The first stage in the process of evolution of consciousness, as Hardy perceived it and delineated in his novels, is the dissipation of moral blindness and initiation into knowledge. This process involves a movement away from myopia to vision, ignorance to knowledge and from subjectivity to objectivity. In Hardy's novels the characters are continuously engaged in a process of thinking and meditating that opens up the gates of knowledge which leads to the knowledge about others as well as about oneself. Hardy sees life as a ceaseless moral and social struggle in which each new experience bestows upon man new knowledge and awakening. Hardy's characters learn through suffering as the tragic experiences of life clear away the cobwebs of illusion and fantasies, fads and fallacies, prides and prejudices and thus enable them to approach the issues in life with an unbiased mind and distinct vision. Hardy puts much emphasis on the establishment of an evolutionary scale where on human change bases itself. As it is to be a change of heart antecedent to change of mind, self-knowledge comes to the characters in a series of self-assessments.
Far from the Madding Crowd (1874) is one of the six major novels of Hardy that represent many facets of human understanding and perception which the characters attain while developing and growing according to the kind of consciousness they achieve individually during the course of their experience in life. In this novel, we perceive a gradual movement that leads to the evolution of consciousness through dissipation of moral blindness and nebulousness of mind through a series of disenchanting and eye-opening experiences. Dale Kramer pertinently comments that the novel traces Bathsheba Everdene's development from "a state of moral solipsism and narrow vision to one of moral expansion and wider sympathy."¹ The novel enfolds the gradual process of growth toward self-knowledge which is a prerequisite to the knowledge about others.

Bathsheba Everdene is governed by instincts and hardly ever thinks. She is an irrational girl who acts recklessly without any thought for the consequences. She is vain and haughtily independent in spirit at the immature age of twenty when we meet her for the first time. She is recklessly flirtatious who ignites the fire of love in the heart of Farmer Gabriel Oak, otherwise a solemn and reserved person.

¹ Dale Kramer, Thomas Hardy: Forms of Tragedy, p.31.
Her folly and childishness comes to surface in her reply to Oak's proposal of marriage:

I want somebody to tame me. I am too independent and you would never be able to, I know.²

Ignorant and inexperienced Bathsheba cannot assess the real worth of Oak, "whose virtues ... (are) as metals in a mine", and whose "defects (are) patent to the blindest."³ So, this scatter-brained girl can perceive the defects only and rejects his suit. From the very beginning we expect a drifting, wayward and anchorless journey in the life of this vain girl who is marked by a savage feeling of independence. In her, we find contrary emotions tagging at heart which represent her confused consciousness and hazy-perception. It is because of the duality of perception that her workmen call her "contrarikind".⁴ Hardy performs the useful office of a perfect anatomist of her divided heart. The very first few chapters of the novel establish Bathsheba as a vain-glorious girl who looks on her in the looking-glass as a fair product of nature in the feminine kind. Infact, She is dreamy and prejudiced as well as impractical and naive. She has the responsibility of a big farm to manage. After dismissing the bailiff on the charge of theft, she shoulders the whole

2 Thomas Hardy, Far From the Madding Crowd (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.35.(Hereafter this title shall appear abbreviated as FFMC).
3 FFMC, p.173.
4 FFMC, p.173.
responsibility, thinking she can manage the farm without the help of a male bailiff.

Proud and wayward Bathsheba commits a serious mistake out of her childishness. Bathsheba whom her people call "head-strong maid", and who is dominated by "pride and vanity" is hurt to see that Farmer Boldwood takes no notice of her maddening and hypnotising beauty either in the Church or at the Corn Exchange. Out of pique, she sends him a valentine inscribing on it: "Marry Me". Thus, unwittingly and recklessly she invites a train of sorrows and sufferings for herself as well as for Boldwood and others connected with both of them in one way or the other. This valentine, meant as a spring folly and a harmless prank, is taken seriously by Boldwood. It sets his repressed passions aflame and his heart burns with, so far repressed, "genuine lover's love." Bathsheba disturbs the placidity of Boldwood due to "naivete in her", without knowing his nature, and without thinking of the consequences of it. She cannot imagine that this "little wildfire was likely to kindle... such a great flame". That Bathsheba is quite ignorant about Boldwood's nature is made clear in this comment:

5 FFMC, p.119. 9 FFMC, 140.
6 FFMC, p.114.
7 FFMC, p.139.
8 FFMC, p.103.
Bathsheba was far from dreaming that the dark and silent shape upon which she had so carelessly thrown a seed was a hotbed of tropic intensity.\(^{10}\)

In fact, she is so immature and impractical that after arousing Boldwood's repressed passions, she wantonly resolves "never again by look or by sign to interrupt the steady flow of this man's life";\(^ {11}\) and repents over her folly. She can not estimate the harm she has already done to this confirmed bachelor. In fact, "the evil is so far advanced as to make avoidance impossible";\(^ {12}\) So, there is no keeping away from the consequences of it.

Very soon Bathsheba realises her folly and "thoughtlessness".\(^ {13}\) She is remorseful and penitent, and admits her mistake genuinely before Boldwood:

> Oh, I am wicked to have made you suffer so".\(^ {14}\)

But the matter does not end here for she commits another blunder very soon out of pique. She dismisses Oak for his plain speaking. But the very next day she is made to realise and repent of her hasty decision. Her sheep get blasted and start dying one by one. Oak is the only person who can save them from the clutches of death by piercing their stomach at a particular point. She can not tolerate the scene of

---

11 FFMC, p.141.
12 FFMC, p.141.
13 FFMC, p.148.
blasted sheep writhing under pain and dying. This scene of
death and destruction makes her correct her folly and
requests Oak to come to her help. Thus circumstances make her
revise her "previous haughty-command"¹⁵ and replace it with
a coaxing plea. This incident humbles Bathsheba a bit and
her illusion of self-sufficiency is broken with the
realisation that she cannot do without Oak's expertise, skill
and wisdom. Previously she used to receive "thanklessly"¹⁶ the
tender devotion with which Oak served her "watching her
affairs as carefully as any specially appointed officer of
surveillance".¹⁷ Now she feels grateful to him for his
precious help. But inspite of the awakening of her realising
power, she is still and essentially characterized by her
pride and vanity. She does not listen to Oak's sound practical
advice regarding Farmer Boldwood's growing passion. In fact,
she, at this stage, is quite myopic, ignorant and
inexperienced. She is given to fancies, illusions and
fantasies. She is quite insensitive to the possibility of
great issue of little beginnings, as has already been proved
by her childish prank on Boldwood. Her chance encounter with
Sergeant Francis Troy is of the same nature. She allows
herself to be drawn into a bewitching conversation with him

¹⁵ FFMC, p. 162.
¹⁶ FFMC, p. 184.
¹⁷ FFMC, p. 184.
only to find to her surprise, that she is no match to Troy's silver-tongued flattery.

Impractical and dreamy, Bathsheba is ignorant of the cunning ways of the world of sordid realities. She is completely entranced by Troy, a dashing cavalryman. He fascinates her with "his penache and a sort of demon-lover quality" which as Desmond Hawkins says, "promises to satisfy her need to be mastered." Thus Bathsheba is thrown out of her wits by his sexual mastery over her within a very short period. He dazzles, unnerves and fascinates her combining the grace of ballet with the dexterity and daring of a circus-knife throwing act. It is a tour-de-force of its kind without any rival. Troy has "the effect of a fairy transformation" on Bathsheba, who enamoured with his gallantry and rough-straight-forward manners, falls recklessly in love with him. At this juncture, Hardy pertinently comments on Bathsheba's inherent folly:

We now see the element of folly distinctly mingling with the many varying particulars which made up the character of Bathsheba. Under the irresistible sway of Troy's charming and alluring ways, she appears to be "weaker than a weak woman who has never had any strength of throwing away" the effect of

18 FFMC, p. 217.
19 Desmond Hawkins, Hardy, Novelist and Poet, p.53.
20 FFMC, p.187.
21 FFMC, p.219.
22 FFMC, p.219.
a male hypocrite. As a matter of fact, it is a novel experience and being quite novice in the game of love-making, she is, at once, blinded by Troy's glittering embellishment "upon the very surface" as she cannot peep into his defects and deformities which "lay deep down from a woman's vision". Blind and myopic Bathsheba loves Troy "to the very distraction and misery and agony", and "thinks nothing of the perjury when it is balanced against her love".

