. 57), “is the way the desire for education is undercut by its inadequacy and irrelevance to the experiences of the central characters”. Social categories of morality and knowledge are petrified, contradicting the flexibilities and complexity of personal experience, and therefore making it too difficult for characters, especially Jude, to associate the doctrines and principles they learn to repeat with their desires. When back in Christminster Jude realizes he cannot belong to that place as it is. He confesses how the “fixed opinions” he used to have are at odds with the way he came to feel: “I am in a chaos of principles – groping in the dark – acting by instinct and not after example. Eight or nine years ago when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I am.” (p. 317). The difficulty of Latin and Greek represent a great portion of this estrangement Jude feels his whole life between his idealized self and the true one, the idealized Christminster and the true one. When compared to Sue, their different histories display different weights attributed to the necessity of learning languages in order to access knowledge, including self-knowledge. Although the narrator does not say much about Sue’s childhood, her confidence and “no fear



of men, as such, nor of their books” (p. 141) hints she had not been as neglected as her cousin. She read more and had more diversified options too because she read translations:

I have had advantages. I don't know Latin and Greek, though I know the grammars of those tongues. But I know most of the Greek and Latin classics through translations, and other books too. I read Lemprière, Catullus, Martial, Juvenal, Lucian, Beaumont and Fletcher, Boccaccio, Scarron, De Brantôme, Sterne, De Foe, Smollett, Fielding, Shakespeare, the Bible, and other such; and found that all interest in the unwholesome part of those books ended with its mystery (p. 141).

Sue never feels the necessity to learn Latin or Greek or any other language to read those books (in a way similarly to the Christminster graduates who do not know Latin). Instead of the bridge to knowledge, the dead languages become the opposite: they are the symbols of the illusion of Christminster, the illusion that everybody speaks Latin there, the illusion that whoever wants to enter, whoever wants to access knowledge, has to break through the impregnable barrier of learning those languages, while the true barrier is in the class system.

Language-related problems are so serious in this novel that they undermine even English, distorting characters' communication, expression and apprehension of the world. The public language, the only way available to articulate their experiences and literally understand each other suddenly is not enough, becoming cold and superficially generalized in comparison with all the tension they carry within themselves (BOUMELHA, 2000). Misunderstandings, silence and lies are commonplace; the language which should be understandable, that should help characters to overcome problems, is problematic. “I can't explain” (p. 159, 234, 235, 238, 324 (2), 333) becomes a motto, used by both Jude and Sue; Phillotson has no arguments against his wife's wish to leave him: “She's one too many for me!” (p. 221); Sue's last conversation with Little Father Time is disastrous because of her decision to be “honest and candid” (p. 323) with the boy. And finally, the irreconcilability of personal and sexual experience with the public discourse prevents Jude from being honest with Sue after the casual night with Arabella; the same way Sue cannot explain her repulsiveness to Phillotson.

The result is that Jude and Sue take “divergent paths, with regard to language and the literary culture” (BOUMELHA, 2000, p. 58): while Sue shuts herself into silence; clenches her teeth and stops her ears both to Jude and Phillotson, Jude moves into a kind of sardonic or parodic series of quotations in which the language of culture becomes a commentary on his own life. Erudition and knowledge transform into repeating other people's words, mentioned from time to time, clearly appropriated and out of context. For example, after the death of the children Jude says “Nothing can be done. [...] Things are as they are, and will be brought to

their destined issue.” Sue pauses and asks “Who said that?” and Jude answers “It comes in the chorus of the Agamemnon. It has been in my mind continually since this happened” (p. 328). The inappropriateness of linking Agamemnon with the children shows that just as once Jude thought that learning Latin and Greek was a matter of mastering a code, now the same weakness is evident in the partial control he has over his reading. “It has not become his own; its fullness can be withheld from him by others who will not pass on its secrets; for a tutor he has only marginal glosses” (INGHAM, 2002, p. xvii). Although the narrator presents Jude as a true scholar, moments like these tell a different and probably truer story of the self-taught among whom Jude consciously includes himself.

The number of misquoted and misplaced quotes, sacred and profane, supports the thesis that the repetition of “fixed opinions” helps neither with characters’ communication nor with their personal development. Ingham (2002) upholds that, the delusory relation of Jude and Christminster is evidenced by the very epigraphs along the novel, always dissolving before the reader’s eyes into something different they originally were. To start, the two quotations introducing Christminster, that seem to capture respectively Jude’s optimism of finally embarking on his academic course and the joy of his incipient love for Sue are fragments torn out of context: “Save his own soul he hath no star” by Swinburne and “Notitiam primosque gradus vicinia fecit; Tempore crevit amor” (Nearness led to awareness . . . love grew with time) by Ovid. While Swinburne’s eulogy on self-reliance is woefully inapt for Jude, Ovid is beginning not a joyous story of love but a tragedy of the doomed lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe. For Sue, the epigraphs go from irrelevant to cruel, and end being mockeries of what they appear to be – “not formal and precise summaries linking neatly to each section but statements in an ambiguous and hostile relationship to the text” (INGHAM, 2002, p. xiv). The snatches from Sappho and the Book of Esther are particularly mean to her:

‘There was no other girl, O bridegroom, like her!’ fixes Jude’s growing delight in Sue at Melchester; but what Sappho in context was promising the bridegroom was that erotic joy, the gift of Aphrodite, that Sue, for all her formal worship of the goddess whose image she buys, painfully fails to deliver. Similarly, her final collapse into abject religiosity seems epitomized by the sentence describing Esther: ‘And she humbled her body greatly, and all the places of her joy she filled with her torn hair’. But in the original account Esther’s penitence is part of a calculated plan which triumphantly achieves the salvation of the Jews from slaughter, while Sue’s brings nothing but suffering and death (INGHAM, 2002, p. xiv-xv).

Among the biblical quotes, the novel’s main epitaph is the most delusory of all. “The letter killeth”, without the complementing “but the spirit giveth life” from 2 Corinthians, is vital in its incompleteness because in no part of the story does the spirit give life; there is never

compensation (INGHAM, 2002, p. xii). The “letter”, signifying the law, the scriptures, like the fixed opinion, is mentioned by Jude when he goes to Marygreen to see Sue for the last time. Convinced that she cannot fix the past by submitting to the old unreasonable morals, Jude implores: “Don’t go – don’t go! [...] This is my last time. I thought it would be less intrusive than to enter your house. And I shall never come again. Don’t then be unmerciful. Sue, Sue: we are acting by the letter; and ‘the letter killeth’.” (p. 377). Ingham (2002) believes Hardy intended this epigraph to refer explicitly to the horrors of marriage without love and to the laws that obliged people to live like Sue at that moment, trying to perform her role as Phillotson’s wife without loving him. However, he denied that the novel was an attack on the marriage laws, despite his assertion in the 1912 (2016b, p. 7) postscript that “the general drift” in relation to such laws was that “the civil law should only be the enunciation of the law of nature”. Ingham thinks Hardy was right in dismissing a superficial reading of a novel that begins with a painful demonstration of the cruelty and irrationality of those laws of nature as in the scene of the earthworms. Hardy’s denial shows he did not “find the morality simpler when handling the natural law in relation to man and woman” (INGHAM, 2002, p. xviii).

Goode (2000) agrees that the quotations do cast an ironic light on the text but affirms that the subtlety of the “The letter killeth” goes beyond simple irony: it illustrates how the intertextuality in *Jude* functions to alienate the text and to radicalise its effect. The epigraph offers a perception only available to the literate who, like Hardy, knows their Bible well; it shows how he dealt with writing in a dialectical way, both as an institution which has to be negotiated and an agency of self-improvement. Furthermore:

[...] killing isn’t only a bad thing. Some things need to be killed, and one thing the literature that is invoked in this text can kill is the unquestioning acceptance of authority emanating from Biblioll [College] and the marriage laws. Moreover, the actual context in 2 Corinthians indicates that by letter is meant the law, the scripture, as voiced... (GOODE, 2000, p. 97-98).

For Goode, the suggestion that the display of learning in *Jude* merely signifies the betrayal of the protagonist’s dead illusion is to read the allusiveness undialectically. Killing sometimes might be necessary to promote change, to question the authority that seems obvious and unquestionable. The act of learning in the novel, just like killing, exceeds an obvious meaning of superficial readings. It means more than language learning, more than a lack of access to modern linguistics, it means that “It is not just that Christminster is difficult to enter, it is also a place of ignorance, like the British elite in general, not only impervious, but second

rate” (GOODE, 2000, p. 100). The place that should provide freedom from the letter is in fact the place that killeth, that promotes the letter, and does not giveth life.

The walls of Christminster are not made of the barriers of Latin and Greek only, they are part of a much greater cultural construction that tells Jude he needs to be inside in order to be happy, but then blocks his entry. The problematic relations with languages in the novel refer directly to the problematic authority that emanates from the university, an authority that has to do with not only the overrating of institutions but also with the difficulty of forming and expressing new views, of escaping established truths, through a language that is shaped by the old ones.

### 3.4 THE QUESTION OF AGENCY

Human language frames the way we apprehend the world, and although languages change and adapt over time, they are not always flexible enough to express unfamiliar or controversial ideas, as happens with characters in the novel and as also happened with Darwin. In a time of significant scientific advancement and changes of perception in terms of the origins of the world and the mechanisms that fostered life, nineteenth-century English language played a significant part – and was often a complicating factor – in the development of new concepts in a world still very attached to the reasoning of natural theology.

The idea that languages change throughout time was not new. As Charles Lyell remarked in 1863, modern languages such as English are derivative instead of primordial, and they change faster than humanity, making the work of the philologist rather easier than that of the naturalist who calculates similar theories in regard to species. Speakers may be unconscious of it, but languages are in a permanent change, passing through constant selection, discarding terms and including others at the same speed. “Sometimes the new word or phrase, or a modification of the old ones, will entirely supplant the more ancient expressions, or, instead of the latter being discarded, both may flourish together, the older one having a more restricted use” (LYELL, 2009c, p. 463). The development and adaptation of the scientific vocabulary were both a necessity and a consequence of the scientific discoveries of the period. Lyell, who with the publication of *Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man* in 1863, was as much influenced by his former disciple Darwin as Darwin himself had been influenced by him years before, employs here the logic of natural selection to explain the fight for survival in the linguistic field:

[...] there are nevertheless fixed laws in action by which, in the general struggle for existence, some terms and dialects gain the victory over others. The slightest advantage attached to some new mode of pronouncing or spelling, from considerations of brevity or euphony, may turn the scale, or more powerful causes of selection may decide which of two or more rivals shall triumph and which succumb (LYELL, 2009c, p. 463).

Languages are important parts of the cultures they represent; their adaptability and longevity are strong marks of the influence and power of those cultures. Although a language evolves according to its use, speakers can feel limited by their inflexibility. In *Jude*, in the same way characters have difficulties expressing the complexity of their personal experiences in face of the petrified moralities and fixed ideas, so did Darwin face similar problems when describing his evolutionary theory, most noticeably in the use of the agent. The English language is extremely anthropocentric, as most languages are, with emphasis on the subject, the agent of a determined action, rather than the object that suffers the action. Darwin had to deal with the anthropocentrism of English to apprehend and describe the laws of a world that was not anthropocentric. Fully charged with natural theological agency and intention, the nineteenth-century scientific jargon centred all signification around humankind and God (BEER, 2009). However, sense in the Darwinian theory depended on promoting the idea of a natural order that produced itself; a system that produced both its own continuance and diversity through self-reproduction. This was difficult to do when the importance of a subject is essential and evident even in the passive voice; whenever something happens, it automatically has to be the doing of someone or of something. Natural selection had no place for an initiating or intervening creator or author, yet terms like selection and preservation inevitably raised questions like, by whom selected or preserved? “In his own writing Darwin was to discover the difficulty of distinguishing between description and invention” (BEER, 2009, p. 48): of describing a process without assigning moral meaning or intention to it.

Many passages of *The Origin of Species* were revised by Darwin over the editions published during his lifetime, principally those that struggled with this problem of agency. Some passages were changed completely, others were altered only slightly. One example is in the second edition, published a few weeks after the first, where Darwin included “The Creator” in a passage that had been left vague in the first edition: “Therefore I should infer from analogy that probably all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth have descended from someone primordial form, into which life was first breathed [by The Creator]”. Beer (2009, p. xix) believes the reason for this addition was the stress caused by the first responses to his work which were more troubled with the absence of a subject than concerned with the main feature

of the development of species. Nevertheless, unsatisfied with the inclusion of an agent, that although not straightforwardly rejected had no relevance to him, Darwin rewrote the sentence completely for the third edition, keeping the hypothetical tone, but clearer in its proposition:

Therefore, on the principle of natural selection with divergence of character, it does not seem incredible that, from some such low and intermediate form, both animals and plants may have been developed: and, if we admit this, we must admit that all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth may have descended from someone primordial form (DARWIN *apud* BEER, 2009, p. 48).

When he says that both animals and plants “have been developed” and “descended from someone primordial form” Darwin is clearly struggling to escape as best as he can from the trap of language and attempting to call attention to the species themselves, to the development and to the changes that happen within them. As time passed Darwin tended to stress more and more his impatience with naturalists who still insisted that the natural system meant something more than merely “a scheme for arranging together those living objects which are most alike, and for separating those which are most unlike” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 305). For his colleagues who believed that modern natural science was about to reveal “the plan of The Creator”, Darwin observed that “unless it be specified whether order in time or space, or what else is meant by the plan of ‘the Creator’, it seems to me that nothing is thus added to our knowledge” (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 305). He stated that the similarities among the many classes of species, which give the sense of pre-established character and purpose, do not prove anything besides the bonds of their common ancestry and the chain of descent, hidden by several degrees of modification.

Questions related with agency permeated all influent evolutionary publications of the period, including the works of Thomas Henry Huxley, such as *Evidence as to Man’s Place in Nature*, in 1863. Famous for his criticism of the English Church and basically every form of religious creed, Huxley was convinced that the human mind was trapped by the limitations of thought and language, and so he hemmed in by physical evidence, supported by his sharp eloquence, to produce the so far incomplete picture of mankind and apes descending from common ancestors (DESMOND, 1998). Even more anxious than Darwin to discredit the human narcissistic belief of being the centre of divine creation, he delivered a whole book about human origins without mentioning God or any euphemism. Instead, in order to show the irony of the physical gradations that clearly associated the human body and other primates, from the most similar apes to the lowest of lemurs, Huxley uses nature as his subject for an emphatic conclusion: “It is as if nature herself had foreseen the arrogance of man, and with Roman

severity had provided that his intellect, by its very triumphs, should call into prominence the slaves, admonishing the conqueror that he is but dust” (HUXLEY, 2009b, p. 105). The image of a nature personified, seeing humanity reach the evolutionary and scientific stages necessary to realize its own insignificance was surely powerful. Huxley often uses this resource of nature as subject, profiting from the limitations of language by inverting the religious mode he rejected, to promote a change of focus from deity to nature: “Huxley’s language shapes itself paradoxically, as the negative form of the language of religion; that is, in its often witty and bitter rejection of religion as a method of knowing, it retains the religious structure and the sanction of feeling that goes with it” (LEVINE, 1990, p. 225).

Huxley’s popularity contributed to the cultural imaginary of a personified conscious nature, often written with capital N, as he did, leaving the form with a lower-case *n* for nature as synonym of one’s personality, essence. Thomas Hardy had a growing admiration for Huxley, whom he personally met once and spoke of “as a man who united a fearless mind with the warmest of hearts and the most modest of manners” (HARDY, 1989, p 125). The spelling of nature with capital N and the influence of Huxley are as clear in Hardy’s prose as they are in his memories and reflexions. To test the possibilities suggested by the substitution of God with (N)ature was tantalizing since Hardy himself could not help but find in nature a sort of alternative for the divine agency he missed. Yet, he never seemed convinced that it would result in anything happier. In 1885 he wrote: “The Hypocrisy of things. Nature is an arch dissembler. A child is deceived completely; the older members of society more or less according to their penetration; though even they seldom get to realize that *nothing* is as it appears” (HARDY, 1989, p. 182). Hardy understood the complications of substituting one divinity for another, and that the temptation existed because part of the problem provoked by the theory of natural selection was exactly the lack of one to blame for the disillusion. Nonetheless, it was dangerous to accept nature as a conscious ruler and to try to read its intentions.

One of the major moments of suffering in *Jude* is the death of the children, when Sue admits she had been trying to read nature’s intentions in their search for happiness. All the injustice and indifference of nature culminate in the ultimate despair for a sceptic Sue who becomes tired of nature’s “mutual butchery” (p. 296) and for Jude who was already convinced of “the scorn of nature for man’s finer emotions” (p. 170). After bluntly telling Little Father Time that the untimed birth of blameless poor children like him was the “law of nature” (p. 322), Sue feels guilty at the boy’s reaction of killing his half-siblings and then himself. She cries over her dead baby’s new frock and tries to understand what she did wrong:

My eyes are so swollen that I can scarcely see; and yet little more than a year ago I called myself happy! We went about loving each other too much – indulging ourselves to utter selfishness with each other! We said – do you remember? – that we would make a virtue of joy. I said it was Nature’s intention, Nature’s law and *raison d’être* that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us – instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart. What dreadful things I said! And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word! (p. 328).

The shock rouses in Sue the need for an agent, for someone responsible who can be blamed for the tragedy, making her substitute the inconsistent nature back with God. She reflects on how their happiness was conditioned to what they thought were nature intentions of making the best of whatever instincts they were endowed with to enjoy what civilization had denied them. She thinks herself a selfish fool to have taken nature at her word. Fate, now a sort of punishing force, has stabbed them for their arrogance, and from then on Sue is convinced she can no longer deny this superior authority, whoever it is. Confused, she seems genuinely to believe in “something external [...] which says, ‘You shan’t!’ First it said, ‘You shan’t learn!’ Then it said, ‘You shan’t labour!’ Now it says, ‘You shan’t love!’” (p. 327).

For Jude, at that point, the final tragedy turns him into the sceptic Sue once was. The confirmation of the cruelty of nature’s laws neither surprises nor convinces him of the existence of a supernatural power. What he sees is that his search for happiness, disguised as a search for social ascendance, was misguided and prevented him from being happy when he could be with Sue. He is resigned about the children, but cannot feel the same in relation to her, who left him to remarry Phillotson believing the teacher to be her true husband in the eyes of God. Jude is shocked by her suggestion that, for the same reason, he also did the right thing by taking Arabella back. In their final conversation, he still tries to persuade her that trying to obey the law, to live by the letter, does not work, they had tried it and it did not work, because “the letter killeth” (p. 376): “We’ve both remarried out of our senses. I was made drunk to do it. You were the same. I was gin-drunk; you were creed-drunk. Either form of intoxication takes away the nobler vision” (p. 378). Nevertheless, Sue is unmovable, and Jude leaves thinking that she had lost her capacity for nobler feelings, for seeing through those perishing forms of ritualistic religion, such important skills for Hardy because they allowed clearer, more effective, and less selfish views of life and its real challenges.



#### 4 THE FLAW IN THE TERRESTRIAL SCHEME

Here he beheld scores of coupled earthworms lying half their length on the surface of the damp ground, as they always did in such weather at that time of the year. It was impossible to advance in regular steps without crushing some of them at each tread (p. 11).

Jude is going back to the village. He is weeping, not of pain, or because of the flaw in the terrestrial scheme he has just discovered, but because “he had wholly disgraced himself before he had been a year in the parish, and hence might be a burden to his great-aunt for life” (p. 10). Farmer Troutham has beat him and told him never to come back to his farm, so Jude has no work and money to bring home, and his aunt will mistreat him and tell everyone how useless he is. Taking a roundabout track to avoid crossing the village in his shame, Jude sees the scores of earthworms “lying half their length on the surface” of the ground, as they always do at such time and weather. The narrator says it is impossible not to crush some of them because they are so many and they are everywhere, yet Jude “carefully picked his way on tiptoe among the earthworms, without killing a single one (p. 11).

Jude cares about the worms even in his distress, the same way he cares about birds and trees, despite nobody caring about him. “Though Farmer Troutham had just hurt him, he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything” (p. 10). Like other boys of his age, Jude used to bring home nests of young birds, but would lie awake half the night after, in misery, until he replaced them back in their original place the next morning. He could scarcely see trees being cut down or lopped because he fancied it hurt them. Also with late pruning, when the sap was up, it seemed like the trees were bleeding profusely, which had been a positive grief for him in his infancy. The narrator remarks that “this weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that [Jude] was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again” (p. 11). The boy’s sense of living an “unnecessary life” and that only in death he will be well, is later amplified in his son, Little Father Time, who responds with a “wish not to live” (p. 326) to this excess of pain and disharmony in the terrestrial scheme. For many characters in the novel, Jude’s sensibility to others’ suffering is just disproportioned and pointless, as with Arabella, who calls him a “tender-hearted fool” (p. 58, 60), always ready to help anyone in trouble, human or not.

The criticism gives Jude a sense of naivety and even stupidity that can easily be aligned with his problems of interpreting life’s challenges, discussed previously; a sense that Jude is

badly equipped for the struggle for survival in every possible way. Crying over cut trees seems the last thing a fit survivor should spend his days doing. Yet, the “weakness of character” that drives him through much suffering also shows the deep respect he has for sentient life; respect that comes from someone who does not see himself superior to neither birds nor trees, and that allows for an interpretation of his character, and the way he relates with his environment, which exceeds a simple definition of inaptness. Following Darwin’s theory on the evolution of human intellect and the role of sympathy, as well as other influences of Hardy’s, to be discussed in this chapter, Jude’s sensibility and awareness to pain demonstrates that his inadequacy is perhaps not the consequence of an undeveloped intellect, but rather of a very developed one. His incapacity to understand and adapt to certain situations represents mainly his incapacity to deal with impositions of the self-centred human social context, because since his childhood he feels that a truer significance of life and relations between living beings go beyond human concerns.

While observing the rooks feeding, Jude feels as if “a magic thread of fellow-feeling united his own life with theirs” (p. 9), demonstrating a connexion, a continuity between human and animal lives which, although permeated through the discourses of both Darwin and Huxley, makes more sense to us now, with our relatively recent ecological consciousness, than it did to Victorians. According to Wilson, it justifies Darwin’s ever-growing popularity.

If one had to isolate a single all-consuming idea which has taken hold of the human race in the post-political era in which we now live, it is the interrelatedness of natural forms – the fact that we are all in this planet together – human beings, mammals, fish, insects, trees – all dependent upon one another, all very unlikely to have a second chance of life either beyond the grave or through reincarnation, and therefore aware of the responsibilities incumbent upon custodians of the Earth (WILSON, 2003, p. 230)

The animals in *Jude* illustrate how Hardy understood the interrelatedness of living beings, as well as how his society dealt with it. The concept of a “magic thread” of continuity, and the human responsibilities attached to this connexion were not impressed upon everyone readily, but many changes were triggered by Darwin in terms of how animals were perceived.

Animals were present in all aspects of Victorian life, and in all social classes: working animals, livestock of various kinds, and the practice of keeping pets which became increasingly common. Victorian culture is famous for celebrating exotic and wild animals in travelling exhibitions or in the London Zoological Gardens, which represented the inhospitable places they came from. The agricultural and sporting press also often offered elaborate illustrations of prize and pedigree racehorses and more. Just like their physical presence, the symbolic significance of animals exerted a powerful influence on Victorian culture. Debates about

animals were tied to central social, moral and political issues of the day, such as the discussions involving their treatment, and the crafting of early animal cruelty legislation (MAZZENO; MORRISON, 2017). At deeper levels, animal issues also related with shifting boundaries of social class, the expansion and maintenance of the British Empire, and “the benefits and challenges created by the development of modern science, including ethical challenges posed by Darwinism” (MAZZENO; MORRISON, 2017, p. 2).

In nineteenth-century English literature, both pre and post Darwin, human and non-human interactions repeatedly focused on humans attempts to domesticate and discipline animals for private ends. These attempts said much about the insecurity of humans and the constant need to distance ourselves from the animal kingdom, a particularly tense relation in the decades previous to Darwin. Bill Sike’s dog Bull’s-eye in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* of 1837 is an example of the pre-Darwinian concern regarding human and animal continuity:

As an animal victim, the character of Bull’s-eye draws attention to the precarious existence of animals in the city, and brings into focus not only the suffering experienced by creatures caught deep within scenes of exploitation but also the fragile status of the human. In the “unnatural history” of human and animal entanglement and co-constitution that is the world of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens’s depiction of Bull’s-eye offers a fleeting opportunity of reading a literary animal as more than simply a surrogate for human concerns. Framed within Victorian discourses of animality, Bull’s-eye emerges as an animal agent who reveals through interagency the paradoxical mix of care, indifference, and violence that characterized relationships between humans and animals in a pre-Darwinian society already uneasy about the distinct nature of humanity (McDONELL, 2017, p. 122).

The mutual reflexion of animal/human character in Dickens suggested the growing link between them. The Victorian age staged an increasing belief in the similarities between humans and animals, even before the ground-breaking work of Darwin put such ideas squarely in the public eye. It was a time of “growing belief in animal subjectivity” (MORSE; DANAHAY, 2007, p. 1), when the RSPCA was founded, when the movement against vivisection rose, and numerous laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals were approved.

In *Jude*, animals are not given large parts; they do not have voice or inner thoughts, as they often did in Dickens, but it does not prevent Jude from not only respecting them, but of genuinely relating with them, of feeling their suffering as his suffering, and looking among them for the acceptance he cannot find in his own community. The things Phillotson tells him before leaving are rather unusual if we consider the kind of life Jude was about to have growing up in Marygreen. Reading much and being good to animals could help but little in a place where he would have to scare birds, kill pigs, and count on long hours of manual labour for low wages. Phillotson’s words may mean that he, as a teacher, perceived Jude’s sensibility. What others

saw as weakness of character, the teacher saw as strong potential. The capacity Jude and Sue have, to sympathise with the less favoured, those being trees, animals or people, is central to understand Darwin's concept of morality, discussed later, and is also what made Hardy believe certain people worthier than others of the privileged position held by humankind.

#### 4.1 DEAR BIRDIES: ANIMAL SUFFERING

In the first chapter Jude is paid to scare the birds for Farmer Troutham, and prevent them from eating the seeds that form a large pile in the midst of the arable field. As the rooks try to get near the seeds, Jude sounds a clacker until his arm aches. Then he begins thinking that the birds were only hungry; and just like himself, they seemed to "live in a world which did not want them". He is pained to see how much their lives resemble his own. Jude then ceases the rattling and allows the birds to eat: " 'Poor little dears!' said Jude, aloud. 'You *shall* have some dinner you shall! There is enough for us all. Farmer Troutham can afford to let you have some. Eat, then, my dear little birdies, and make a good meal!' " (p. 9). His logic is that since there is food available and the birds are hungry there is no reason for them not to eat. When the farmer comes and beats him, Jude tries to justify his actions saying that Mr Phillotson told him to be good to birds, which makes the farmer ever angrier.

Jude later wonders on this "flaw in the terrestrial scheme, by which what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener" (p. 10). He feels that "nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for, it scares him. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony" (p. 12). It is difficult for him to understand how nature could not provide for all; how some, like the farmer, have so much, while others, like the birds and himself, have so little. Although Jude does not know it, his idea of harmony is at odds with Darwin's natural selection, which is based on competition, where the death of the weak is imperative for the strong to live. The terrestrial scheme seems illogical because it is disharmonious to the coherence expected from a world where everything should make sense, where happiness and abundance should prevail. Jude is confused and disheartened. The identification of the flaw comes along with the identification of himself as one of the weaker parties; one who, like the rooks, is deprived of life's bare necessities.

Animals continue to cross Jude's path throughout the novel, yet apparently only the ones in distress catch his eye. When he and Sue are visiting aunt Drusilla many years later, Jude is awakened in the middle of the night by cries that he knows well: a rabbit has been caught in a trap and will pass the night in agony, dying slowly and painfully from the wound. "He who in

his childhood had saved the lives of the earthworms now began to picture the agonies of the rabbit from its lacerated leg” (p. 205). Laid on the bed, he listens to the cry again about half an hour later and decides to go outside to find the hurt animal and end its suffering. Once out, he finds Sue at her window, also awake and about to go looking for the rabbit. She says “I heard the rabbit, and couldn’t help thinking of what it suffered, till I felt I must come down and kill it. But I am so glad you got there first. . . . They ought not to be allowed to set these steel traps, ought they!” (p. 205). Reaching the spot where the rabbit was, Jude strikes it “on the back of the neck with the side of his palm, and it stretched itself out dead” (p. 205).

The cousins, described as the two halves of a same person, feel alike about animal suffering. After being forced to sell her two pet pigeons because she could no longer afford to keep them, Sue puts herself at risk by entering furtively the poulterer’s shop where the birds were doomed to become “a nice pie for somebody for next Sunday’s dinner!” (p. 295):

An emotion at sight of them, assisted by the growing dusk of evening, caused her to act on impulse, and first looking around her quickly, she pulled out the peg which fastened down the cover, and went on. The cover was lifted from within, and the pigeons flew away with a clatter that brought the chagrined poulterer cursing and swearing to the door” (p. 296).