Sincere and devoted Gabriel Oak forewarns Bathsheba against the trick and cunningness of Troy, and reminds her that she has almost promised Boldwood to marry, but she is so enamoured of and infatuated with him that she pays no heed to his timely warning. Her assessment of Troy's character is disastrously wrong. She takes him to be a conscientious youngman, blunt but always speaking his mind about a person plain to his face. Her infatuation with Troy's wooing with the display of swordsmanship shows how myopic and romantic she is. The exciting exercise of codness and nerve "brought the blood beating into her face, set her aflame to the very hollows of her feet and enlarged emotion to a compass which quite swamped thought". Now neither Oak's admonition nor Boldwood's remonstrance can check her hot passions of love.

---

23 FFMC, p.220.
24 FFMC, p.230.
26 FFMC, p.224.
growing and over sweeping her head and heart like a wild-fire. However, Boldwood's fury and threats against Troy actually start her off to Bath to warn him against the impending danger. She goes there with determination that she will close this love-chapter with the help of Troy. But she is quite "blind to the obvious fact that the support of lover's arms is not of a kind best calculated to assist a resolve to renounce him". Bathsheba who "could show others the steep and thorny way does not have the will to "reck'd ...her own rede". At Bath, she becomes an easy prey to Troy's manoeuvres and manipulations. He so works up her jealousy of some woman more beautiful than her that she marries him there and then. There can be no better example of her folly and ignorance than the act of her marrying Troy in spite of his warning that "his constancy could not be counted on" unless she becomes his wife at once. Thus she is beguiled and entrapped in a wedlock between "jealousy and distraction".

Soon after her marriage, the process of disillusionment and realisation begins. Troy proves to be a thriftless farmer who wastes Bathsheba's fortune on the horse-race track and proves out to be a rakish cad. For Bathsheba, their life comes to be a hell. Troy neglects her

27 FFMC, p.252.
28 FFMC, p.220.
29 FFMC, p.253.
30 FFMC, p.297.
farm at the harvest time when the storm is threatening to spoil the whole year's labour. He revels in drinking and dancing and perforces the workmen to drink themselves to stupor. He does not allow "such fidgets" to spoil his merry-making. He wants "drinking ... to be the bond of their union". Bathsheba, in her desperation, realises the folly of marrying such a reckless, irresponsible and drunken-fellow. This incident brings out the real colours of dazzling Troy's spirit. Bathsheba is cured of her romanticism when Troy throws her mistakes in her face. She comes out of the delusive world of love, romance and gallantry and sees the true state of affairs with wide-open eyes. By and by, her perception and understanding of the world around her is altered and modified. She is shocked at "the despairing discoveries of her spoilation by marriage with a less pure nature than her own". She regrets having "stooped to folly of this kind". Then comes the shocking and stunning revelation of Troy's illegitimate relations with Fanny Robin. This discovery completely shatters the web of enchantment she has woven around Troy. This experience and discovery constitute Bathsheba's education through three stages — realisation of her folly, awakening and spanning her movement from myopia to vision, and finally her adoption of sympathetic attitude toward others as a result of her

31 FFMC, p.283.
32 FFMC, p.288.
33 FFMC, p.322.
34 FFMC, pp.322-23.
physical and mental suffering. She comes out of the narrow-cell of self-smugness and begins to give consideration to other's thoughts and feelings. Troy undoes his union with Bathsheba with an emotional confession that Fanny was his real wife and Bathsheba is united with him merely through "a ceremony before a priest". Distracted and bewildered Bathsheba runs away from home with determination that she will never live with such a treacherous and deceitful husband. Bathsheba spends the night among dry ferns. In the silence of night and the haunting loneliness of that deserted place, she undergoes much thinking and ruminating. In that hour of cool thinking and reasons, she perceives the truth of social life:

It is only woman with no pride in them who run away from their husbands. There is one position worse than that of being found in your husband's house from ill-usage.

With the realisation of her social-duty, and after perceiving the irretrievable nature of things done, she returns home. She is now no longer a romantic, light-hearted proud elf. A shadow of reflection and solemnity that comes from "worrying perception" is discernible on her lovely face. By and by, Bathsheba grows out to be a self-confident farmer, and, as Dale Kramer says, "a chastened ...woman".

35 FFMC, p.353.
36 FFMC, p.359.
37 FFMC, p.328.
38 Dale Kramer, Thomas Hardy, p.31.
But her education is not yet complete in all respects. She is still dangling between "youthful fancy" and "the philosophy of maturer years". Though the web of illusion is broken and the spell of romance is gone, she is yet to attain to perfect and distinct perception and higher consciousness that alone can save her from wandering on the path of errors, and blunders.

However, the process of the growth of consciousness in Bathsheba shows a definite progression when she, remorseful and penitent, reaps the seeds of her follies and vanities. Being disillusioned, she is no longer the previous butterfly. Now she differs from "the less far-sighted" girl and is capable of perceiving clearly that her mistake had been "a fatal one". As self-awareness in Hardy inextricably involves the awareness of the world, Bathsheba comes to be enlightened about the world around when self-awareness dawns upon her. She recognises a real and trustworthy friend in Oak. After spending a night in the plantations and on swampy land in utter solitude, she wakes up in the morning to find herself a different person. The dormant and deep-seated aspect of her personality becomes fully active and apparent. Purged of her foolish romanticism, touched by the taints and tortures of the world and baptised in the fire of suffering, she emerges out with "a freshened existence, and a cooler

39 FFMC, p. 367.
40 FFMC, p. 383.
brain". The dreams of romance and gallantry flee from enlightened Bathsheba "like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing". Her awakening from night's sleep into the crimson light of dawn is symbolic of her awakened consciousness, illumined vision and clear perception which can make her see the realities of life. Nonetheless, she is still separated from truth by a thin veiling of a mist of early dawn. She needs a bit more schooling and warming of the sun to perceive clearly the whole panorama of life.

Still in the state of nebulousness of mind, Bathsheba, once again, stoops to folly. Though she appears wise and rational now,, but a few "irrational assumptions" that mark her personality still take hold of her rationality. 43

Boldwood's "staunch devotion" undiminished by circumstances, fills her with a guilt-complex. She becomes tender and sympathetic to him. In a moment of tenderness, she confesses to Boldwood:

My treatment of you was thoughtless and inexusably wicked! I shall eternally regret it. If there had been anything I could have done to make amends I would most gladly have done it.45

Taking advantage of such a weak moment Boldwood comes forward and renews his proposal of marriage and compels her to promise that if she ever marries, she will marry him only.

41 FFMC, p. 354. 45 FFMC, p. 415.
42 FFMC, p.355.
43 FFMC, p.149.
44 FFMC, p.413.
Bathsheba nearly promises to marry him after seven years if Troy does not turn up. Thus unwittingly, she tries to make amends for her previous folly, and recklessly invites anxieties, worries and complexities for her already disturbed flow of life. In this way she succumbs to folly once again while trying to be "wise and discreet". Burdened with a guilt-complex she decides to amend the wrong done to him "without any consideration to (her) own future at all".

On Christmas day, her efforts to "be just" to Boldwood are thwarted by sudden and mysterious appearance of Troy in the party. In a desperate effort to save his matrimonial hopes, Boldwood shoots Troy dead and surrenders to law. This shocking and sudden tragic reversal of situation sends Bathsheba "beyond the pale of activities" and in "a state of mental gutta serena", she is driven nearly mad by the realisation that a childish act committed two years back has started a chain of events, leading to murder and imprisonment and making her own life a saga of tears, troubles and tribulations. This realisation makes her assess and re-assess the whole course of her life and recollect her own thoughtless actions and whimsical behaviour in the past.

---

46 FFMC, p.418.
47 FFMC, p.419.
48 FFMC, p.442.
49 FFMC, p.446.
After Troy's death, Bathsheba is vitally engaged in a process of mental regeneration and moral purgation. With the wrecking of her reveries, dwindling of her hopes and the ruin of illusionary-self, she undergoes thereby a gradual and rapid transformation so much so that Liddy comments:

She is not the same woman.50

By now she seems to be ready for the penultimate steps in her transformation from a myopic and ignorant self to a subdued, awakened and enlightened mature woman. Ian Gregor pertinently comments that in some ways "the moral education of Bathsheba in which she learns to reject the illusionary world"51 is almost complete. The baptismal experiences teach her that the world is a mighty and destructive force and we cannot impose our own pattern on it; only a wise and temperate man like Gabriel Oak can find peace and security in it, and make it a better place to live in. Thus Bathsheba blossoms under the impact of adversity and evolves out from the state of myopia to the state of higher consciousness where she can evaluate the real worth of devoted, industrious, unflinching and undemonstrative lover Gabriel Oak. After such persistent and intense schooling for so long a time, she is enlightened completely so much so that "she seldom thought practical what she did not practice." 52 Thus from "a ramping

50 FPMC, p.445.
51 Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p.50.
52 FPMC, p.449.
girl" the stuff of which greatmen's mothers are made."
The last but not the least important lesson in the course of her schooling and chastising comes when Gabriel Oak informs her that he would be leaving England the next spring. Bathsheba suddenly finds herself all alone, quite helpless and miserable. By now she has become so dependent on him that he seems indispensable to her. This declaration sets her thinking and she concludes that she has been indifferent, cruel and harsh to Oak's unflinching devotion. With tears of contrition, genuine realisation and hearty repentence, she realises that her false notion of social superiority and refinement has kept her away from the only man worthy of being her life-partner. She cannot afford to "out-live the only true friendship she had ever owned." Now out of the web of prides and prejudices romantic illusions and fallacies, Bathsheba recognises the silent and perfect harmony that exists between the two. Finally awakened, chastened and experienced Bathsheba is united with wise, calm and practical Oak in such a union which "many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown" as it is based on the harsh realities of life. Thus Bathsheba progresses, in the words of Penelope Vigar, from "naive complacency to deepening self-recognition" through a series of actions and reactions to different situations in life.

The Return of the Native (1878) displays a twilight world of dreams and superstitions, romantic fantasies and misguided passions and savage independence of spirit. It portrays, as Penelope Vigar rightly puts it, "the tension between the real and the ideal, darkness and light, blindness, deceptions, dreams and illusions, which form an ever-changing pattern throughout the tale." This hazy world exists between the oblivion of night and the clear openness of day and is based on a distortion of reality polished by individual whims and obsessions, fads and fantasies, dreams and fallacies.

Almost all characters in the novel are myopic and naive; the major occupants of this world -- Clym, Mrs Yeobright and Eustacia Vye -- are extremely prone to illusions. While Eustacia's conception of reality is dim and romanticised, her attitude is constantly and erroneously based on a fantasy of freedom and a wistful longing for a glamorous and glittering life with "a Saul or Bonaparte" as her paramour. Mrs Yeobright "tied to the mundane level of human knowledge and error, is only half conscious of the other happier world of complete delusion or complete ignorance." she nourishes her own prejudices, fads and obsessions, and, thus, is quite grim

55 Penelope Vigar, Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality, p.128.
56 Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (London: MacMillan, 1974), p.37 (Hereafter the book will be cited as RN)
57 Penelope Vigar, Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality, p.129.
and obstinate. Whatever that happens against her ideas cuts her down with mortification. Like Eustacia, she is also busy spinning dreams of glory and greatness around her son who is doing excellently well as a manager of a rich diamond business.

To this world of dreams and fantasies, illusion and reality, Clym returns quite weary and disillusioned of the glamour and glitter of cosmopolitan life. After having five years of experience of urban life, he is awakened to the fact that "the idlest, vainest and most effeminate business" of this artificial life of pomp and show is insignificant and hollow. He returns to Egdon with the realisation that he can be a more useful part of the rustic life by following "some rational occupation among the people he knew best".

Disenchanted and disillusioned of the glittering Parisian life, he decides to do some worthy thing — "to spread the light of knowledge among the darkness of ignorance and superstition". Like Eustacia and Mrs Yeobright, Clym is also illusive and is occupied with his own fancies and idealism. He is also myopic and lives in a state of nebulousness of mind. That is why when he reveals his plans to his mother, she replies in a prophetic tone that his "fancies will be (his) ruin". Clym is obsessed with his idealistic plans and

58 RN, p.195.  60 RN, p.198.
59 RN, p.195.  61 RN, p.199.
and is motivated by a humanistic zeal and fervour to "clear away ... Cobwebs"\textsuperscript{62} of superstition and ignorance, magic and witchcraft by educating them. There is in his attitude something of the same illusion that is discernible in other characters. He seems to be as prejudiced against urban life as Eustacia is against heathery life. He is an impractical idealist and not "a well-proportioned mind"\textsuperscript{63} and thinks erroneously. Completely swayed by his idealistic aims, he overlooks the fact that "to argue upon the possibilities of culture before luxury to the bucolic world may be to argue truly, but it is an attempt to disturb a sequence to which humanity has been long accustomed".\textsuperscript{64} In fact, he is beating his wings in the air, quite forgetting the reality that he himself has risen to this comprehensiveness after getting satiated of material pleasures of the world, which are denied to them.

No doubt, Clym has attained to that higher state of consciousness where he becomes acutely aware of the quandary he is in, and the predicaments of those unfortunate people who are "going to ruin for want of somebody to buckle to and teach them how to breast the misery they are born to?"\textsuperscript{65} Nevertheless he is impractical and naive and lives in a state of mental haze, regarding the practical truth of life. With

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} RN, p. 199.
\item \textsuperscript{63} RN, p. 197.
\item \textsuperscript{64} RN, p.197.
\item \textsuperscript{65} RN, p.199.
\end{itemize}
his enthusiastic spirit of enlightening the dark corridors of the life of these rustic people, he falls desperately in love with Eustacia who is his counter-part. He is so infatuated with the bewitching and maddening beauty of hers that everything moves around her and she beams forth from her central point to infuse her presence in all that Clym sees now. Though Eustacia frankly expresses her hatred for the rustics, he decides to make her his life partner in order to fulfill the missionary task he has undertaken himself. This shows that he is still myopic. Even after seeing the shape of her "youthful dreams" Clym goes ahead passionately with his plan and marries her. Mrs. Yeobright aptly and pertinently calls him "a foolish man" who deludes himself about the nature of the loved one though he seems to have a dim awareness that "her tastes touched his own only at rare and infrequent points". However, Clym assumes blindly that Eustacia will abandon her longing for luxurious life of glamour and grandeur after getting his love. Thus he moves about in a world of willing suspension of disbelief. Mrs. Yeobright has a clear-sighted perception of Clym's juxtaposition of his ideas and his marriage with Eustasia and wisely comments:

66 RN, p.303.
67 RN, p.226.
68 RN, p.222.
You are blinded Clym. It was a bad day for you when you first set eyes on her.

Clym is really "blinded" and unwittingly thinks that Eustacia can be a good matron in a boarding school. He hopes to pursue his educational pursuit "by the assistence of a wife like hers". The apparent incongruity of purposes in itself should have been sufficient to induce Clym to think better of his decision. Being enamoured of and infatuated with Eustacia's hypnotising beauty, his mother's judicious assessment of Eustacia sounds to him to be a biased opinion of a jealous woman. Blinded as he is by his romanticism, he lets his passions get the better of his reason, and thus buys "an hour of bliss and many hours of sadness". Being prejudiced against his mother's harsh attitude toward Eustacia, he cannot get benefitted by his mother's timely and sound declaration that she will prove to be his disaster. Short-sighted Clym cannot see the paradox of marrying a pagan while himself being occupied with humanitarian zeal. Even the furze-cutter Sam can better understand that Eustacia is "quite a different sort of body" and is a misfit for the pursuit of teaching. On the basis of his choice of Eustacia, Mrs. Yeobright draws a conclusion that Clym is quite myopic and impractical:

69 RN, p.216. 71 RN, p.217.
70 RN, p.215. 72 RN, p.225.
Don't you see that by the very fact of your choosing her you prove that you do not know what is best for you.  

Thus with his "obstinate wrong-headedness" Clym hastens to marry Eustacia. H.C.Duffin pertinently comments on Clym's woeful life as a "tragedy of divergent aims". Clym joins hands with Eustacia among multiple misunderstandings and illusions and so does she. Myopic Clym enters a new world "where personal ambition(is) not the only recognised form of progress", with a hedonist wife, utterly selfish. Obviously such a union is wrought with tragic possibilities. Tragedy, in fact, is writ large on such a bond. 