Such moments provoke in Jude and Sue a sense of incongruity at those creatures’ helplessness because nobody else feels for them. Their suffering seems to be irrelevant because they are not human. It does not fit the natural theological definition of suffering as an exception to happiness because, according to Rev. William Paley, suffering is a human condition. In fact, every trying circumstance of human life is calculated “for the production, exercise, and improvement, of moral qualities, with a view to a future state, in which, these qualities, after being so produced, exercised, and improved, may, by a new and more favouring constitution of things, receive their reward, or become their own” (PALEY, 2008, p. 271). Suffering is not punishment; it offers opportunity for moral improvement. Non-human suffering surely clashes with this concept of pain as probation because it is very difficult to see that the rooks or the pigeons will profit in any moral way for their trials. Furthermore, Paley points out the necessity of being conscious of adversities in order to profit from them, which excludes anyone who cannot understand the nature of their trials or where the profit is. Animal suffering does not make sense in this view, apparently because it is of no consequence to human affairs.

But in a novel that acknowledges the interrelatedness of living forms such as *Jude*, the suffering and helplessness of dumb creatures not only exists but also indicates the continuity between animal and human species, disqualifying the argument of probation. Besides Jude

himself, who feels the pain of birds and trees, later, in the second generation, the problem of understanding pain as the basis of moral self-improvement is evident in the (human) figures of Jude and Sue's children. The two siblings and the stillborn baby, with no voice, no faces or names, raise the question of how their short lives and tragic deaths can be of any moral service to themselves (if not a type of divine punishment to the parents). In Darwin's time, acknowledging suffering as a general condition of life means more than acknowledging the animal capacity of feeling physical pain, but mixed with the whole human perception of what suffering is and the meanings usually attributed to it.

One of the most relevant parallels in the nature of interpreting the works of Darwin and Hardy is that for both of them "the most telling criticism of Christian theism was the fact of human suffering. Neither could believe that an all-loving and all-knowing God could have been responsible for the horrors and tragedies of human (and animal) experience" (LEVINE, 2009, p. 41). It is not only a matter of death and pain being part of the necessary process of natural selection versus what Paley justifies as the essentials to human probation, but of both the naturalist and the fiction writer's ability to turn general fates into particular ones. Instead of seeing statistically and from a distance, both saw them personally and individually. For Levine (2009), their sensitivity to the pervasiveness of pain, waste, loss, and suffering of all creatures is what gave them a reputation as disenchanters of the world, by subjecting their views to the blazing rationalism of their times that lead to a sense that life was perhaps not worth living.

Intellectually eclectic, Hardy "found relatively little difficulty in ranging ideas newly derived from Darwin and Huxley alongside the necessitarian views already instilled in him by the peasant fatalism of his upbringing and reinforced by exposure to the tragic patterns of the Greek drama" (MILLGATE, 2006, p. 122). He tried continuously to reconcile a whole series of radically opposed philosophies and creeds throughout his life, but felt it particularly difficult to reconcile modern rationalism with the idea of divine omnipotence and purpose. Hardy believed natural science had just provided humankind with an urgent opportunity to reassess established truths, and it was his very lack of formal and traditional education that made the "transition from belief to unbelief a good deal smoother for him than for many of his more sophisticated contemporaries" (MILLGATE, 2006, p. 122). In a letter to the Humanitarian League in 1910, he expressed how he understood Darwin in relation to animal treatment:

Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species, is ethical; that it logically involved a readjustment of altruistic morals by enlarging as a necessity of rightness the application of what has been called "The Golden Rule" beyond the area of mere

mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom. Possibly Darwin himself did not wholly perceive it, though he alluded to it (HARDY, 1989, p. 376–377).

“The Golden Rule”, referring to Jesus’s commandment in the book of Mathew “love thy neighbour as thyself” is used by Hardy to emphasise the importance to imprint an improved, more unified sense of ethical respect between humans and animals. “Altruism, or The Golden Rule [...] will ultimately be brought about I think by the pain we see in others reacting on ourselves, as if we and they were a part of one body” (HARDY, 1989, p. 235).

According to Richardson (2009), Hardy read Darwin correctly when he saw the wish of finding continuity between humans and animals. By ignoring humankind in *The Origin of Species*, Darwin purposely underplays the implications of his observations over humanity, and focuses on the interdependence of species instead, never singling out any specific one. More than a decade later in *The Descent of Man*, and eight years after Huxley’s *Evidence as to Man’s Place in Nature*, Darwin finally approaches what he calls the difference of “degree and not of kind” which separates species, emphasising that the human capacity to understand our superior position in relation to other forms of life is what best distinguishes us from them.

[...] the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of *degree and not of kind*. We have seen that the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, etc., of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals. They are also capable of some inherited improvement, as we see in the domestic dog compared with the wolf or jackal. If it could be proved that certain high mental powers, such as the formation of general concepts, self-consciousness, etc., were absolutely peculiar to man, which seems extremely doubtful, it is not improbable that these qualities are merely the incidental results of other highly-advanced intellectual faculties; [...] the half-art, half-instinct of language still bears the stamp of its gradual evolution, the ennobling belief in God is not universal with man; and the belief in spiritual agencies naturally follows from other mental powers. *The moral sense perhaps affords the best and highest distinction between man and the lower animals*; but I need say nothing on this head, as I have so lately endeavoured to show that the social instincts, – the prime principle of man's moral constitution [...] – with the aid of active intellectual powers and the effects of habit, naturally lead to the golden rule, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise;" *and this lies at the foundation of morality* (DARWIN, 2004, p. 151, my italics).

For Darwin, the human intellect is the result of our successful evolutionary history. But he highlights that similar mental powers are found in more or less developed stages in animals such as domestic dogs, especially when compared to their wild counterparts. The exclusivity remains in the stage of development, not in the capacity to evolve. The human sense of morality provides the best distinction between humans and animals, and the foundation of it, according to Darwin, is the human capacity to apply the Golden Rule. Here Richardson (2009) believes

that Darwin sounds hesitant when he reminds his readers of the instinctive basis of moral principles, and at the same time reinforces how instincts must be aided by active intellectual powers and habit. Darwin probably means that the human intellect, for being so highly developed, although evolved from instinct, cannot be commanded by instinct alone; but every choice, even the seemingly most obvious ones, depend on individual judgement.

What Darwin calls our moral sense allows us to weigh our decisions according not only for the welfare of our own community or species, but also for other communities and species. In a broad sense, it involves understanding the responsibilities of possessing a highly developed intellect; it involves the comprehension of life mechanisms and the importance of each living being for their balance (DARWIN, 2004). Just like Lyell before him, Darwin criticises human arrogance as the greatest obstacle for the advancement of knowledge:

It is only our natural prejudice, and that arrogance which made our forefathers declare that they were descended from demi-gods, which leads us to demur to this conclusion. But the time will before long come, when it will be thought wonderful that naturalists, who were well acquainted with the comparative structure and development of man, and other mammals, should have believed that each was the work of a separate act of creation (DARWIN, 2004, p. 45).

In Hardy, the characters' conduct towards the defenceless demonstrates superiority, even if they are poor or rich, or if they have access to formal education. Tess, in *Tess of the D'Urberville*, "with the impulse of a soul who could feel for kindred sufferers as much as for herself", kills the agonizing birds left by the gamekeepers, just as Jude did with the rabbit:

Poor darlings— to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the sight of such misery as yours!" she exclaimed, her tears running down as she killed the birds tenderly. "And not a twinge of bodily pain about me! I be not mangled, and I be not bleeding, and I have two hands to feed and clothe me." She was ashamed of herself for her gloom of the night, based on nothing more tangible than a sense of condemnation under an arbitrary law of society which had no foundation in Nature (HARDY, 2005b, p. 298).

Tess is ashamed to think that under the laws of society, she should be reproached by freeing the birds from their pain. The same strangeness regarding cruel acts considered commonplace is felt by Jude in the shocking pig-killing scene. He does not want to kill the pig they had been fattening during the autumn months. As the daughter of a pig-breeder, Arabella sees the deed indifferently and demands Jude do it because the man who was supposed to kill the pig did not show up. Jude is shocked to learn that it had been starved for more than a day and even more shocked when Arabella wants the animal to bleed for hours before it dies in



order to get the best of the meat and the blood. When the pig is caught, it seems to know what will happen, and very much human-like, facing of death, goes from a “squeak of surprise” to “repeated cries of rage”. As Jude and Arabella hoist their victim on the stool, with its legs tied upward, “the animal’s note changed its quality; instead of rage, now a cry of despair; long-drawn, slow and hopeless” (p. 58). The description of surprise, rage and despair make the scene very painful because Jude perceives the pig as acting like a person. He feels as though he is betraying the pig’s trust: “Upon my soul I would sooner have gone without the pig than have had this to do! [...] A creature I have fed with my own hands”. He does it mercifully, in spite of Arabella, and kills it as fast as he can; yet at the final moments, Jude has to face the creature’s “glazing eyes riveting themselves” (p. 59).

Denouncing animal cruelty was something in Hardy’s mind since boyhood, and expressed in this fiction much more consciously than the supposed immoralities he had been accused of, especially in *Jude* (SUMPTER, 2011). One of Hardy’s most striking experiences related with animal mistreatment happened when he was a boy while accompanying his mother to London. There he witnessed what he called “the pandemonium of Smithfield, with its mud, curses, and cries of ill-treated animals” (HARDY, F. 1994, part 1, p. 17). These memories remained with him until his final years, as registered by Florence Hardy in 1927:

The sight of animals being taken to market or driven to slaughter always aroused in Hardy feelings of intense pity, as he well knew, as must anyone living in or near a market-town, how much needless suffering is inflicted. In his notebook at this time he writes: 'December (1st Week). Walking with F. by railway saw bullocks and cows going to Islington (?) for slaughter.' Under this he drew a little pencil sketch of the rows of trucks as they were seen by him, with animals' heads at every opening, looking out at the green countryside they were leaving for scenes of horror in a far-off city. Hardy thought of this sight for long after. It was found in his will that he had left a sum of money to each of two societies 'to be applied so far as practicable to the investigation of the means by which animals are conveyed from their houses to the slaughter-houses with a view to the lessening of their sufferings in such transit' (HARDY, F. 1994, part 2, p. 434).

Animal pain in *Jude* is different from previous Hardy novels because it seems a direct consequence of their proximity to people, like in a slaughterhouse, while in earlier works animals are more at the mercy of natural circumstances. For example, in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Oak’s sheep fall from the cliff because of a hasty young sheepdog; four of Bathsheba’s sheep die and others almost die because the “unfortunate animals” (HARDY, 2010, p. 144) “broke fence”, (HARDY, 2010, p. 146) and ate some plants they were not supposed to eat; and so on. But in *Jude* the scene is very different, bare of visible nature most of the times, altered either into lifeless fields or towns with no roots or beauty. Interactions between people and

nature are mostly defined by the poverty of the places where characters move constantly back and forth, which demand that they pay more attention to their slight means of economic survival than to respect for other creatures. Domestic animals are a fragile remaining link to that vast natural world that previously fulfilled Hardy's fiction so abundantly. Butler (1980) argues that the natural symbolism in *Jude*, although not as central as in other Hardy's works, is still worth considering because it integrates the material world to the cosmic significance behind the story; compensating what he judges to be Hardy's fading ability of blending perfectly a love story and the natural background. Mallett reinforces this idea that there is deep meaning in the weak natural presence in *Jude* by saying that the "magic thread of fellow-feeling" (p. 9) that unites Jude to the rooks does not represent merely an evolutionary bond, but, at least at that moment, is truly magical: "The spiritual connection between humankind and nature, pushed out by materialist philosophy, is allowed to edge its way back (MALLETT, 2009, p. 27).

Nonetheless, there are characters like Arabella or Dr Vilbert who do not consider a problem using fellow creatures for personal purposes because they do not recognize animals as such, or nature as more than a source of brute power to sustain their needs. Arabella has no scruple whatsoever in buying Dr Vilbert's distillation, made of the juices of nearly a hundred doves' hearts, not even after he tells her his cruel manner of catching the birds by attracting them to his own roof with rock salts. Arabella never has any crisis of conscience in relation to animal suffering because she does not relate; she sees things in a very simplistic and selfish way; dealing with animals (or animal parts) as just a daily chore, as most around her do.

Animals have important roles in *Jude* because they help externalize human qualities that Hardy believed made people like Jude and Sue worthier than people like Arabella and Vilbert. Even though their actions to relieve animal suffering are more likely to result in more suffering to themselves than in any relief, it is their altruism that shows their superiority. Hardy believed the establishment of the common origin of species demanded for a readjustment of ethical morals beyond the area of humankind to that of the whole animal kingdom (HARDY, 1989); instead of a relation based on advantage and exploitation, human approach to animals should involve the acknowledgement of them as a coexisting force, not a submissive one.

#### 4.2 LOWER AND HIGHER ANIMALS

There seemed to him, vaguely and dimly, something wrong in a social ritual which made necessary a cancelling of well-formed schemes involving years of thought and labour, of forgoing a man's one opportunity of showing himself superior to the lower animals, and of contributing his units of work to the general progress of his generation,

because of a momentary surprise by a new and transitory instinct which had nothing in it of the nature of vice, and could be only at the most called weakness (p. 56).

Jude's scholarly scheme was his opportunity to show himself "superior to the lower animals", and to contribute to the progress of his generation. It seems unfair to him that what he calls transitory instincts – his involvement with Arabella, which, according to him, had nothing to do with vice – should spoil everything. As discussed in chapter two, Jude feels his sexual instincts must be refrained because they debase him; natural urges must be replaced by reason in order to authenticate human superiority over lower forms of life. When Jude falls into drinking, his degraded state is reported through the barmaid's behaviour, who hands him the glass "with the bearing of a person compelled to live amongst animals of an inferior species" (p.115). Drinking and sex, the weaknesses Jude blames for his defeat, reveal the irrational self he thinks he should be able to control, he being a man, not an animal.

Differently from caring about animals and relating to them, feeling like an animal is very debasing. It is easier to sympathise with animals when they display human-like behaviour than when we recognize brute instincts as part of human nature. When animals act like humans, demonstrate feelings deemed complex and exclusively human, or seem to learn from us, we feel more comfortable in recognizing the similarities between us and them. However, feeling the necessity to prove oneself superior to animals is deprecating, it indicates a downgrading to a lower evolutionary stage which can hardly sound complimentary. Considering the permanent demand for adaptation, and that the dominance of species seems transitory, human/animal relations posed several difficult questions in the times of Darwin. Loving animals can never be mistaken with becoming one, a fear not invariably contrasted with the Victorian optimistic mood of progress (BEER, 2009).