Very soon, the process of disenchantment and disillusionment starts in the case of both, Eustacia and Clym. After a brief period of sensual gratification, Clym sets forth with his altruistic plans of "instilling high knowledge into empty minds". He devotes himself completely to this mission. Eustacia, who has married him solely with the purpose of transporting herself to the world of luxury and splendour, cannot withstand the "sight of books" which

73 RN, p.225.
74 RN, p.225.
75 H.C.Duffin, Thomas Hardy, p. 192.
76 RN, p.217.
77 RN, p.225.
seem "antagonistic to her dreams". Their emotional and intellectual incompatibility becomes discernible soon after their brief honeymoon revelries. Clym feels irresistibly propelled by an ardent love for truth of the purely intellectual kind with a craving to put all his power and resources into a project for the enlightenment of the rustic. By and by, he finds himself entrapped into a stultifying union with Eustacia and comes to realise that this union of an altruist with a hedonist will not flourish. He realises that Eustacia's voluptuous sensuality exercises a withering effect on his intellectual ambition. She proves to be completely averse to his altruistic impulses, Clym's despair is embittered by Eustacia's reckless and foolish day-dreaming. He is so completely disillusioned with his romantic love that he begins to regret his rash decision and hasty action of marrying her. In this regard Hardy comments:

Now that he had reached a Cooler moment he would have preferred a less hasty marriage. 79

After undergoing the first series of disenchantment, Clym begins to perceive that the first blinding halo kindled about him by love and beauty is rapidly extinguishing. He recognises clearly the absence of affinity between them. The effect of Eustacia's persuasions to shift to Paris or some

78 RN, p. 262.
79 RN, p. 230.
other fashionable city proves to be, as Hardy says, "a resolve" to chain himself more closely than ever to his books. Quite contrary to Eustacia's wishes, he becomes more "firm" in the intention as if the tendency of marriage were rather "to develop the fantasies of young philanthropist than to sweep them away". Recognising Eustacia's real motive of marrying him, he asks her in a disillusioned tone:

Has your love for me all died then because my appearance is no longer that of a fine gentleman?  

When the blinding hypnotism of romantic love is dispelled, Clym realises that the apparent harmony that seemed to prevail on their ill-tutored minds at the time of their marriage has now disappeared completely. He honestly and sincerely confesses his folly and ignorance before Thomsin:

I, who was going to teach people the higher secrets of happiness, did not know how to keep out of that gross misery which the most untaught are wise enough to avoid.

Thus Clym gets separated from Eustacia by a deep breach in their hearts after the death of Mrs. Yeobright.

Clym again plays the fool in the hands of emotions and sentiments. He is completely subdued by the crashing

---

80 RN, p. 269.  
82 RN, p. 275.  
81 RN, p. 262.  
83 RN, p. 332.
grief of his mother's tragic death, indirectly brought about by Eustacia's callous and indifferent attitude toward her. Clym becomes almost mad and his reasoning power is completely won over by his sentiments and misery. He laments the loss of the dead at the expense of the living one. Under the sway of instincts and emotions, he goes away from the light of clear reason and compassion and becomes brute in his attitude toward her. Determined to find out the mystery of his mother's death, he launches a mad haunt but succeeds only in exchanging his ignorance for misinterpretations. Deceived by the apparent meaning of Wildeve's presence at that time and Eustacia's refusal to open the door, he sees vile and immoral things in hallucination and goes to the extent of accusing Eustacia of infidelity and whorage. His callous treatment of Eustacia shows that she has not yet come out of his imprisoned self of ego. His private narrow world is inextricably mixed with the solid and objective exterior world like breath with mist. Wrapped in his subjective vision of things, he behaves like a man bewildered by intoxication, and hence has no power to distinguish what comes from himself from what is objectively there. Finally he becomes unable to do the right thing by his continuous and ceaseless stumbling and fumbling through the spiritual darkness equivalent to the darkness of the heath across.
whose tortuous surface he, paradoxically, can find out his way without faltering.

Slowly and gradually Clym marches forward on the path of mental illumination. After experiencing separation from Eustacia, he can see her with a less prejudiced eye and assesses her with a more sympathetic and kind heart. He admits that his accusations of Eustacia were unjustified and that he has neglected her. Exposed to a series of shattering and shocking experiences after her death, he emerges out of the labyrinth of sorrow and suffering as wiser, saner and more considerate to other's feelings. He acquires an exceptionally clear awareness of human nature and the cosmos. He is evolved to a higher state of consciousness so much so that even in his affliction, he would neither pray nor curse the divinity which is more or less irrelevant to his plan of living. He realises the futility of revolt against circumstances and becomes resigned to what life offers. He sees ruefully with clear eyed perception that the society and nature are quite indifferent even to the right aspirations of an individual member of it. He gradually acquires the profound comprehensiveness that wisdom lies in adapting ourselves to the circumstances, limiting our wishes to the rigorous conditions of life. He adopts calm and complete
resignation, as opposed to Promethean rebelliousness, as the means of converting the darkest dungeon like Edgon into a serene hermitage. He finally succeeds in establishing a perfect harmony with Edgon and its people, a harmony that comes out of the mature perception of life which bestows upon one repose. Having undergone traumatic and harrowing experiences of life, he is stripped off all illusions; his understanding of the world is rational now, for he renounces the emotional approach which the world has rejected. He succeeds in resolving his inner paradox between heart's longings and head's illumination. As a result of this evolution of consciousness, he turns his emotions to be perfectly in tune with what life and people have to offer him. Like a perfect sage, he sets out on his mission of spreading light among the people of heath.

The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886) is one of the most important documents, setting the broad lines on which his protagonists march forward in the process of learning and growing, and giving ample evidence of Hardy's concept of evolution of consciousness. In this novel too his protagonists attain to the stage of knowledge by discovering the truth in the sphere of conduct. Henchard is the most myopic character of Hardy. He is rash, egoistic, passionate, impulsive, aggressive and self-centred, always giving way to
his impulses and passions. Henchard's blundering nature sows seeds of trouble for himself as well as for others. He, invariably, makes the wrong move due to his ignorance, though basically he is a fair and honest man. During the course of his life, Henchard undergoes soul-making and sieving experiences, which not only purify his biased, rash and prejudiced self but also bestow upon him a realisation of truth and thus clear his dogged awareness. His process of learning and growing is inherent in gradual and continuous change from myopia to vision which implies his evolution through conditions in which he has to face bitter truths of practical life that, in consequence, bite into him altering and modifying his attitude of self-smugness. Though he is "tragically slow to learn" as F.R. Southerington has put it, he is not incapable of change. He learns definitely. Evolution of consciousness takes place in him, as in other characters, through a change of heart antecedent to change of mind, but he has to go a long way before he is purged of his faults and his blurred vision is cleared.

Hardy beautifully and efficiently performs the very useful office of clearing away the cobwebs of his prejudices, pride and ignorance, and thus enabling him to approach the questions of morals and ethics with unbiased mind and

84 F.R. Southerington, Hardy's Vision of Man, p. 103.
open-heartedness which alone give him true understanding of life. In the beginning, Henchard is short-sighted and impractical. He is dissatisfied with his life and does not understand the real cause of his miserable condition. Being myopic, he thinks that his wife and child are "holding him back from getting on" and "preventing him from making a fortune" as Merry Williams aptly comments.

Under the intoxication of rum, he makes a wrong and desperate effort to escape this situation and commits a strange and shocking blunder of selling his meek wife and child to a sailor for five guineas. He makes this abortive effort to put an end to all his miseries generated by her. Dale Kramer is absolutely right when he says that Henchard "cast off his wife as if she were an evil influence that has caused what he regards as his miserable plight". Thus supremely dissatisfied with the drabness of his life, he makes the most intimate relationship a subject to the cash-nexus. He is so myopic that he does not think of the far-reaching consequence of his immoral and illogical act. He cannot comprehend that this "intended stroke of liberation," as Irving Howe says, will "prove to be a seal of enslavement." The very first act of the novel makes it crystal clear that Henchard is myopic and ignorant not only about the practical affairs of the world but even to his true self. At the

86 Dale Kramer, Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy, p. 24.
87 Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, p. 86.
stage, he gives a free play to his egoistic impulses so much so that professor H.C. Webster compares him with Shakespeare's King Lear. He says that Henchard's first folly in selling his wife "inevitably recalls the first scene of King Lear". In the morning when the effect of rum is gone, Henchard realises the utter foolishness and callousness of his unopposed and unethical action. He realises that his conscience is doubly burdened. He realises the cruelty of exercising a property right over his wife and child. He regrets his virile act of simplifying his own conflicts by reducing them to "the ruin of good men by bad wives." He realises that it was a crime on his part to "discard that drooping rag of a woman with her mute complaints and maddening passivity". Thus, Henchard is remorseful and repentent in the morning. He realises the significance of his folly to the full and resolves to find out Susan and the child and to "put up with the shame as best as he could". He is filled with exhausted regret and self-contempt. Now when his ignorance is dispelled, he is sober, calm and repentent. He makes a mad hunt in search of his family. Albert J. Guerard wisely says that it is the crime of selling wife that gives origin to "his tendency to paranoia and self-flagellation". This incident proves to be a

89 MC, p.7.  
90 Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, p.84.  
91 MC, p.19  
disenchanting experience. He feels awakened to a new life and moved beyond animal wrath. His regret at having dealt his wife harshly, rather cruelly, is only the first of many such moments when his conscience stirs under the burden of his conscience and he becomes aware of the beastliness of his commitment. In fact, the sale of wife "constitutes" as Irving Howe says, "a kind of fortunate fall". In the process of learning, this incident teaches Henchard the first alphabet of self-knowledge. At this stage, he is like a primitive man, a bull breaking fence and as Jean Brooks calls him a "savage and unrestrained man", in whom "the primitive past and primitive nature operate in instivictive impulses usually disastrous in a modern civilization that must progress morally".