Despite Jude's anxieties, the animal imagery of the novel concentrates mostly on the female characters Arabella and Sue, with apparently different outcomes, but amounting to practically the same uneasy feeling of debasement. Arabella, the "complete and substantial female animal" (p. 33), with always "plenty of flesh on [her] bones" (p. 305), is constantly associated with abundance, carnality, and the pigs her father raises – corpulent animals that allow a dozen different preparations with their meat. Pigs are famed for being dirty and noisy, as well as obstinate, like the long-legged fugitive that escapes to the neighbouring farm. The description fits Arabella when she tears her hair and cries in the street after throwing Jude's books on the floor with her greasy fingers of preparing lard, and then suddenly leaves for Australia without her husband. But it is Arabella's practical, unfeeling attitude towards the very

creatures – “Pigs must be killed”, “Poor folks must live” (p. 59) – that denounces she does not reason much beyond what the animals themselves do.

Meanwhile Sue is constantly compared to birds and to their apparent physical and psychological fragility. In her Summer clothes, she is “flexible and light as a bird, her little thumb stuck up by the stem of her white cotton sunshade, went along as if she hardly touched ground, and as if a moderately strong puff of wind would float her over the hedge into the next field” (p. 281). Jude asks her “Have breakfast with me now you are here, my bird?” (p. 324) and tells her “I can see you through your feathers, my poor little bird!” (p. 202). When Sue finally agrees to marry him, she returns his kisses and says “The little bird is caught at last!” through a sad smile while Jude answers “No – only nested,” (p.257-258). The bird imagery contributes to the ethereal unworldly perception Jude and Phillotson have of her, the one she rejects in name of her rationalism and independence. Even if well-intended, the comparison reduces Sue’s human character. She appears so delicate, defenceless, almost irrational, that makes Gillingham warn Phillotson about leaving her cage open, and “letting the bird go in such an obviously suicidal way” (p. 354). Sue does not see herself as a bird, but she feels for them. The fate of her pet pigeons awakens her revolt at nature’s law of “mutual butchery!” (p. 296) because she is as much a “tender fool [...] about birds and things” (p. 259) as Jude.

Associating animal character to humans is as problematic as associating human character to animals, such as happiness, sadness, or love. In the post-Darwinian world, human behaviour becomes the gold standard by which every other creature was measured, and it became a particular pleasure to pervert the nature of the beast, consolidating the superiority of humankind. It was thought “because humans can train animals out of their normal behaviour and into human behaviour, we can triumph over brute force” (LOSANO, 2017, p. 132). The agitation provoked by Darwin’s indirect authentication of this common Victorian understanding that animals displayed intelligence by behaving like humans and showing human feelings, although often unfair to both parties, was in fact important because it blurred the line that divided species and helped establish the idea of common ancestry of humans and animals. The concept of continuity was directly associated with the acceptance that many of the traits which commonly attested the superiority of humankind were actually possessed by animals too, only in less developed stages. Darwin’s classification of higher and lower animals is not always clear, but is part of his attempts to explain the gradations of development among species, which justified naturally the evolutionary position held by humans.

In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, published in 1872, Darwin focuses on how apparently different species are connected by their common origin and how

they evolved in similar ways. For instance, although the regular use of articulate language is exclusively human, animals have varied means to express their emotions, through the emission of sounds, movement of the ears, erection of the head, fur, and so on. Their expression is not only coherent, but can be easily identified in most cases, such as when dogs show themselves affectionate towards their masters. Darwin affirms that animals have the capacity to convey sensations familiar to us such as joy, anger, or fear, as well as physical urges like cold and hunger. The sets of facial muscles and nerves shared by humans and other mammals, which allow similar facial expressions, reinforces the evolutionary link. Specific physical movements used to display emotions, rendered now innate, were gradually acquired and refined as products of evolution, just like feelings themselves develop according to each species needs and course of adaptation (DARWIN, 2009). No animal species has so far reached the intellectual development of humankind, but it does not mean they are not in permanent evolution as well. Dogs, for instance, some of Darwin's favourite examples of what he calls higher animals, are so intelligent they possess something like a consciousness, so it is probable that they can eventually develop a sense of morality. A dog demonstrates the capacity to know what should or should not be done in moments such as when its master tells it not to touch an object of its interest, and the dog does not touch it, even when the master is not present (DARWIN, 2004).

Nevertheless, Darwin defines only humans as moral beings, the ones able to make the complex moral choices that not even the most intelligent horses or gorillas can. Our unique moral also sense allows us a unique sense of community because our decisions are based on rational thinking over the causes and consequences of our actions. A moral being is for him:

[...] one who is capable of comparing his past and future actions or motives, and of approving or disapproving of them. We have no reason to suppose that any of the lower animals have this capacity; therefore, when a Newfoundland dog drags a child out of the water, or a monkey faces danger to rescue its comrade, or takes charge of an orphan monkey, we do not call its conduct moral. But in the case of man, who alone can with certainty be ranked as a moral being, actions of a certain class are called moral, whether performed deliberately, after a struggle with opposing motives, or impulsively through instinct, or from the effects of slowly-gained habit (DARWIN, 2004, p. 135).

Here again we can see that Darwin avoids stating that every human action shows moral superiority, spontaneously and definitely. Although humans alone can be ranked as moral beings and human actions alone can be called moral, he restricts moral actions to actions "of a certain class", which means not all of them are moral. The varied nature of moral actions – impulsive, instinctive or after slowly-gained habit – suggest a theory still in progress, as well as Darwin's struggle with the limitations of contemporary science. Nonetheless, the definition

appeals to readers' pride when it hints to the human responsibilities entailed in having such a superior brain and singular capacity for understanding and analysing past, present and future.

Overall, it is not always easy to follow Darwin's definitions of instincts, habit, reason and so on, especially as he himself was doing his best to outline the differences among them. He believed that much of what is regularly considered instinctive, in both animals and humans, is actually the result of observation and learning, indicating the capacity to imitate and change behaviours and strategies that at first seem fixed. Instincts, as discussed earlier in chapter two, are the most primary mental impulses, actions that should otherwise require experience to perform, but are performed, say by an animal, more especially a very young one, without any experience: "When [such actions are] performed by many individuals in the same way, without their knowing for what purpose it is performed, is usually said to be instinctive" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 155). For example, a baby suckles, a new-born blind and tiny marsupial crawls to its mother's pouch, birds migrate, bees make cells, and so on. Darwin wonders to what point instincts are modified through natural selection and to what point they are universal, independent of the environment and the influence of other individuals. For him, every animal was capable of judgement and reasoning, even if only in very small doses, including lower animals such as insects, normally supposed to be driven by instinct alone.

Darwin believed in different levels of combination between instinct and learning. For instance, fear of particular predators is considered an instinctive quality, like when lion cubs avoid snakes instead of trying to eat them. Yet, fear must be adapted and strengthened by experience because new predators appear from time to time.

Fear of any particular enemy is certainly an instinctive quality, as may be seen in nestling birds, though it is strengthened by experience, and by the sight of fear of the same enemy in other animals. But fear of man is slowly acquired, as I have elsewhere shown, by various animals inhabiting desert islands; and we may see an instance of this, even in England, in the greater wildness of all our large birds than of our small birds; for the large birds have been most persecuted by man. We may safely attribute the greater wildness of our large birds to this cause; for in uninhabited islands large birds are not more fearful than small; and the magpie, so wary in England, is tame in Norway, as is the hooded crow in Egypt (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 158).

For Darwin, "man possesses the same senses as the lower animals, [and so] his fundamental intuitions must be the same. Man has also some instincts in common, as that of self-preservation, sexual love, the love of the mother for her new-born offspring" (2004, p. 87). If we compare all the things animals do that are considered instincts with what is considered instincts in humans, it seems we have fewer instincts than the animals which follow us closely in the evolutionary line. For example, African chimpanzees easily build platforms where they

sleep, and know which poisonous fruits and herbs to avoid and which ones they can eat. At the same time a man would eat the poisonous plants before knowing which ones are bad for him, and he does not know how to build beds unless he is taught to. Darwin concludes it does not mean animals have more instincts than humans, only that they may learn according to their capacity and needs, just like us. “We cannot feel sure that the apes do not learn from their own experience or from that of their parents what fruits to select” (DARWIN, 2004, p. 87).

#### 4.2.1 Sympathy

Some of the fiercest debates among the nineteenth-century scientific and philosophic communities involved whether morality was exclusively human or whether animals had the capacity for it also; whether it was a natural consequence of evolution, within reach of other species, or intrinsic only to us. In addition to Darwin himself, such debates involved Thomas Henry Huxley, the philosopher Herbert Spencer, as well as Leslie Stephen, to mention another great influence of Hardy’s. Spencer supported Darwin’s principle that certain animals had a capacity for moral choice, only in less developed degrees, and so human morality, or “human justice”, was the development of a subhuman, “animal justice”, though essentially of the same nature (SUMPTER, 2011, p. 668). He defended the existence of an “animal-ethics”, claiming that animals were capable of acting egoistically or altruistically depending on their interests such as, for instance, protecting their offspring.

That the individual shall experience all the consequences, good and evil, of its own nature and consequent conduct, which is that primary principle of subhuman justice whence results survival of the fittest, is, in creatures that lead solitary lives, a principle complicated only by the responsibilities of parenthood. Among them the purely egoistic actions of self-sustentation have, during the reproductive period, to be qualified by that self-subordination which the rearing of offspring necessitates, but by no other self-subordination (SPENCER, 2011, position 22416).

Differently, Thomas Henry Huxley argued that as the natural world is the product of a non-moral cosmic process, nature could not be the guide to human ethics. He clearly refuted Spencer’s assumption that human morality evolved harmoniously from natural laws with his injunction that we came to be at odds with them. The care for the weak and the sick, for instance, was an ethical imperative which demonstrated that human conscience often found it necessary to check nature’s indifference to human life (SUMPTER, 2011, p. 668). Regarding the supposed ethical improvement from one generation to the next, Huxley declared in his lecture “Evolution of Ethics”, in 1893, that if “character” is a sum of tendencies to act in a certain way,

which can often be traced through a long series of progenitors and collaterals, it can be justly said that “ ‘this character’, this moral and intellectual essence of a man, does veritably pass over from one fleshly tabernacle to another and does really transmigrate from generation to generation” (HUXLEY, 2009c, p. 15). However, individual character reveals itself dull or bright, weak or strong, vicious or upright, according to, mainly, its modifications by the confluence with another character, and there is no guarantee of improvement. For Huxley, the advocates of the so-called “ethics of evolution”, whose speculations adduce more or less sound arguments in favour of the origin of moral sentiments by a process of evolution, seem to be on the right track, “but as the immoral sentiments have no less been evolved, there is, so far, as much natural sanction for the one as the other. The thief and the murderer follow nature just as much as the philanthropist” (HUXLEY, 2009c, p. 31).

Thomas Hardy felt inclined to stand by Huxley’s view when he wrote that nature was not moral or immoral, but “unmoral” (HARDY, Letters 3, p. 231 *apud* in SCHWEIK, 1999, p. 63) and invoked in his most complex novels *Tess* and *Jude* diverse and conflicting ethical perspectives which at best suggested that “human moral worth cannot be reduced to some formula” (SCHWEIK, 1999, p. 58). His friend and mentor, Leslie Stephen, also endorsed the idea of an unmoral nature, and affirmed that the capacity for sympathy defined human morality:

Morality proper [...] begins when sympathy begins; when we really desire the happiness of others or, as Kant says, when we treat other men as an end and not simply as a means. [...] The human mother sacrifices herself with a consciousness of the results to herself. [...] The animal sacrifices herself but without consciousness and therefore without moral worth (STEPHEN, 1893, no paging).

Sympathy, the capacity to put oneself in another’s place, is more than a moral precept, but “a logical rule implied in the earliest germs of reason as a description of reasoning itself, so far as it deals with other sentient beings” (STEPHEN, 1882 *apud* SUMPTER, 2011, p. 669). Yet, Sumpter (2011) thinks that Stephen is unsure on whether sympathy must be conscientiously exercised or if it is part of human instinct. At the same time he mentions Kant, who believed reason decided moral duty, not natural inclinations, Stephen claims that instincts precede and shape reason, as in the case of the human mother who regards her sacrifice with a pure view on its effect upon the child: “The instinct which comes to regard such conduct as bad in itself, which implies a dislike of giving pain to others, [...] grows up under such protection, and in the really moralised being acquires a strength which makes the external penalty superfluous” (STEPHEN, 1893). Perhaps it is a bit confusing because of the example he chose – the mother and her child, that, at least in Darwin, is the typical example of the human link



with irrational nature – but Stephen seems inclined to assume that reason and the capacity for sympathy are intrinsic and somewhat fixed in human nature, not results of time and change. Thus, animals are left out because, although they can act similarly, they cannot understand the consequences and implications of their choices. It reminds us again of Rev. William Paley before him, with whom Stephen shared a religious formation, and who supported that only humankind understood life's trials to profit from the moral improvements they offered.

For Darwin (2004), sympathy, just like moral sense, was not exclusively human, and he points to different degrees of communitarian feelings easily found in different species that show this. He argues that all animals living in groups, which must defend themselves from enemies, must be at some degree faithful to each other; and those that follow a leader must be at some degree obedient to that leader for that community to work. Although there are certain species of animals that exclude or even kill sick members of a herd, for instance, in order to prevent the group from moving too slowly, there are many others that demonstrate sympathy when individuals of their own species are suffering, and even some that sympathise with the suffering of individuals belonging to other species, which is the closest to what humans do. Darwin exemplifies with the friendship he had observed between a dog and a sick cat, in which the dog showed concern for the cat; or also in the case of dogs that are extremely faithful to their human masters, and protective of them. Some animals can be very selective, by displaying sympathy only towards specific members of their species and not towards others; or they may simply ignore the distress of members of other species, as non-social species do, like lions and tigers. Such behaviours are observed among humans too, as seen by Darwin himself in some of the aboriginal tribes of considered uncivilized places. To him, the civilized human is the one who has so far best overcome barbarism through the capacity to act sympathetically by combining reason and experience, the key elements for the flourishing of any community:

With mankind, selfishness, experience, and imitation, probably add [...] to the power of sympathy; for we are led by the hope of receiving good in return to perform acts of sympathetic kindness to others; and sympathy is much strengthened by habit. In however complex a manner this feeling may have originated, as it is one of high importance to all those animals which aid and defend one another, it will have been increased through natural selection; for those communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring (DARWIN, 2004, p.130).