When Henchard reappears after a long gap of twenty years he is transformed into a figure of affluence and social standing. Here Hardy makes it clear that he has undergone no equivalent moral transformation. We learn that he is otherwise simply "matured in shape, stiffened in line, exaggerated in traits, disciplined, thought-marked in a word older". Though physically a matured man Henchard is still a rash, aggressive and impulsive man who acts under the spur of moment without caring for the consequences of his acts.

93 Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, p.86.
95 MC, p.69.
He is still so novice and short-sighted that he cannot understand the significance of Farfrae's friendship with Elizabeth Jane whom he takes to be his real daughter. As before, his decision and actions are out of touch with his deeper reasoning, and his instinctive drive still wins over his better-judgement. Had he been a bit practical or worldly wise, he would have encouraged such a union. Robert Kiely rightly observes that Henchard's knowledge of himself is so imperfect that "his understanding of others is limited to a simple dichotomy of identification or opposition." 96

The next crisis in the process of modifying and altering of myopic self comes when Henchard unwittingly turns his warm-hearted friendship with Farfrae into enmity. He is so whimsical and cynical that when he likes Farfrae he finds him resembling his younger brother, he finds nothing but virtues in him. But once the turns against him, he sees him as an evil incarnate. His snobbery and stone-headedness are the main causes of his downfall. But, myopic and self-smug as he is, he holds Farfrae responsible for his fall. He now considers Farfrae to be his arch enemy. His jealousy and hatred culminates in a murderous assault on Farfrae. In fact, he is so ignorant and blind that he does not know the limitations of his capacity. He is badly defeated in

business by Farfrae in the same move which he has started to "grind him in to the ground". As his fortune is reversed due to his own wrong-judgements and reckless commitments, the sharpness of his disappointment and anxiety increases, and his frustrated wrath is vented with increasing vehemence and with more obvious moral culpability on persons who appear to deserve it less and who suffer from it more intensely. With his wrong-judgement and aggressiveness, he goes more rapidly toward destruction" with no light to guide him on a better way."  

Henchard's egoistic self-centredness and too hot a temper blur his understanding which makes him distort every relation into possession. His rationality is as much a victim of his violent impulses as are the women in his life. In fact, he is akin to Conrad's Lord Jim, arrogant and short-sighted. His ignorance makes him superstitious. He comes to depend on the "prophecy of the weather-forecaster". He is so uncalculated and imprudent that he appoints Jopp as his manager after dismissing Farfrae rashly. This act proves to be a serious blunder which accelerates his downfall. In fact, while taking Jopp as his manager, he ignores the fact that Jopp nourishes many grudges against him as well as

97 MC, p.244.
98 MC, p.164.
99 MC, p.246.
Farfrae. He does not properly understand Jopp, who, in fact, is a sort of villainous person who will not miss any opportunity of taking revenge upon him. Jopp incites and excites Henchard's jealousy for Farfrae. It is Jopp who encourages Henchard is his imprudent plan of buying the huge bulk of grain, depending on the prophecy of the weather forecaster. Henchard realises his utter foolishness and recklessness when the weather turns out to be good suddenly and he is wreaked financially. Farfrae manages nicely throughout this spell of varying weather and prices, making profit at each change whereas Henchard misjudges the situation every time and thus incurs heavy loss. Thus due to his miscalculations and lack of skill in battling circumstances, Henchard fails to protect himself from the onslaught of the commercial world. Groping blindly in the darkness of ignorance, he is defeated by all, one by one.

Myopic Henchard, defeated in trade and foreshaken by all, comes to receive yet another blow when he discovers that Lucetta loves Farfrae, his rival in business and his proclaimed enemy. In his desperate effort to snatch Lucetta from Farfrae, he wrings a forced-promise of marriage from her before Elizabeth as a witness, but his judgement again proves wrong. Lucetta secretly marries Farfrae at Port Bredy.
When he comes to know of it, he does not compromise with the reversed circumstances. Swayed by jealousy and wrath, he threatens Lucetta to punish her by exposing her past to her husband. When Lucetta beseeches him to return her love letters in order to blot the past and for the happiness and well-being of both of them, he swears to return every scrap of her letter. But again the myopic Henchard takes a wrong move. Wishing her well, he does the greatest harm to her. He takes Jopp into his confidence and assigns him this confidential duty. Thus, unwittingly Henchard becomes the cause of much of the miseries and sorrows all of them have to undergo a consequence of the scandal arranged by Jopp. In fact, Henchard is essentially a good man who means well but being myopic and imprudent, and being driven by his hot temper and impulsive nature, he commits such blunders that bring disastrous results.

Henchard's failings bring vision and awakening to him. He comes out of the cobwebs of his irrational blind-self and heads toward better understanding and fuller comprehension of life. He realises his folly and repents for his wrong move. He comes out of illusion into the light of self-knowledge. He realises his worth and feels ashamed of having "lost his good name". In a moment of illumination and self-realisation he sees himself as an "image of unscrupulous villain". He is

100 TC, p. 361.
101 TC, p. 363.
made to think and rethink about what he has been doing all through his life by the sorrow and disgrace he has received. Farfrae makes him think that he is no longer the most affluent person in Casterbridge but an ordinary hay-trusser. A series of transforming experiences give Henchard a new and novel understanding and perception. Thus his remorseful and guilt-ridden conscience awakens him to new knowledge about self as well as about others. By this time all the layers of pride, prejudices, ego and aggression have been removed from his eyes. Now he can see the things in their true perspective. He is no longer "the volcanic stuff behind the rind," but "a self-tormenting, repentent sinner who curses himself for the failure of his own redemptive efforts".

Lucetta's death gives the last fatal blow to his crumbling, egoistic and myopic-self. He is now completely shorn of all impurities of character. Elaine Show aptly evaluates Henchard's transformation at this stage and says that by dedicating himself to the love and protection of Elizabeth Jane, he is "humanly reborn". Henchard now acts and thinks with awakened consciousness. He is so much transformed that "he(is) not now the Henchard of former days." He successfully passes through the process of learning and altering and comes to emerge out of his animal-wrath and egocentric aggressiveness. He learns the lesson of

---

102 MC, p. 162.
103 MC, p. 209.
104 MC, p. 385.
adaptability. He watches Elizabeth Jane's growing friendship with Farfrae patiently. He does not give a free play to his whims now. The bitter water of suffering has purified him of his grossness. Henchard's domineering and impulsive nature has been "schooled". He has modified and changed himself so much that he is, in a way, "denaturalized". The process of evolution of consciousness in Henchard is so remarkably delineated by Hardy that Irving Howe says:

It is one of Hardy's most remarkable achievements that, through incidents and gestures, we are steadily made aware of how deeply Henchard suffers at being unable to declare in language the consciousness he has won.

The caveman of the earlier chapters who was always ready with blows for words is given to thoughts and reflections. In his lonely hours, he recollects the scene and incidents of his past life and realises the utter foolishness of his reckless behaviour. He assesses and re-assesses himself as well as others and comes to the conclusion that he has been wrong in almost every decision and judgement in the past. Such reflections and self-evaluation make him humbler, calmer and more calculated. But he is still in the process of making, and not yet a completely wise man. He still needs more education and alteration, though he has fully realised that he is "conspicuously old-fashioned, behind the time in business.