Thomas Hardy's interest and engagement with those debates over emotion and instinct both in people and in animals has a wider significance than has previously been noted by contemporary criticism. They reveal the relevance of biological impulse to his understanding

of ethics. “*Jude* may offer a dark vision of the contemporary limits of human sympathy, but sympathy is also the focus of Hardy’s evolutionary hope” (SUMPTER, 2011, p. 666). It seemed important to Hardy that sympathy was not only a matter of conscious choice, but also a natural impulse; spontaneous, even if only to some people. Jude is a sympathetic protagonist who displays very well Hardy’s concept of advanced morality. In a scene such as the slaughter of the pig, Jude recognizes the animal as a “fellow mortal” (p. 60), just like him, a creature that acts the way he as a human being would act under the same distress, only it does not speak. It is not a matter of recognizing the pig as human or almost human, or demanding that the pig is able to memorize the Nicene Creed in Latin to recognize its worth and to sympathize with its pain. There are differences, there are degrees of evolution, and for Jude, the fact that he can control the situation and the pig cannot, that he can understand the causes and consequences its death involves, naturally demands that he act responsibly and sympathetically. Curiously, more than Jude himself ever realizes, such way of thinking he shares with Sue is what best shows how superior he and she are to the lower animals.

Acts of sympathy in Hardy characterize a kind of optimism that sometimes is difficult to notice in his fiction because they apparently do not amount to anything positive for characters and are mostly forgotten by the end. Yet, Bates (1905) highlights that this self-effacing affection, this altruism demonstrated by many of his characters displays the human love that redeems humanity. In Hardy, the highest form of self-sacrifice seldom produces the conventionally expected and often results in mitigating sorrow, granting a world where permanent happiness and tranquillity are not generally attainable, where misery is all about us, and increase of love inevitably brings increase of suffering. But this scenario also reveals the true worthiness found in people, which simply rewards good with good itself.

The deeper Hardy,[...], whose manhood speaks to us through his spontaneous pictures of life more entirely than in his reflective remarks, I certainly call not a pessimist but an optimist, for he shows a worthy humanity, true to itself, unconquered by destiny, sanctified by love. This love, you say, brings no reward? How could it bring ulterior reward, a good beyond itself, when it is itself the final good? (BATES, 1905, p. 484).

#### 4.3 THE BEGGARLY QUESTION OF PARENTAGE

In the competitive human social environment acts of sympathy or of unselfishness, are usually interpreted as choices that injure instead of fortify the fight for survival. Darwin’s emphasis on individual struggle produced several readings of natural selection mechanisms throughout the decades that pointed to the opposite of the importance of community feeling.

When Herbert Spencer (1864, p. 468) adapted the principles of natural selection to social studies and coined the expression “the survival of the fittest” (often mistakenly attributed to Darwin) the idea of an individualist dog-eat-dog culture, where the ends of surviving gain more importance than the means to it, became gradually popular and later would be popularly known as social-Darwinism. Not only selfishness was incompatible with Darwin, but Spencer himself emphasised that the survival of the fittest depended on strong communities formed by strong individuals (HODGSON, 2004). Nonetheless, he defended in his *laissez-faire* philosophy that if people were economically less dependent on the state, they would instinctively form communities based on mutual affinities and be fortified by it, as well as naturally selected (SPENCER, 1969). The clear disadvantage of the poor in such scheme found support not only in a crude reading of the theory of natural selection, but in the antipathy commonly found in the late nineteenth century intelligentsia towards the masses that crowded cities like London (CAREY, 1992). Hardy himself dealt with conflicting feelings about the masses and the popular allegations that they generally lacked vitality, individuality, and often even souls:

You may regard a throng of people as containing a certain small minority who have sensitive souls; these, and the aspects of these, being what is worth observing. So, you divide them into the mentally unquicken, mechanical, soulless; and the living, throbbing, suffering, vital. In other words, into souls and machines, ether and clay (HARDY, 1989, p. 45).

Finding a balance between sympathy and aggressiveness becomes very difficult in the complex Victorian society that liked to play by its own rules. Darwin’s corroboration of Spencer could be indirectly found in the many instances when the naturalist complains about human vanity and interference on natural balance, although directly Darwin never supported any philosophical or political movements on population control or segregation. One common social Darwinist premise was that human society grew uncontrollably because of our habit of protecting the weak instead of allowing nature to select and eliminate them when necessary, as Spencer proposed (CAREY, 1992). The problem was that survival in large cities was much more a matter of social and financial fitness than anything connected with survival under natural circumstances. Supported by common prejudices projected on the masses which included their habit of having more children than they could decently raise, such arguments tended to justify the indifference of governments and the intellectual strata towards the poor.

In 1904, replying to Rev. S. Whittell Key’s letter on the subject of sports, an older Hardy ponders on the effects of scientific advancement in the collective perception of the value of life. He sees in the cruelty of blood sports a proof that humanity in general had not yet emerged from

barbarism. For him, those practices consisted merely in “watching a fellow creature, weaker or less favoured than ourselves, in its struggles by nature's poor resources only to escape the death-agony we mean to inflict by the treacherous contrivances of science” (HARDY, 1989, p. 345). The plight of animals, stuck between the cruelty of nature and the cruelty of humans, who either shoot them or use them for scientific experiments, reminds Hardy that:

In the present state of affairs there would appear to be no logical reason why the smaller children, say, of overcrowded families, should not be used for sporting purposes. Darwin has revealed that there would be no difference in principle; moreover, these children would often escape lives intrinsically less happy than those of wild birds and other animals (HARDY, 1989, p. 345).

This is what Richter (2011, p. 8, 15) calls a “vulgarized” notion of the natural selection theory, turning Spencer’s “survival of the fittest” into a “survival of the best”, by emphasising the normative aspects that later would justify Darwin’s connections with the lethal biopolitics that tainted the twentieth century. If poverty or number of family members could legitimize unfitness, then there should be no reason to prevent poor children from being used for blood sports, or to be dissected alive in physiology studies, as animals commonly were. The attempt to justify our lack of sympathy with Darwin’s logic, for Hardy is an attempt to justify human barbarism which consists in the deliberate infliction of pain on whoever cannot defend themselves, whether animals or children, rich or poor, just because one can.

Jude and Sue are typical members of the masses from whom sophisticated intellects or selfless responses to problems would be hardly expected. As their number of children increase at the same rate as their poverty, they are simply as irresponsible as they are expected to be by their society. Yet, Hardy wanted Jude to be seen by readers as a responsible person: from his never abandoning his crusty old aunt, either helping her personally or getting someone to stay with her in his place, to his leaving his dreams and his studies unfinished in order to marry Arabella when she claimed to be pregnant. Jude’s most unselfish and disinterested act happens when Little Father Time arrives, his supposed son with Arabella, born in Australia after their separation, and raised so far by her parents. Sue asks Jude if the boy can really be his son and he answers “It hits me hard! [...] It may be true! I can’t make it out”. Sue’s eyes fill and she says “the poor child seems to be wanted by nobody!” (p. 264). Jude then comes to himself:

‘What a view of life he must have, mine or not mine!’ he said. ‘I must say that, if I were better off, I should not stop for a moment to think whose he might be. I would take him, and bring him up. The beggarly question of parentage – what is it, after all? What does it matter, when you come to think of it, whether a child is yours by blood or not? All the little ones of our time are collectively the children of us adults of the

time, and entitled to our general care. That excessive regard of parents for their own children, and their dislike of other people's, is, like class feeling, patriotism, save-your-own-soul-ism and other virtues, a mean exclusiveness at bottom (p. 264).

The fact that nobody wants the boy makes Jude remember his own childhood when he felt unwanted too, and all the rejection he has felt so far. He complains about the excessive regard parents have for their own children, which allows them to injure the lives of those who do not have anyone to fight for them, as another example of mean exclusiveness that exists in so many forms. Whether Little Father Time is his biological son or not becomes a trifle when the situation is seen from a collective perspective, where all adults and children are members of a great family, biologically connected. By dismissing the “beggarly question of parentage”, because “all the little ones of our time are collectively the children of us adults of the time, and entitled to our general care” (p. 264) Jude evokes Hardy's saying 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” (HARDY, F. 1994, part 2, p. 346). Hardy's “conscious world” knows of no boundaries and whole species become parts of larger families where the primary impulse of self-preservation takes form in the care for each other. The ideal of a big and solidary community touches Sue as well, who thinks the arrival of Father Time “brought into their lives a new and tender interest of an ennobling and unselfish kind, it rather helped than injured their happiness” (p. 278).

#### **4.3.1 Nobler Inclinations**

Here Hardy clearly remembers his studies of Auguste Comte's *System of Positive Philosophy*, published in 1865, which claims that communities ruled by sympathy are humanity's greatest strength to deal with the absence of a ruling divinity. Comte was one of Hardy's early influences and awoke in him the feeling that the concept of God was a contradiction in a radically imperfect world. According to Comte, it is the very rejection of the Christian doctrine of our fallen nature that allows the gradual development of humanity and the preponderance of nobler inclinations towards ourselves and others. Instead of absorbed in celestial objects at the expense of the sympathy for one's neighbours, Comte's positivist society was characterized by a strong family unit and by altruism. Over time, those nobler feelings would become organic improvements, transmissible to future generations (MALLET, 2009).

Comte's general law of human social and intellectual development passed through three successive stages which humanity must, according to him, follow: “the Theological stage, in

which free play is given to spontaneous fictions admitting of no proof; the Metaphysical stage, characterised by the prevalence of personified abstractions or entities; lastly, the Positive stage, based upon an exact view of the real facts of the case” (COMTE, 2009, p. 34-35). From a purely provisional, to another that was no more than a stage of transition, the third was the only permanent or normal stage, a state of awareness which would enable humanity “to take a comprehensive and simultaneous view of the past, present, and future of Humanity” (COMTE, 2009, p. 35). Mallett explains the three stages:

Theological stage, natural phenomena and events are ascribed to the will of a supernatural being, and the political order to divine governance. In the Metaphysical stage, supernatural accounts give way to the notion of abstract “virtues” or “powers” supposed to inhere in the physical world, “God” dissolves into “Nature,” and political authority is referred to theories of rights, popular sovereignty, and the social contract. In the Positive stage, the notion of a supra-human deity is rejected as untenable, questions of first and final causes are dismissed as fruitless, and speculation about things-in-themselves is superseded by inquiry into the regularities governing the relation of phenomena to each other (MALLETT, 2009, p. 22-23).

The third stage is basically where Darwinian natural science arrives years later, looking for “things-in-themselves” and rejecting supernatural first causes and intentions; with people capable of comprehending their past, present and future. What Comte did, before Spencer, was to observe and study human society and relations the way natural science does with the natural world. His positivist system represents “the definite acceptance of society; a system which regulates the whole course of our private and public existence, by bringing Feeling, Reason, and Activity into permanent harmony”, and developing each element of our nature to make “the general working of the whole more coherent” (COMTE, 2009, p. 340).

Society is unified, and individuals within it are like cells within the human body; each time one dies, it is replaced by another, “without detriment to the whole” (MALLETT, 2009, 23). Society always transcends the individual, and any claim to stand outside it is self-defeating; the very language in which society is couched is already a social form. The strength of the social organization depends on the conscience of individual insignificance in face of the group; the fortified sense of community consequently diminishes the sense of individuality. Caring for one another is everyone’s duty because it is what fortifies the whole structure.

Mallett explains that the Comtean replacement of the theological form, based on dogma and the supernatural, for a new one celebrating humanity, or what Hardy defined as the expression of “nobler feelings towards humanity and emotional goodness and greatness” (HARDY, 1989, p. 358), was an attempt to readjust human ethics: “the bringing into harmony of two areas of human thought, metaphysics and morality, which had developed and must

develop along similar paths, but had done so at different speeds” (MALLETT, 2009, p. 23). Angel Claire in *Tess* is an example of a Hardy character who already “discredited the old systems of mysticism” and starts to question “the old appraisements of morality”, and who concludes that they were at odds: “He thought they wanted readjusting” (HARDY, 2005b, p. 360). In the same way, Clim Yeobright in *The Return of the Native* rejects moralities and the religiosity he grew up in but which became senseless to him. When Jude dismisses “the beggarly question of parentage” he takes this eagerness for readjustment to a level Comte would approve, where sympathy cannot be sacrificed for anything, and the altruistic family of humanity becomes stronger by rejecting trifles such as paternity issues.

Here Hardy’s confidence in such deliberate acts of altruism weakens as he recognizes that extending the reach of sympathy to the whole of society opens infinite possibilities for human suffering. Jude and Sue can barely live at the sight of suffering rooks, worms, rabbits, trees and so on. Furthermore, following the patterns in Hardy’s fiction, family bonds in *Jude*, even when eagerly embraced, are rather more dysfunctional than functional and hardly ever help with anything (MALLETT, 2009). Father Time ends up marking the family’s ultimate decline into poverty, despair, separation and death, despite all good intentions involved.

Beer (2009) reminds us that Hardy’s response to Comte, like in every other area of his intellectual life, was bound up with his interest in evolutionary ideas. Consequently, Comte’s general view of society over the individual loses strength for the novelist because Hardy could not avoid singling out the individual over the crowd; to look sympathetically at someone like Jude who fights against stereotypical roles, who does not see himself a mechanical member of the mass, bound to fulfil a predetermined role, but as someone who is able to reason and to see the inconsistency between what is expected of him and what he feels. Nonetheless, in Darwinian natural science, despite the focus on the individual as promoter of change, the importance of strong communities to produce these strong individuals is also undeniable. It is clear in the outcome of the novel that Jude and Sue pay a high price for detaching themselves from the social body, trying to transcend it. A result Comte would also approve.

But Hardy was quick to understand that the post-Darwinian thought challenged man’s place in nature as one of priority, opposing Comte who saw human centrality as essential (MALLETT, 2009). Huxley defined Comte’s “positivist religion”, also known as the “religion of Humanity, as “an “incongruous mixture of bad science with eviscerated papistry” that instead of clarifying the way of humanity towards better science, actually substituted one kind of idolatry for another; one in which, instead of God, humanity worships itself (HUXLEY, 2009a, p. 370-371). For Huxley, there was nothing to worship in a “wilderness of apes”, and he

declared Comte's knowledge in physical, chemical, and biological science to be amateur; with good intentions dulled by an air of superiority (HUXLEY, 2009a, p. 371).