104 MC, p. 385. 105 MC, p. 106 Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, p. 86.
attitudes and obviously totally unaware of the philosophical problems of the day”, as Rosemary Summer sees him. He disciplines his violent, aggressive, impulsive self, realising the bitter truth that things cannot be changed according to his will. He becomes a bit wise and "now thinks and acts with heightened consciousness" as Robert C. Schweik puts it.

At this juncture when Henchard is learning to adopt himself to the changed situation, Newson comes to claim his daughter Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard is at once perplexed and puzzled by this sudden, unexpected turn of events so much so that in a flash he tells "mad lies like a child in pure mockery of consequences". Later on when he thinks over it, he himself is "amazed at what he had done". His mad lies to Newson make it clear that Henchard is not mature in his behaviour. A wise, grown-up man will not adopt the path of lies in order to secure affection and care of the dear one. At last, Newson reappears to make Henchard realise that truth cannot be altered by lies. Henchard only succeeds in incurring Elizabeth's wrath and hatred. Thus, once again Henchard provokes the worst results with best of intentions by his reckless and imprudent attempt to seize and seal happiness for himself. Elizabeth Jane, who loves him from the core of heart, openly shows her hatred when she discovers

107 Rosemary Sumner, Thomas Hardy, Psychological Novelist, p. 57.
109 MC, p. 372.
110 MC, p. 372.
this lie. Ashamed of his ungentlemanly behaviour, he leaves Casterbridge for good. Out of this crisis, Henchard emerges awakened and illumined. He has now fully realised that one has to reap what one sows. Now he is wise and prudent. He does not blame any outer agency for his misfortunes. He is awakened to the fact that no "sinister Intelligence of Black Fiend" and no supernatural Nemesis dogs his footsteps; he himself is the worst enemy of himself. After mental illumination, Henchard removes his harmful presence from Casterbridge so that he may not cause any harm to Elizabeth and others unwittingly. He has gained tragic consciousness with the multiplicity of his tragic experiences and through confrontation with the tragedy of life. Wisdom which is the fruit of his intense suffering teaches Henchard self-renunciation. In this connection Christopher Walbank pertinently comments that "self-knowledge lands him a moral stature". Henchard does not feel ill on being rebuked by Elizabeth Jane, for he knows what he deserves under the circumstances he has been creating by his reckless behaviour and folly. He goes out alone to die. Before death, Henchard lives a moment of heightened consciousness, perfect vision and final illumination. His journey from ignorance to knowledge is complete. Knowing full well the insignificance of name and fame, he wishes complete annihilation in death. Henchard's last Will distinctly demonstrates that he has

111 MC, p.411.
112 Christopher Walbank, Thomas Hardy, p.154.
fully evolved in terms of learning and growing. His death shows that the cyclic pattern of slow modification of society is coupled with the tragic course of an individual's life.

The Woodlanders (1887) can best be described as the tragedy of errors committed by myopic characters that are groping blindly in the darkness of ignorance and illusions. Almost all characters miscalculate more or less fatally under the interacting pressures of individual inclinations and fads. Melbury is at the head of them; it is chiefly against his folly that we find ourselves inwardly exclaiming again and again. Melbury lives in a state of mental haze, quite removed from the realities of practical life by a thick veil of his own pride and prejudice, ambition and dreams, fallacies and fantasies.

Myopic and deluded Melbury creates a web of illusions and dreams around Grace with a wistful longing for social advancement through her marriage. In this way, being lost in childish reveries, he creates the same in Grace's heart, producing "some displacement" in her mind and the idea that she would "step into history" by connecting herself with those who were once the lords of the Manor House for many hundred years". Thus he incites an irresistible yearning in Grace's heart for the luxury and splendour of life.


114 WL, p.152.
creating a mirage before her. That is why when Grace meets Fitzpiers, he at once assume in her imagination the hues of "a melancholy romanticism" so much so that in her mind, the "veneer of affectation overlies a bulk of truth", and as a consequence, "the substance is estimated by the superficies, and the whole rejected".  

Like Melbury, Grace also lives in a world of dreams and illusions. She has no definitely evolved consciousness at this stage and hence no particular opinion or independent stand of her own. Her reasoning faculty is not yet fully developed. She is simply "a vessel of emotions" at this stage. She depends on her father for every thing and accepts what he decides for her. When Melbury wants to give her to Giles as a penance for the wrong committed to his father, she pays her tender attention to Giles, though she feels offended by his rustic and substandard way of living. In fact, she has acquired a superciliousness of behaviour through her education in a fashionable school. Her conduct is controlled by a strong notion of social status. Her error also lies almost in the same broad field as her father's. Though she is considerably more sensible and sensitive than her father, she is tractable and gullible. She is very snobbish and has such a delicate femininity that makes it impossible for her

116 WL, p.126.
117 WL, p.58.
to lose sight of social status and refinements of life. Giles can see into her mind and thinks that their engagement is a very "uncompromising business" and that Grace should "hob and nob else where" because she has been "schooled...so monstrously high" as to be of no use to his rustic life. Grace herself feels that a sort of mist screen Giles from her. Ian Gregor befittingly remarks that "what has separated them is a difference of consciousness".

Grace has her own little snobberies and social ambitions. That is why she is "at once infatuated by Fitzpiers' superficial refinement and culture". She also opts for illusions and locks herself up in a subjective world of fantasies and fallacies. She is so myopic that a hint from Mrs. Charmond to take her with on a tour to Europe is sufficient to charm her view. Same is the effect of the superficial sophistication of Fitzpiers. After meeting him, she "walked about with a reflective air" and with a novel feeling. Hardy makes appropriate comments on her delusion:

The idea of so modern a man in science and aesthetics as the young surgeon, springing out of relics so ancient was a kind of novelty she has never before experienced.

Fitzpiers exercises a magical effect on her "exciting her, throwing her into a novel atmosphere which biased her

---

118 WL, p. 67.  
119 WL, p. 78.  
120 Ian Gregor, The great Web, p.148.  
121 WL, p.156.  
122 WL, p.150.  
doings". He almost hypnotises Grace with a charm that almost seduces her mentally. Under the hypnotic effect of this "refined, coercive, irresistible" man, she behaves like a bewildered woman "who did not know what she had been doing". She is so enamoured by the idea of "a refined and cultivated inner life of subtle psychological intercourse" with Fitzpiers that she feels helpless and subdued. After seeing Suke Damson coming out of Fitzpiers's house, she tries to break the web of illusions and makes a desperate effort to throw away the spell of his magnificent superfluity. But simple and ignorant Grace is taken in by Fitzpiers false allusion of Suke's tooth ache. Grace, "having the readiness of a honest heart", gets "mental liberation" from suspicion by Fitzpiers's fabricated and well-pleaded lie. Thus among her misgivings, fear, admiration, and above all, the irresistible pressure of her father, she gets married to this libertins.

Very soon the realisation that she has been duped by false glitter and glamour dawns upon Grace. The revelation of Fitzpiers's illicit-relations comes as a rude shock to her delicate and sensitive heart. She realises that Fitzpiers and Mrs. Charmond have "hungry hearts and wild desires", the gratification of which is impossible. She genuinely repents

126 WL, p.156.
for her "frightful mistake in marriage.* She is made to assess and reassess Mrs. Charmond and Fitzpiers, Giles and her own blind self. She finds that Fitzpiers's polished infidelity stands in sharp contrast with Giles's homespun faith. With painful realisation, she recognises that her blind "acquiescence in her father's wishes had been a degradation to herself", and realises that "she should have obeyed her impulses." Silent suffering clears her blurred vision and she sees distinctly that her education is the cause of her tragedy. In a moment of self-illumination she bursts out before her father:

I wish you had never thought of educating me... cultivation has only brought me inconvenience and troubles. 131

Her interest in Giles and the simple rustic life gets revitalised by the widening of her perception and awakening of consciousness in her. She recognises the value of honesty, goodness, manliness and tender devotion" which exist in the breasts of unvarnished man. 132 Disillusioned and distracted Grace realises that her father has as Dale Kramer says, "deprived her of the happy life she might have enjoyed with Giles". 133

Grace, not yet fully awakened and evolved, gets another disillusioning shock. Misguided Melbury encourages Grace to make advances of love to Giles with the hope of