Probably the hardest part for Hardy in leaving Comte behind was abandoning the idea of progress still attached to the Lamarckian evolutionary theory of increasing complexity of organisms. In spite of considering human will limited, Positivism proposed to guide humanity towards its more refined, more sophisticated version, aiming at a future where old problems, like diseases and poverty, could be eradicated and greater harmony could be reached. With the scientific discoveries and advancements of the nineteenth century taking place much faster than in previous centuries, it was not a difficult assumption to make or believe. Spencer contributed too: instead of the permanent recovering of lost ground described by Darwin, he understood the evolutionary process, under its primary aspect, as "a change from a less coherent form to a more coherent form consequent on the dissipation of motion and integration of matter" (SPENCER, 2011, position 35741); a system in which improvements accumulate, all the character is retained and nothing is ever lost. The popularity of evolutionary theories among Victorians lead to assumptions that the world had been inherited by them at its pinnacle of development and they were the bearers of a bright progressive future. Beer says this is a recurrent conception that tends to confirm every age's values since then. "The apparent historical determinism of evolutionary ideas loosely applied [...] tends to justify society as it now is, as a necessary phase in progress. The idea of development makes it seem that all past has constantly aspired towards becoming our present" (BEER, 2009, p. 14).

#### 4.4 PROGRESS AND DECAY

At the same time Darwin's story of process and development tended to be interpreted as a story of progress (although he had tried to make it clear that progress was not an inevitable rule), alternative narratives of degeneration and decay simultaneously emerged, resonating in the uncertainties caused by the lack of human control over nature, as well as in the difficulty of knowing which ways were best to attain that progress. (RICHARDSON, 2004). This final part of the text discusses how the modest optimistic mood of altruism and improvement in *Jude* is overwhelmed by the opposite feeling: a sense that the natural fight might not be worth fighting; that humanity is incapable of dealing with the natural laws that produced us, but can no longer provide fulfilment for our needs. Jude and Sue' clinging to what they believe to be the will of nature, which would allow them the freedom denied by society, goes beyond escaping the necessity of pleasing a divine creator, or rejecting social conventions, and raises questions on



the limits of human intellectual development, as well as the limits to which we are willing to hope for an improved existence.

In 1859, the same year *The Origin* was first published, a process called *entropy* was named by William Thompson, later Lord Kelvin. Based on the rate of loss of radiant heat by the sun, he concluded that unless sources then unknown could reverse the problem, inhabitants of the earth would not continue to enjoy the light and heat essential to their lives for many millions of years longer. Thompson's theory both undermined Victorian confidence and challenged Darwin because it imprinted a sense of urgency that did not match the amounts of time required by natural selection (RICHARDSON, 2004):

Relentlessly attacking the idea of natural selection, Thomson in fact offered a bleaker vision than Darwin's, though one more compatible with a religious view of the world. "To those who fully admit the immortality of the human soul, the destruction of our world will not appear so dreadful", wrote Darwin in 1876, confessing that for him the idea that the sun would grow too cold to sustain life was "an intolerable thought" (RICHARDSON, 2004, p. 158).

Deeply attentive to new ideas, especially when they involved the ingredients of theology versus science, Hardy had a conversation in 1875 with his friend Leslie Stephen on "theologies decayed and defunct, the origin of things, the constitution of matter, the unreality of time and kindred subjects" (HARDY, 1989, p. 109). In his notebooks he copied a passage from James Cotter Morison's *The Service of Man. An Essay toward the Religion of the Future*, published in 1887: "Decay & death stamped not only on man & his works, but on all that surrounds him. Nature herself decays – Alps – Sun himself – from the animalcule to the galaxy" (HARDY *apud* RICHARDSON, 2004, p. 159). The inevitability of the passage of time and the anxieties associated with it provoked in Hardy a notion that suffering was a consequence of change: "It is the on-going – i.e., the 'becoming' of the world that produces its sadness. If the world stood still at a felicitous moment there would be no sadness in it" (HARDY, 1989, p. 46). The continuous movement of the world, with no certain destination, reminded Hardy that "nothing is permanent but change" (HARDY, 1989, p. 380)<sup>1</sup>, with a poignant feeling that nothing good is retained, that everything is eventually lost.

Progress and long-term improvement are clear elements of Jude's scholarly scheme. He thinks he can not only change things for the best for himself with hard work, but also contribute for the general improvement of his fellow men. After failing to be admitted into the university,

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<sup>1</sup> Hardy refers to the expression "As a German author has said", but echoes the famous saying by Greek philosopher Heraclitus, usually translated into English as "Nothing is permanent except change".

Jude still makes plans for Little Father Time to do what he could not: “I hear that soon there is going to be a better chance for such helpless students as I was. There are schemes afoot for making the University less exclusive, and extending its influence” (p. 387). The belief that there is always a right way of doing things, and one has only to be able to find it, encourages him. Jude sees hope even in defeat, as he demonstrates years later on his return to Christminster: “I may do some good before I am dead – be a sort of success as a frightful example of what not to do; and so, illustrate a moral story” (p. 316). In his desire for a meaningful existence, Jude is willing to become an example of failure if that helps the next generation to do better. Once he is convinced short-term progress is too difficult, if not impossible, supporting others makes him feel accomplishing something and contributing to the future.

Despite being resentful, Jude shows maturity when he recognizes that circumstances were stronger than his personal qualities; that the environment is bigger than the individual:

[...] it was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one; and my impulses – affections – vices perhaps they should be called – were too strong not to hamper a man without advantages (p. 316).

This reading of his defeat is very Darwinian when it comes to the impossibility of virtual change in a single life span, but perhaps still naïve when Jude seems to truly believe that in two or three generations the hardworking Fawleys will reach a comfortable social position, as if the rewards were natural consequences of their efforts. Jude is right when he realizes he is not in control of everything, what he may not have realized at that point is that evolving does not necessarily mean succeeding. He admits being carried away by circumstances, “a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness that makes so many unhappy in these days!” (p. 316), but regrets the help and directing he did not receive when he needed to know whether or not to follow uncritically the path he believed to be right, without considering his aptness or bent, thinking he could have reshaped his course accordingly: “I tried to do the latter, and I failed. But I don’t admit that my failure proved my view to be a wrong one, or that my success would have made it a right one” (p. 316). Jude betrays the feeling that what prevented him from becoming one of those gentlemen in red and black that they see coming from the university was not his natural disposition, but his social condition, the poverty that left him at the mercy of his vices. Had things been different, people would see him pass into the university and say “See how wise that young man was, to follow the bent of his nature”, but instead, as a failure, they say “See what a fool that fellow was in following a freak of his fancy!” (p. 316).

Eventually, Jude begins to realize that individual progress is a possibility only as much as failure is, and that there is no directing or altruistic disposition that grants one from not being hampered by general circumstances. However, at that point he still targets the Church and the university as the culprits for his failure. His “sudden antipathy to ecclesiastical work, both episcopal and nonconformist”, rises under a smarting sense of injustice and from the inconsistency between his former dogmas and his present self. Yet, he refuses to leave Christminster because of an “ultra-conscientiousness which would not allow him to seek a living out of those who would disapprove of his ways” (p. 298). His candour when he recognizes that he had been merely pursuing upward mobility disconcerts readers, whose sympathies with him had been so acute (INGHAM, 2002): “Now I know I have been a fool, and that folly is with me [...] And I don’t regret the collapse of my University hopes one jot [...] I don’t care for social success any more at all [...] I bitterly regret the church, and the loss of my chance of being her ordained minister” (p. 119).

Paralleled with Jude and the problems related with faith and education, Sue and her criticism of the marriage laws reinforces the growing notion in both chief characters that if they could eliminate social impositions from their lives, things would be simpler and happier. When Little Father Time arrives, Sue makes a great effort to overcome her convictions and agrees to marry Jude in order to “make a more natural home for [the boy] perhaps” (p. 265). It does not last long because the presence of Widow Edlin restores the ominous link between present and past and checks all optimism with the torments of family history. The tales of the ancestor hanged and gibbeted, the child who died, and the mother who went mad right before the wedding day, bring back all the bleakness and tragedy connected to the Fawleys. Father Time, who now calls Sue mother, says after hearing all that: “If I was you, mother, I wouldn’t marry father!” (p. 272). The next day, at the marriage office, Sue tells Jude that although the intentions of the marriage contract are good and right for many, she and he are a “queer sort of people” that feel about it in ways others still do not. She thinks the forced ties destroy cordiality and willingness, as they observe in an unhappy couple getting married near them:

Everybody is getting to feel as we do. We are a little beforehand, that’s all. In fifty, a hundred, years the descendants of these two will act and feel worse than we. They will see weltering humanity still more vividly than we do now, as ‘Shapes like our own selves hideously multiplied’ and will be afraid to reproduce them (p. 276).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> She is quoting Shelley’s *Revolt of Islam* Canto III, stanza 23.

Sue's projection of humanity turning into a hideous multiplication of itself clearly contradicts any idea of improvement. The image supports the cousins' wish to substitute imposed conventions for what Saldivar (2000, p. 41) calls the "lawful order of natural logic and unit", in which their desires would be directed by the will of nature. Sue justifies the misfortunes of marriage by claiming it to be unnatural: "it is none of the natural tragedies of love that's love's usual tragedy in civilized life, but a tragedy artificially manufactured for people who in a natural state would find relief in parting!" (p. 206). The freedom of unions without contracts would be the first step for people to multiply only when they wished to (considering children are generated only inside wed lock, of course). The problem is that Jude and Sue's notion of this privileged system of law demystifies along the narrative as a fantasy. It is not more than a hypothesis, a fictional construction that would allow the orderly conduct of human business, but not an irrefutable truth. And "if the order of 'natural' law is itself a hypothetical construct rather than a 'natural', occurrence in the world, then there is no necessary reason to suppose that it can, in fact, provide relief" (SALDIVAR, 2000, p. 41). The sense that the truth lies beyond the "artificial system of things" (p. 209) is bitterly betrayed by the death of their children; social and natural environments are not so separate after all.

It is Sue who perceives the mistake and says: "We said – do you remember? – that we would make a virtue of joy. I said it was Nature's intention, Nature's law and *raison d'être* that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us – instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart" (p. 328). Confused, she inverts her principles as a kind of self-punishment, telling Jude that they must pay for having made of nature a false god: "What dreadful things I said! And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word!" (p. 328). Whether born inside legal marriage or not, children are bound to live in a world of suffering, which confirms her previous idea of an unmanageable humanity, multiplying carelessly and disorderly. When the children die, she says: "It is best, perhaps, that they should be gone. – Yes – I see it is! Better that they should be plucked fresh than stay to wither away miserably!" (p. 328). Jude, however, is less resigned: "Yes [...] Some say that the elders should rejoice when their children die in infancy. But they don't know!" (p. 275).

Hardy had an opportunity to express the feeling that it was sometimes best for children to die than to face the horrors of being alive. He wrote in 1891 to Henry Rider Haggard and his wife, whose ten-year-old son had recently died, expressing "sympathy with you both in your bereavement. Though, to be candid, I think the death of a child is never really to be regretted, when one reflects on what he has escaped" (HARDY *apud* TOMALIN, 2012, p. 224) Tomalin (2012) wonders whether Hardy really believed that or he was just trying to be awkward; or even

if he was definitely embracing a Schopenhauerian perspective that living is not worth the trouble. One can hardly comfort parents in that manner. The fact that Haggard never answered the letter may mean he interpreted this strange way of expressing sympathy as a consequence of Hardy's ability to believe in several conflicting things at once.

Little Father Time, the aged soul in the body of a child, is the key figure that destroys Jude and Sue's idea that if they could do whatever they wanted they would be happy. Goode (2000, p. 116) argues that their wish to return to a golden age of simplicity, like they found in Stoke Barehills, could never eradicate sorrow because "the outraged human sense in things" is part of human nature; it is a feeling which grants that even if everything could be entirely to one's liking, one would straightway feel for something else – the trees, the rooks. Humanity is, or has become, naturally overcome by suffering and disappointment due to its continuous and unfulfilled needs. The doctor who examines the children's bodies tells Jude that Little Father Time is an example of boys arising in the present generation with advanced views of the senseless circumstances 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" (p. 326). The boy's appearance and gloominess suggest from the beginning that Little Father Time is more than a regular character, but Hardy's allegorical figure representing the coming of the human ultimate resignation over the realization that, as Jude quotes from the chorus of Agamemnon, "Nothing can be done. [...] Things are as they are, and will be brought to their destined issue (p. 328).

#### **4.4.1 The Wish not to Live**

The loss of the will to live suits the logic of Schopenhauer, whose philosophy Hardy began reading in translations in 1883, although he had been available in the English periodical press since the 1870's. Schopenhauer saw the world as malignant, and God and immortality as illusions, which conversed with Hardy's fatalism, as well as with his complaints that "philosophers seem to start wrong; they cannot get away from a prepossession that the world must somehow have been made to be a comfortable place for man" (HARDY *apud* TOMALIN, 2012, p. 223).

Schopenhauer's account of a world as a seething turmoil of mutually antagonistic elements found special resonance in the post-Darwinian emphasis on death and the struggle for existence (MALLET, 2009). According to Schopenhauer, the natural incapacity of people to deal with their needs and expectations lead to a never-ending state of unfulfilled wishing and

consequent suffering. The perpetual state of life consists in looking for fulfilment, for gratification – often only temporary – to relieve our desires and then waken new ones. There is no way out of suffering because we never stop wanting; we can only reduce it through the conscious renunciation of the will as much as possible (SCHOPENHAUER, 2004). Thinking of Darwin, it can be said that the same needs that drive the daily fight for survival, starting with the most basic necessities for food and shelter to the most sophisticated human desires for luxury or a university degree become the actual source of unhappiness because every need, when and if entirely fulfilled, is always instantaneously substituted for another. We never have what we need, what we want, independently of what we have. When Jude drinks, he needs more drinking; when he is in love, he cannot live without the one he loves; if he cannot graduate at Christminster, his son can, and so on. Plus, his awareness of the unfulfilled want of others, considering the sensitivity and capacity for sympathy of characters like Jude and Sue, increases suffering even more.

Suicide seems to be the way to cease pain; it is how the advanced Father Time chooses to do it. However, for Schopenhauer, suicide does not solve the problem of suffering; it affirms the will instead of denying it. People who commit suicide want to live, only are unsatisfied with the lack of fulfilment in this world for their strivings, and so are deluded that by destroying life, the will is relinquished, while in fact, the only thing relinquished is the individual appearance (SCHOPENHAUER, 2010b). The image of the boy, hanging between the other two dead children, in a Christ-like act of sacrifice, not only is apparently incongruous in a novel that rejects Christianity so firmly but also contradicts Schopenhauer's premise that continuing to exist with an attitude of resignation in the face of all suffering is greatly superior to committing suicide. Despite its shocking and allegorical elements, the tragedy of the children does not result in salvation for Jude and Sue through the sacrifice of innocent blood or anything like that. More crudely, it eventually pulls readers back to the subject of Darwinian competition and the social problem of poverty and overpopulation with the note left by the boy: "Done because we are too menny" (p. 325). The macabre pun which allows the misspelled *too many* to be interpreted as *too much like men*, also endorses Hardy's conviction that "tragedy and grief are the lot of both children and adults because of their participation in a common humanity and that even the innocence of children is no protection against the inexorable forces responsible for unmerited misery in the human condition" (GORDON, 1967, p. 299).

Hardy shared with Darwin a feeling that nature's laws were somehow flawed (BEER, 2009) and thought that the more we know about them the more helpless we become:

The truth seems to be that a long line of disillusionive centuries has permanently displaced the Hellenic idea of life, or whatever it may be called. What the Greeks only suspected we know well; what their Aeschylus imagined our nursery children feel. That old-fashioned revelling in the general situation grows less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws, and see the quandary that man is in by their operation (HARDY, 2006, p. 143).

The laws are defective because humanity has outgrown them; they fail to provide a meaningful context to substitute the one provided by the rejected creationist model which granted a solution for every problem, simply because everything happened for a reason. Our frustration is the result of our over awareness, so what the natural world offers is no longer enough. In 1889, Hardy declared:

“A woeful fact—that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. Even the higher animals are in excess in this respect. It may be questioned if Nature, or what we call Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from invertebrates to vertebrates, did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences. Other planets may, though one can hardly see how” (HARDY, 1989, p. 227).

This is Hardy being fully himself, taking a good look at the worst before anything else, thinking that only life on other planets could offer the solution for the human plight. Earlier in 1884, in the germ of the poem “The Mother Mourns”, he had already written: “We have reached a degree of intelligence which Nature never contemplated when framing her laws, and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfactions” (HARDY, 1989, p. 169). Perhaps partly due to the necessary agent in the English language already discussed here and partly because of the writer’s habit, Hardy never totally gave up on referring to nature in a manner which made it appear like a sentient entity, capable of intention and feelings of regret or revenge. However, as he ponders on the defective laws to which humanity is submitted, he reveals that he is aware of this inadequacy and, like Huxley, consciously uses nature as subject to call attention to the contradiction of acknowledging its unlimited power and then asking for sympathy in return. In 1902, he wrote a letter concerning a review of Maeterlinck’s *Apology for Nature*, in which he discusses nature’s hidden morality, and the superiority of its greatness in relation to any conceptions of meaning and justice humankind may hold:

Pain has been, and pain is: no new sort of morals in Nature can remove pain from the past and make it pleasure for those who are its infallible estimators, the bearers thereof. And no injustice, however slight, can be atoned for by her future generosity, however ample, so long as we consider Nature to be, or to stand for, unlimited power. The exoneration of an omnipotent Mother by her retrospective justice becomes an absurdity when we ask, what made the foregone injustice necessary to her

Omnipotence? So you cannot, I fear, save her good name except by assuming one of two things: that she is blind and not a judge of her actions' or that she is an automaton, and unable to control them: in either of which assumptions, though you have the chivalrous satisfaction of screening one of her sex, you only throw responsibility a stage further back (HARDY, 1989, p. 338).

Hardy argues that pain is part of existence, and natural laws will never bend themselves to attend human anxieties or demands for significance. Whether blind to “her” actions or an automaton with no control of them, either definition is nothing more than the futile attempts to charge nature responsible for not responding to our expectations. He finishes saying that trying to read nature’s intentions is an old story though, and warns that “to model our conduct on Nature's apparent conduct, as Nietzsche would have taught, can only bring disaster to humanity” (HARDY, 1989, p. 338-339).

Disaster takes form in *Jude* with separation, suffering and death; with characters’ poignant permanent feeling of misunderstanding the very world that produced them and that once seemed so promising. Little Father Time appears as an exaggerated version of young Jude, whose suffering for himself and for all living creatures provokes a sense of his life being unnecessary and a burden to others. What Jude only suspected, his son is born already knowing: there is nothing to expect, nothing to learn, nothing to live for, and so he comes into this world already yearning to leave it. This extreme awareness of the frustrations of life before they happen allows no hope of an improved existence; it suggests that only those who do not understand the implications of the human condition (and animal and vegetable) can enjoy being alive. A single generation of boys like those would drive humanity towards extinction or at least leave it seriously endangered. Yet, Hardy knew his Darwin better than that, and would not embrace one definite alternative to the future. He knew changes do not take over at once, the evolutionary process is gradual and conditional until a certain point, and so the mere thought of Little Father Times appearing could actually look like an opportunity for us to reconsider many things, and perhaps take more coherent paths. The continuation or extinction of humanity, as it happens with every other species, are two naturally possible ways continuously being shaped in front of us, affected by the slightest details, including our choices; granting nothing, but allowing a good range of motion, at least when it comes to our capacity to reflect over it all.



## CONCLUSION

Growing up brought responsibilities, he found. Events did not rhyme quite as he had thought. [...] As you got older, and felt yourself to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it. If he could only prevent himself growing up! He did not want to be a man (p. 12).

*Jude the Obscure* is, in many senses, a novel about growing up, about having responsibilities, about feeling at the centre of one's time. On a first level, it is about the growing complexity of the protagonists' lives, mainly Jude's, who in his difficult childhood perceives the threats he cannot prevent meeting in the future because he cannot prevent himself growing up. At another level, the novel is about growing up in the sense of an increasing awareness of humankind when it comes to Thomas Hardy's hopes for a more sophisticated understanding of the interrelatedness and interdependence of life, and the human responsibilities towards ourselves, the planet, and all living beings on it. Based on Darwin's theory of natural selection, this awareness involves the delicate subject of humanity *not* being the centre of the world, but rather, another product of evolution; it involves understanding that divine purpose and justice are human constructions of significance and that we make demands upon an indifferent and unconscious universe in our continuous attempts to make sense of our existence.

It is a novel about growing, about developing, which in many moments catches readers thinking of growing as improving, as progressing, increasing in complexity with all character and advantages retained, as Spencer proposed. However, growing in *Jude* follows Darwin: it actually means becoming, changing, adapting, living and dying, acquiring some bits and pieces and losing others: transforming. The final destination of every being, of every species, is unknown because change and development, as Hardy understood, based on the natural science of his day, does not mean heading towards an ideal self, to a happy ending, to the solution of the problems and doubts that seem to appear as the result of growing up. The becoming of the world produces change, not perfection; evolving consists of the constant attempt to recover lost ground the best way possible, otherwise one is left behind.

Jude does not want to grow up, just like a meditative young Thomas Hardy did not want to either: "Reflecting on his experiences of the world so far as he had got he came to the conclusion that he did not wish to grow up" (HARDY, 1989, p. 20). Growing up demands action, decision-making, and the wisdom to differentiate right from wrong, something that

seemed particularly difficult at the busy end of the nineteenth century, a period marked for its many social, religious and scientific changes in England and in the world; marked by the rise of Darwin's evolutionary theory and all the ethical and cultural challenges that came with it. Characters in the novel are not completely aware of the historical turmoil in which they live and of the representativeness of their seemingly personal conflicts for the future of human consciousness as guardians of the Earth. Yet, often they are conscious that their actions can reach further than they did before, as, for example, when Jude feels he is contributing to future generations by struggling to attain a university degree, or when Sue believes that in the future people will understand the injustice of forced marriage. Both fight for the right to decide their fates in a moment when the role of the individual in society was changing fast, but at the same time Darwin pointed to the individual as the igniter of change, the crowded cities, the poverty and the class system still denied those who belonged to the masses to stand apart. But changes take time, they are slow, like Darwin taught us, and only the future could answer what the outcome of the cousins' struggles would be. Perhaps if they were real people now, more than a century after the novel, they would be happy about some things, and disappointed about others.

Anyway, Jude cannot avoid growing up and facing this scary world because there is no alternative but to move forward; denying life is not the way to deal with one's problems. So, after crying and feeling sorry for himself, "like the natural boy, he forgot his despondency, and sprang up" (p. 12). From childhood, Jude identifies a flaw in the terrestrial scheme in which "what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener" (p. 10), meaning that not everybody is provided for, that natural balance and individual welfare are different things. It provokes in him a feeling that reflects Hardy's own feelings very well: that the natural laws are unperfect, that they bring too much pain, to people as much as to other forms of sentient life. The part in which young Jude thinks "He did not want to be a man" (p. 12) is significant because, of course, it means he would prefer to remain a child, but it also hints to the problematic human existence from which the world demands so much and returns so little. When Jude grows up, and he will, he cannot be anything but a man (he cannot be a woman or a dog), so the specific distaste about becoming one finds resonance many years later when his son kills himself leaving the tragic note in which he states that the problem was being "too menny" (p. 325). The flaw in the terrestrial scheme does not involve only the struggle to survive, the lack of resources for everyone, but being a man: Jude's capacity – the human capacity – to see that flaw in the scheme and to feel for those who are not provided for.

Nevertheless, Jude is still young and he has hope. He does not relate with the town where he lives, and its people, which encourages him to look for a future in education and social

ascension, and to be as far from Merygreen as possible. His dreams turn to the university of Christminster, a place where he supposes he can develop his intellectual potential and be happy. Yet, finding one's path is not as simple as it seems, and at the same time Jude learns that there are obstacles which will not allow him to enter the university, the spiritual certainties that lead him there in the first place are contradicted by the way the world unfolds before him. Understanding the demands of life, dealing with rejection, with love and his desires is harder than expected and, as Jude finally learns, neither nature nor society abide to personal dreams.

*Jude the Obscure* was published in book form thirty-six years after Darwin's breakthrough *The Origin of Species* appeared causing commotion among the scientific and non-scientific communities. *Jude* was not the first nor the only Victorian novel to display elements that can, especially nowadays at a distance, be easily associated with the latest evolutionary ideas of its time, however it shows Thomas Hardy as one of the writers of the period who were able to perceive the multiple possibilities opened by the theory of natural selection. The perspective of a world ruled by randomness and chance, instead of divine purpose, provided a sense of liberty that helped much with the problem of the human arrogance that Hardy, and Darwin himself, despised. It desacralized humankind as the direct descendants of God and rightful heirs of the world, and exposed how limited our reach of knowledge was, both within and beyond what the eye can see. *Nature* and *natural world* became household names as did the body of natural elements and the interactions among them, animate and inanimate. Nature is not a conscious entity, it cannot substitute God as moral mentor or persecutor; it does not value merit or show preference for humans, animals, or anyone. What prevails is the daily struggle of each individual, each species, to survive; death and extinction are parts of this cycle as much as life and endurance, and there seems to be little that can be done about it.

The problem about being a man, Jude finds, is that the frail human pride is too dependent on the existence of free will. Christianity defines free will as the human privilege to take the right or the wrong path according to one's wishes, despite the assumption that there is always a path that pleases God and another that does not, so making mistakes is basically our opportunity to err, repent and atone. Taking the virtuous side grants, through genuine faith, afterlife salvation, besides a good amount of control over the natural phenomena here on earth, as, for example, when we pray for rain to stop, and it stops. When Darwin presents a world that does not revolve around human interests, he threatens both the individual free will and the human claim of control over nature, as well as the assumption that everything in it was made for our pleasure. On the one hand Darwin frees humanity from the necessity of trusting a path written by the ruling entity and of pleasing this entity in order to succeed, but on the other hand

we are thrown in a competition against natural forces that, although it seems like complete freedom at first, strips human existence from the mystic advantages over the rest of the world, taking control from our hands again.

Darwin's basic premise of natural selection is that "as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 51). Only the most adaptable, the smartest, the most attractive – and the luckiest – survive and transmit their traits to the next generation. Competition is fierce because resources are limited, which means that the ones who do not succeed eventually become food for others (or example to others, perhaps, as Jude does), promoting natural balance and allowing species to be refined and adapted to the ever-changing environment. Jude feels he has no choice but to detach himself from the crowd through study and hard work and expect that his efforts will someday be rewarded. The problem is that Jude is still too attached to the tradition in which he grew up that says that the world is ruled by a conscious power and its moral conditions. Simultaneously to his desire to have control over his future by attaining a kind of education that is not normally available for people like him, he is never really sure if such a thing is possible. Even as Jude tries to push aside the superstitious of his great-aunt, following his will does not bring happiness either.

The idea that taking nature as a ruling force provided complete control over our lives because it eliminated the human subjection to God was easily contradicted by Darwin's first attempts to explain that the unpredictability of nature extended to the human self. Blood descent might be as determinant to personality, tastes and tendencies as it is to physical appearance. A child is not a straight combination of a mother and a father, but the blend of long family lines, ramifications in tree form, randomly combined. When we look at this tree in reverse, not only human species, but the whole animal kingdom converges into common trails of ancestry and hints of never before thought of shared traits. In closer, family terms, inheritance in Darwin indicated it was difficult to determine the end of family influence and the beginning of personal choice; neither it was possible to control or predict people's actions or the environment because every element of it permanently seeks to fulfil their own interests.

Acknowledging humankind as part of the animal kingdom, subjected to the newly discovered natural laws, was hard for Darwin's early readers, and still is in many aspects for modern ones. The idea that instinctual, primitive drives are in constant conflict with reason is offensive to human intelligence because it obstructs free will. In the novel, sex and drinking make Jude feel like an inferior creature, debased by urges he believes he should be able to

control. But it is Sue who best illustrates the struggles against the biological trap and how it covered both the biological and the social spheres of life. Sue is aware of the limiting situation of women in a society that attests male superiority in every possible way, and trusts her intellect to claim freedom from standards that establish how women should be and act. However, her hopes for change are frustrated by the popular reading of natural laws as the extension and confirmation of the way Victorian society worked. Despite the deconstruction of human origins and roles proposed by the theory of natural selection, stereotypes of gender were more confirmed than refuted by Darwin who still saw woman as strangely separated from her species counterpart. Considered less evolved and less rational, women posed almost as the missing link between the civilized man and his animal ancestors by displaying both civilized traits and acute instincts such as famous motherly love. Sue's womanhood did not provoke estrangement to most contemporary readers of Hardy when she ends the novel practically mad; on the contrary, it seemed appropriate, despite her discourse and attitude. Sue's rejection of the roles of mother and submissive wife made her seem abnormal to some, or a burden to the hero to others, differently from Arabella, the woman who "makes a man" of Jude (LAURENCE *apud* WATTS, 1999, p. 29) and who apparently behaves as a woman should. In terms of natural selection, Sue seems suicidal because she does not want to fulfil her role in the cycle of life by renewing it. On the other hand, she is the kind of girl who, unhappy about those limitations, slowly introduces important changes to Victorian society, claiming for rights that she thought fit suited men, suited women also, such as in education and freedom to deal with their bodies.