129 WL, p.197.
130 WL, p.197.
131 WL, p.208.
132 WL, p.208.
of seeking divorce from Fitzpiers. Grace rebuilds her castles of love in the air on the basis of this wrong-information. Not only she, but Giles is also encouraged by Melbury to "build up a dangerous structure on their supposed knowledge." They are lost in thoughts like children in the presence of "incomprehensible". By now Grace is changed, she has become "a new woman in many ways", and "a creature of more ideas, more dignity and above all more assurance than the original Grace had been capable of". She is altered so much that Giles comments:

You are better, much better than you used to be.\(^{137}\)

Though she is wiser, saner and more sympathetic, still she has the same "unenlightened school-girl simplicity about the laws and ordinances", and hence she is duped by her father's false hopes. Grace is still unaware of the fact that she is "wedded irrevocably" to Fitzpiers, even though she does not feel "morally bound" to him. Even now she has a sort of "agonising seductiveness" about her and is lost in the nebulousness of mind. When the crust of her misunderstanding and misgivings is removed, Grace finds herself unable to face the situation and runs away from home in order to escape the truth. Gradually and slowly she is made to realise by the

---

\(^{134}\) WL, p.262. \(^{138}\) WL, p.270.
\(^{135}\) WL, p.262. \(^{139}\) WL, p.270.
\(^{136}\) WL, p.261. \(^{140}\) WL, p.262.
\(^{137}\) WL, p.261. \(^{141}\) WL, p.270.
baptismal and harrowing experiences of life that there is no other way for her than the resolute facing of the situation; she will definitely have to reap the crop of her vanities and follies. The self-sacrifice of Giles bestows upon her a true realisation and brings inner illumination. She reaches the stage of heightened consciousness, where her social sensibility overpowers her proud self. She surrenders herself at the alter of her social duty. She sees with clear-eyed perception and distinct vision that though the irrationalities of society are responsible for her second wrack, there is no running away from it, and no retreat to Noble Savage is possible. as there can be no tracing back through history. She embraces the social ethics and realises that men are best circumstanced only when they live and die within the matrix of some stable and endurable culture. With this realisation, she accepts the social bond of marriage but with full knowledge of Fitzpiers's character and with a comprehensiveness that this fickle minded fleshy man may replace her again by some Suke Damson or Mrs. Charmond.

_Tess of the d'Urbervilles_ (1891) is an epochal work of Hardy which can best be described as an allegory of man's mental progress through the world from myopia to vision. The whole career of Tess affords the best illustration of this subtle process of gradual change from ignorance to knowledge. Her life enfolds the gradual refinement of her sensibilities and advancement of cognition and perception in her. Penelope
Vigar befittingly comments in this regard:

Tess's metaphorical journey from rustic innocence to experience do constitute a kind of pilgrims progress.142

At the beginning of her life's hazardous journey Tess is an innocent adolescent girl, endowed with essential qualities of goodness of heart and nobility of character, but she is vitally deficient in practical knowledge. She is quite simple, gullible and ignorant. It is her naivete and simplicity that become her tragic flaw. In fact, Tess is badly parented. Her mother, Mrs. Joan, who encourages her husband to make castles of his knightly ancestry in the air is as myopic as a child. Desmond Hawkins aptly comments on the illusive nature of Tess's parents:

What is for Sir John pure fantasy is turned to practical account by the worldly wisdom of Joan. 143

Both of her parents are irresponsible, immature and ignorant. Tess, very conscientious and responsible, thinks that she can mend every matter in the household. She is "mere a vessel of emotions untincturcd by experience" at this stage, though she takes the role of family head. That is why when her father is unable to carry the consignment of taking bee-hives to Casterbridge, she offers to go though she does not know the practical difficulty involved in it. Quite

142 Penelope Vigar, Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality, p.132.
143 Desmond Hawking, Hardy: Novelist and Poet, p.125.
144 Thomas Hardy, Tess of d'Urbervilles (London: Mac millan, 1963),p.35 (hereafter this book will be referred to as TESS.)
young and ignorant, she falls asleep and allows the wagon to go into the coming mail-cart from opposite direction. She is startled out of her reverie by the sudden jerk only to find that she is not yet grown up enough to shoulder such responsibility. The only means of family income, the horse, Prince is killed owing to her negligence. Extremely sensitive and conscientious, she is filled with a heavy sense of remorse and a killing sense of self-accusation for this negligence. Endowed with subduing guilt-complex, she is compelled to bow down before her mother's illogical plan. In fact, Tess also inherits her family traits of illusiveness and day-dreaming. She is "tractable" and inexperienced, quite unaware of the fact that she is young and beautiful and a trap can be laid anywhere in the world to ensnare her simplicity. She goes reluctantly to claim kins at Trantridge. Being impractical and novice, she makes no efforts to change the course of action, though she senses some unknown danger on this path.

Tess is like an inexperienced obedient girl in the hands of ignorant and elusive parents. She, like ever other young person, stands in need of parental guidance at this stage but she lacks it utterly. In fact, Tess has been brought up in the environment of what H.C. Duffin calls "slip-shod" morality and hence no such education can be expected from her "slack-twisted parents." Though she is

145 Tess, p.36.
146 H.C.Duffin, Thomas Hardy, p.507.
free from the coarse fibre of her mother, she is equally
given to dreams and fantasies. Studied upto sixth standard
under a London teacher, she is advanced in thoughts and "is
already removed from her mother's fast perishing world by a
gap of two hundred years." However, her mother injects the
idea of marriage with Alec as a very likely possibility. She
is offended by her mother's childishness, yet she is not
repelled by this idea. That is why when Alec offers her
strawberries, she eats them in a "half-pleased, half
reluctant state". She is attracted quite instinctively
toward Alec not because of his charm and flattery but because
of what Ian Gregor says, "a sense of power" he exercises on
her femininity. Quite unaware of the harm this new sense of
freedom can do her, she relishes it, but only half-heartedly.

In fact, Tess inherits "a slight incaustiousness of
character" which, alongwith her inborn tractability and
submissiveness of disposition, leads her to a disaster.
Returning home from the fair where Car Darch, Alec's latest
wench, attacks Tess, thinking her to be her supplanter.
Horrified and confused, Tess is rescued by Alec, who carries
her off into the woods. Tess flees with Alec on an
"impulse" quite unaware of the harm this saviour can do to
her. In fact she is inexperienced and only "a picture of
honest beauty, flanked by innocence and backed by

147 Tess, p.50. 150 Tess, p.110.
148 Tess, p.52. 151 Tess, p.82.
149 Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p.182
simple-souled vanity". Though physically grown up, mentally she is just a toddler, and any false sympathiser of Alec type can easily cheat and betray her. This view finds a fitting illustration in the incident of her seduction. She is so simple and naive that the ironic comment and timely warning of the folkwomen that she is going to fall "out of the frying pan into the fire" fails to sound her against the impending danger. Again she falls asleep on the leaves wrapped in Alec's great coat and wakes only to find herself "maiden no more". After a month or so, Tess is made to realise that she has become a part of the "whorage" of Darch sisters. She determines to leave the place on realising the gravity of the matter and her own responsibility in it.

Thus, myopic and innocent Tess is "caught during her days of immaturity like a bird in a spring" and becomes a helpless victim in "the trap" Alec set for her in her "simple youth". Tess's spontaneous outburst before her mother is a sufficient proof of her ignorance and lack of education:

O mother, I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why did not you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why did not you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had chance O' learning in that way, and you did not help me". This horrifying and shaking experience stirs Tess's consciousness. And with this stirring, the process of

---

154 Tess, p. 92. 158. Tess, p. 100.
155 Tess, p. 83.
learning and growing is initiated. She emerges out of the fire of suffering wiser, sanar and maturer. She remains no more innocent and untinctured by experience. Thoughn this seduction is a fall from innocence, it proves, in many ways, a fortunate fall in the sense that it awakens consciousness in Tess. From here onwards, her eyes become keener, tongue, sharper, and her mind, quicker. In fact, seduction bestows upon her the bitter realisation that "the serpent hisses where the sweet birds sing" and with this awakening, she changes "from a simple-girl to a complex woman". However, Tess's journey from Marlott to Trantridge can best be described as a journey from Innocence to Experience, as Hardy tells us in his authorial comment:

An \underline{inmeasur}able social chasm was to divide our heroine's personality thereafter from that previous self of hers who stepped from her monther's door to try her fortune at Trantridge Poultry farm.\textsuperscript{161}