Sue is not really suicidal; she never thinks of ending her life like Little Father does. Her problem is detaching herself too much from the crowd, something that both in the natural world and in Hardy's fiction, is likely to provoke rejection. Darwin explains that radical differences, aberrations, although natural, are not usually well accepted in any group because they bring unbalance. Individuals born with "sudden reversion to the perfect character" (DARWIN, 2008b, p. 203) tend to live difficult and short lives because they are different from the average individual of the species. Jude and Sue, although very compatible between themselves, feel excluded for being different from the majority. They arrive at the conclusion that the problem is not them, but the way society is artificially arranged. Following Hardy's premise that "the civil law should be only the enunciation of the law of nature" (HARDY, 2016b, p. 7), both Jude and Sue openly reject social conventions and look for comfort in living and loving as they think right, with nature as a guide to their feelings and desires.

As the novel unfolds, the cousins, as well as Hardy himself, attempt to recover the former sources of enchantment and fulfilment, that were found in the natural world of previous

novels: the sense that the mere act of living the moment made life worth living; that the very non-duration of existence and its tiniest aspects were the main features that made life so precious. Nature in Hardy's earlier novels inspired welcoming feelings, not feelings of rejection. The running water, the falling leaves, the pettiness of human affairs in comparison to the rest of the universe, everything would make things meaningful, everything seemed simple and authentic. However, in *Jude* the link between humankind and nature is damaged, distant, and the few suffering creatures that cross the protagonists' path only remind them of the cruelty of natural laws and of humankind. It becomes clear that Hardy thinks it a mistake to model our conduct on our interpretation of nature, as much as it is modelling it on the divinity, expecting for goodness and mercy in return. Jude and Sue expect too much from nature, but only the sense of ending, loss, and of wanting remains; the sense that the human conscience grew to be at odds with the environment that produced it, that there is no understanding between them anymore. Their wish to live in a community ruled by altruism ends up betraying an unfounded belief in progress, as well as opening infinite sources of pain through the unguarded extension of sympathy. Jude and Sue's sensitivity to both their own as well as to others' unfulfilled aims make them unfit for this world, unfit to deal with life's demands.

*Pessimistic* has long been an adjective associated with Thomas Hardy to explain the absence of happy endings, the apparently meaningless suffering of his characters, and lack of moral lessons in his stories. What the present dissertation attempts is to dismiss easy definitions by reminding readers of the author's background, his thoughts and his life and times, in order to promote a fresh look at his bleakest book and perhaps reconsider dusty labels and truths that become attached to the literary discourse along time, just like they do with life in general when we stop talking about them. Hardy's reflexions on the reassessment of society, history, religion and the human self, proposed by Darwinian natural science, are clear in a great part of his prose and poetry, and provide material for continuous discussion, based on the universal human aspects of literature that keep them relevant. It is not difficult for twenty-first century readers to relate with Jude's trouble when he realizes that the world does not provide for all; what perhaps is more difficult is to overcome the sheer pessimism attributed to it and try to look at the questions the novel raises the way Hardy did, with the wonder of discovery present in the busy post-Darwinian nineteenth century. Although it has been a long time now, with both Hardy and Darwin seemingly so internalized in our culture and in the way we see the world, when discussion dies, when authors are remembered by name but are not read anymore, it becomes easier to jump into hasty, prejudiced, and anachronic conclusions, and so refreshing things from time to time is vital. As Beer (2009, p. 4) says, "One's relationship to ideas depends significantly

on whether one has read the works which formulate them. Ideas pass more rapidly into the state of assumptions when they are unread. Reading is an essentially question-raising procedure”.

Besides his works, Hardy’s letters and notebooks make his deepest respect for Darwin and Huxley clear as the best scientific thought of his day, yet, the consequences of human evolution were his main causes of preoccupations and his pessimistic tone (SCHWEIK, 1999). Beyond the competition and the struggle for survival, Hardy saw in Darwin the importance of human reasoning and choice, as the only beings capable of understanding the responsibility involved in the unfair equation of life. As the best adapted and most intelligent race, it was for Hardy an ethical imperative that humanity overcome its barbarous origins, marked by the often unnecessary and deliberate infliction of pain on those who cannot defend themselves. Not exactly because it contradicts the mechanisms of natural selection, but because our awareness of the flawed terrestrial scheme makes us conscious agents in it. The highly developed human intellect, which he thought exceeded the frames of nature, provides us with the capacity to understand and evaluate our choices, considering their effects over ourselves and over others; thus, it not only allows us to, but demands that we act sympathetically and responsibly.

Hardy believed, or at least tried to nurture the belief that altruism must be fostered because it was the only hope of humanity, to fight back the oppressive environment and make the best of earthly circumstances (MILLGATE, 2006). Although agnostic, he remained perpetually alert to the possibility, however faint, of some “blessed hope”, something left aside, still unknown, that one day would appear. “Abstractly, theoretically, generally he could see only an incomprehensible and probably meaningless universe; concretely, practically, specifically he cared deeply about the human condition, perceived value in individual lives” and asserted values as charity and what he called “loving- kindness”, traditional and officially Christian, because he thought such things could indeed bring benefit (MILLGATE, 2006, p. 379). The fact that Hardy, as a fictional writer, took things personally, did make him suffer, but also gave him what he called his “meliorist” philosophy, inspired by the hope that knowledge could somehow bring improvement. In 1904, he defended himself from an accusation of pessimism by saying that his novels are no more than a “plea against man’s inhumanity to man, to woman and to the lower animals”:

For instance, people call me a pessimist; and if it is pessimism to think, with Sophocles, that ‘not to have been born is best,’ then I do not reject the designation. . . . But my pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs, and that Ahriman is winning all along the line. On the contrary, my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist. What are my books but one plea against ‘man’s inhumanity to man’—to woman and to the lower animals? . . .

Whatever may be the inherent good or evil of life, it is certain that men make it much worse than it need be. When we have got rid of a thousand remediable ills, it will be time enough to determine whether the ill that is irremediable outweighs the good (HARDY, 1904 *apud* MILGATE, 2006, p. 379).

Rational justifications of the world were exciting for minds like Hardy's because they opened the way for concrete reflexion and perhaps action against major problems that ravaged society like poverty and diseases. Finally getting rid of those "remediable ills", along with the ideas of progress of the age were thoughts too fascinating to be easily discarded. More abstractedly, Hardy's glimpses of optimism were based on the "possibility that 'the Unconscious Will of the Universe' was 'growing aware of Itself' and that it ultimately might become not merely conscious but sympathetic" (SPARKS *apud* MILLGATE, 2006, p. 413). The "meliorist" Hardy, however, never lasted long and he tended to resign to his position of observer again. In a letter to Frederick Harrison, the most famous advocate of Comte's Positivism in England, Hardy returns to the subject of blood sports to complain about the human difficulty in being moral and merciful when there is no bedrock of righteousness to rest on:

I, too, call myself a 'meliorist', but then, I find myself unable to be in such good spirits as you are at the prospect. In regard of Sport for instance, will ever the great body of human beings, of whom the commonplace & degenerate breed most, ever see its immorality? Worse than that, supposing they do, when will the still more numerous terrestrial animals – our kin, having the same ancestry – learn to be merciful? The fact is that when you get to the bottom of things you find no bed-rock of righteousness to rest on – nature is unmoral – & our puny efforts are those of people who try to keep their leaky house dry by wiping off the waterdrops from the ceiling (HARDY, 1907 *apud* MILLGATE, 2006, p. 413).

Hardy found it very difficult to reconcile the facts that humanity resulted from the same evolutionary laws that created all other living creatures – some of them so strikingly similar to us – and at the same time, the human sense of morality, of right and wrong, was so much at odds with the way the natural world worked. Those like Hardy, who believed sympathy made the difference, felt their efforts to find support in nature useless; they felt permanently wiping off the water in a house with a leaky ceiling, as the natural laws neither corroborate nor reject completely the values projected on them. Although people were able to see the common origins shared with animals, the implications of the Golden Rule – treating them as we want to be treated – were not obvious for many. Animal suffering in *Jude* illustrates Hardy's wish to find nature's hidden morality – or at least a morality that makes sense to us – by defining worthiness through characters' kindness towards the vulnerable. However, he could not help felling that



every time people defined worthiness in this way, they were only trying to mirror their own convictions on nature to justify them, just like Jude and Sue trusting nature to guide their wishes.

Hardy thought that interpreting the natural world in order to make it fit personal beliefs or established truths was one of the main obstacles to be overcome before humanity would be able to consider a less arrogant, less antagonistic relation with its natural roots. Religion and old religious interpretations of the world were for Hardy the most harmful illusions that supported human selfishness and prevented a clearer, rational understanding of life. In his last novels, most notably, *Tess* and *Jude*, “he was particularly concerned with the inimical relationship of religious mores to human lives, scriptural references repeatedly appear in contexts which suggest that Christianity is a pervasive hindrance to the fulfilment of human aspirations” (SCHWEIK, 1999, p. 56). Jude tries to escape the cruelty of nature by having a religious and intellectual education, believing that one complemented the other, but he finds the institutionalized faith of his times to be incoherent, exclusivist and even more unfair than nature. Hardy thought that the Victorian religious and educational systems were hypocritical and based on obsolete theist values, distorted in order to favour established moralistic views, the social status quo and institutions, represented in the novel by the university of Christminster.

Around the end of the nineteenth century, the tradition of natural theology was not only threatened but already largely dismantled by Darwinism, and nature, society, and the human self were passing through a process of desacralization, severed from the inherent significance, value, and meaning of a divinely created and designed world. Jude hopes for his son that the university would become more accessible to poor students in the future; nonetheless, the dissociation of religion and knowledge behind such changes was a gradual and complicated process that involved more than questions of faith versus science, but also of power. Despite many Victorians themselves were convinced that they were embattled over a war of science against belief, it is now difficult to point at natural science as the sole culprit for the decline of religion. There was a mixture of complex, often unselfconscious motives, involving identity, ambition, status, and preferment. “Religious tensions were part of a greater struggle between the forces of conservatism and the forces of change, indeed between an old and a new theodicy” (EISEN, 1990, p. 2).

It is important to remember that Darwin’s breakthrough evolutionary theory and all its consequences were not the mere pursuit of personal and solitary whims, but responded to the scientific and cultural agitation of his times. Placing the theory of natural selection in the cultural discourse of the end of the nineteenth century works within the culture and responds to its exigencies; it responds to questions of particular urgency among Victorians: “questions

about the sources of authority (religious, political, and epistemological), about the relations of the personal and the social to the natural, about origins, about progress, about endings, about biological and social organicism” (LEVINE, 1991, p. 2). The enthusiasm with which Victorians received Darwin’s rebuke to the creationist model tells much about the urgency they felt for alternatives. Telling people that the world was not made for their benefit and that other lives were not merely made to serve their needs and pleasures somehow fitted already unstable convictions as to the actual human predominance over the natural world and time itself. Survival and extinction, descent and forgetfulness, being briefly alive and struggling to stay so, living in an environment composed of multiple other needs, coupling and continuing, and one day ceasing to be: all the fears, pressures and desires involved are alerted without any particular attention to the human person. “This is a history of a world in which the human has a place but has not always been present, and where other kinds have each their own lost and fitfully recorded histories” (BEER, 2008, p. ix).

In 1920, a seventy-nine-year-old Hardy still declared having no philosophy at all, but merely “a confused heap of impressions, like those of a bewildered child at a conjuring show” (HARDY, 1989, p. 441). He remained intellectually active and alert his whole life, welcomed new thoughts, embraced some more than others, but refused until the end to authenticate truths or to stop raising possibilities. Hardy promoted discussion in his works, in *Jude* he promoted polemic, even hatred, some would say on purpose, as an author who was not afraid to touch delicate subjects, but never as the holder of answers. Hardy apparently knew that as change never ceases, questioning and discussion would go on – and must go on – as well. *Jude* is a novel of contrasts, where characters move radically from believer to incredulous, from pagan to religious fanatic, from hope to doubt, but never really from doubt to certainty. There is death, there is tragedy, yet instead of answers, questions stimulate more questions because Hardy never offers straightforward outcomes, much less clear approval or disapproval of characters’ dealings and decisions. Along decades of attempts to read *Jude the Obscure* as a rounder, moralized novel, it continues to undermine the very debates it provokes. This is perhaps the reason for *Jude* to keep its provocative tone and form over the years, contrasting with many other novels written around the same period, and which are more moderate and conventionally inserted in their household labels. *Jude* was never an easy reading, and if it shocked in its times, now it hardly matches the expectations of studious but often unseasoned twenty-first century readers when it comes to novels written by famous Victorians.

Underneath its undeniably, emotionally bleak façade, *Jude the Obscure* is a novel capable of providing a sense of freedom due to the absence of some frequent Victorian literary

*clichés*. In it, neither the male finds transcendence through education and vocation, nor the female through marriage and motherhood. On the contrary, the narrative continuously reinforces the ominous indications that “You shan’t learn! [...] You shan’t labour! [...] You shan’t love!” (p. 327). This sense of freedom is what Penny Boumelha (2000, p. 16) calls “a certain intellectual exhilaration” derived from its refusal either simply to replicate those gendered structures of transcendence as if they were somehow natural, or to generalize across them as if they had no social effectivity. As part of its airs of modernity, *Jude* provides an unsettling, unsentimental argument against stereotyped versions of the myth of personal fulfilment based on the most cherished life ideologies celebrated in novels, with characters both eventually either getting what they worked hard for and/or learning the true value of things through the acceptance of their roles in the society which they belong.

*Jude* is a novel with potential for the deepest considerations on the human ethical role and responsibilities that came with Darwin’s evolutionist theory and its consequences to human-animal-environment relations. It is a discussion that should never die, nor be taken for granted or forgotten, because the more time passes, the more essential it is to remember that the same doubts that unsettled Darwin and his contemporaries and which made them look for alternatives to the answers they already had are still relevant. More than a look at the worst, or a fist raised against God, *Jude* proposes us, twenty-first century readers, as it did with other generations before, a reflection over our own priorities, our sources of authority, and, why not, a good look at the future. Nature is cruel, the fight for survival and for happiness will not soften, humankind is not the centre of the universe, and time passes slowly, continuously and indifferently. However, it is in our capacity to reflect on the countless possibilities that lie ahead that comes choice, and this, although not absolute, although no harbinger of truth, allows humankind to rely on something more than chance. According to Goode (2000), it is by *not* underestimating the pessimism in *Jude* that we are able to embrace the shy optimism of its will. To Jude, there is no way out of that barren place, no way out of the difficulties in which he is inserted, no short-time progress, except for the illusions confirmed as illusions from beginning to end. Although the impasse is derived from specific conditions in the novel, they become universalized and Jude represents the whole educated proletariat and even the whole human species in face of limitation of the environment. Through Jude, the voice of the obscure gains articulation and thus calls out and replies that he was not seeking in the first place. The mere fact that as a boy he can look at the brown and bare surface of the field and say “how ugly it is here” (p. 8) is a sign that he sees beyond that.

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