For Tess's people, such occassion gives rise to dreaminess and scandal as is with her mother who sees this fall as an opportunity for wedlock, but for Tess, this is a sound thrashing to improve and educate her, and thus gives rise to reflectiveness which divides her not only from the world outside but also from her family. With the rise of consciousness in Tess, we see that "the gap which has always existed between the world of Marlott and her own" widens all the more. She can, now, well perceive the folly of her

\textsuperscript{159} Tess, p.118 \textsuperscript{160} Tess, p.119 \textsuperscript{161} Tess, p.91. \textsuperscript{162} Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p.184.
parent's vain-glorious hope of regaining their lost aristocracy. With the awakening of consciousness in Tess, she becomes capable of taking her own decisions and is no more tractable or submissive, yet her education is not complete. She gets her second lesson in the practical ways of the world when she gives birth to a baby. Her father does not allow her to get the child baptised through the proper ceremony for the fear of public condemnation. However, "immature" Tess assumes the role of a parson and baptises the child before her brothers and sisters as congregation. But when the child dies, she is shocked to learn that her baptism has no religious sanction and hence not acceptable. The parson refuses to give a Christian burial to the unbaptised child. This incident destroys Tess's placidity beyond reparation; her religious faith is broken as she becomes aware of the hypocrisy and ceremoniousness of religion. Out of her disillusionment and disenchantment from religion she tells the Vicar frankly:

Then I don't like you. ...and I'll never come to your church no more. 164

Thus Tess moves a step further on the path of evolution of consciousness. Through such bitter experiments "symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face", and her voice acquires "a note of tragedy". Jean Brooks pertinently comments on the
significance of this experience:

The worm-eaten saint ... prepares both for Tess's growth towards a more advance kind of religion and for the deadness of its outer forms. 166

Now, Tess becomes, what Hardy calls, "a fine woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last two years have failed to demoralise". These harrowing experiences prove an "education" for Tess though not "liberal". These lacerating experiences of motherhood transform Tess swiftly and miraculously into, as H.C. Duffin says, "a greater Tess". 169

The next phase of Tess's mental awakening starts with her decision to leave Marlott under the illusion of getting rid of the stigma of unwed-mother. She presumes that she can "veil bygone" by changing the environment. She does not comprehend the law of nature that we are what we have been and will be what we are. So, under myopia and ignorance, she thinks:

The recuperative power which pervaded organic nature was surely not denied to maidenhood alone. 171

Tess is still ignorant of the false notions of morality according to which chastity "once lost ... always lost". She has to pay the price for her ignorance when she marries Angel under the illusion that past is past and of no significance in her new life. At times, she feels as if her past "were waiting like wolves just outside the circumscribing light", but, as Hardy adds further, in her "a

167 Tess, p.119.
168 Tess, p.119.
169 H.C.Duffin, Thomas Hardy, p.51.
170 Tess, p.119.
171 Tess, p.119.
172 Tess, p.119.
spiritual forgetfulness co-exist(s) with an intellectual remembrance. Her excessive love for Angel "irradiate(s) her into forgetfulness of her past sorrows. Motivated and upsurged by "an invincible instinct towards self-delight", she tends to shut her eyes on her past, but her search for a new life proves to be a wild goose chase and she is made to know the cyclic pattern of life. Her second effort for happiness repeats merely the previous pattern of illusion to reality. This time disillusionment comes more brutally and unscrupulously as the man of flesh is replaced by the man of intellect. Tess takes Angel to be a liberal, broad-minded and emancipated man, free from the narrow fetters of traditional conventions and dogmas. Tess is shocked to know that Angel is very much in the hands of rigid puritanism and is as much fastidious about morality and chastity as any ordinary man in the society. Her hope of being forgiven by Angel results in a fiasco. Quite contrary to her expectations, Angel reacts with a priggish shock, a virtuous horror and fanaticism. Tess is awakened to the fact that Angel is a common Victorian who regards sexual offence as venial in a man and grave and unpardonable in a woman. She recognises with wide-eyed perception that the world is not yet evolved enough to comprehend her predicaments and evaluate her objectively; the society is not yet prepared to

173 Tess, p.223.
174 Tess, p.223.
175 Tess, p.120.
accept her as a combination of sensuality and spirituality. After this, the more severe schooling she gets the stronger and the more unflinching her undaunted spirit becomes. She maintains her equanimity even under most vulnerable circumstances. To Angel's allegations, she replies with a rare moral courage:

It is in your own mind what you are angry at, Angel, it is not in me.  

Again, at Flintcomb Ash, Tess fails to stamp a meaningful pattern on the flow of time by a timely action, and thus, unwittingly invites more and more agonies and afflictions for her. She accepts blindly the arrogant complacency of Angel's brothers as a sure proof of his parents snobbishness. This misconception and error of judgement become the archstone of her tragic life in future. Her misguided consciousness shows that Tess is not yet accurate in her perspective. She still lives in a world of mental nebulousness and hazy perception. After her second meeting with Alec, a strange realisation overpowers Tess's mind that Alec alone, in a physical sense, is her husband. He comes to her help when the family is evicted from their parental house after the death of her father. She feels grateful to Alec for his assistance. Moreover, Angel himself told Tess that she belongs to Alec by virtue of copulation. By and by, she is made to realise by her illogic and hazy

176 Tess, p.263.
consciousness that her true identity lies outside the periphery of man-made morality, and in some greater natural order, it is the reality of copulation that establishes her as the wife, or, at any rate, the physical mate of Alec. Fumbling in the dark corridors of life, she comes around a stage where she abnegates her self at the alter of duty to her destitute family.

Very soon, Tess is made to revise and reconsider her evaluation of Angel when he returns to her repentent, changed and purged of his idealistic fastidiousness. Tess realises that once again Alec has succeeded in seducing her mentally, this time by inducing a realisation in her heart and mind that Angel would never come back to accept her. Now she repents her hasty decision. A new upsurge and a deep yearning "to achieve a felicitous wholeness of being" get hold of her and in a desperate effort to kill the situation, she kills Alec and demolishes the wall that stands between Angel and her. She chooses death to a mechanical life in which only body participates. Thus, Tess gets fulfillment in her union with Angel. She dies with a placid resignation, and calm serenity. Before death, she transcends the fear of death by a true upsurge of inner awakening. She knows that after a moment's illumination in which the truth of life is seen naked, there is no death. She gets real enlightenment

---

which comes through attentive cultivation of inner values and self-awareness through caring communication of these inner-concerns for others. Standing on the highest stage of perfect consciousness, Tess beholds the tragic cyclic-pattern of life, and gladly accepts death, which alone can put an end to this cycle. Completely disillusioned and disenchanted, she does not want to be cheated by this renewed episode of happiness as she knows that it will not last long. A rare enlightenment illuminates her perception and she sees herself neither as "a soul" at large nor as "a fly entrapped between the blank gaze of earth and heaven", but as a person awakened and illumined to the realities of life. With consciousness fully awakened and evolved in her, Tess becomes, as Albert Lavalley says, "the prototype of a new and harmonious self that can meet the new age of skepticism" and one who has attained "a grandeur of human possibility" in coping with the world.

The basic tenet of evolution of consciousness entailing the dissipation of moral blindness and rise of awakening through enlightening disenchantment reaches its culmination in Jude the Obscure (1895). The character of Jude is the most significant study in conversion and transformation in the realm of Hardy's fiction. Jude begins his life as a naive, foolish and immature boy who is

178 Ian Gregor, The great Web, p.188.
179 Albert Lavalley, 'Introduction', Twentieth Century Interpretation of tess, pp. 6-7.
bewildered at the incomprehensibility of life, but ultimately attains to the profound insight into the basic nature of the phenomenon of life. He achieves a clarity of vision and sharpness of perception through a series of fumbling and staggering in the darkness of ignorance and through his bold resolute facing of the dilemma of life.

From the very beginning, Jude is wrapped in his dreams and illusions. He never lives in the present. Instead he remains lost in either weaving dreams about the future or mourning the past. He is very ambitious and given to day-dreaming. He has a strong passion for learning as is evident from his aunt Drusilla's comment:

"The boy is crazy for books. It runs in our family rather."

When his only friend and confident Richard Phillotson, goes to Christminster to achieve great academic heights, Christminster becomes an obsession, a haunting passion with him. He frequently has "mental leaps" to the city where he visualises Phillotson lost in reading and writing. By and by, he gets "romantically attached" to "the city of learning" to which he alludes "like a lover alluding to his mistress". Illusive and ignorant Jude is surrounded by a halo when he sees in the direction of Christminster which, he thinks, is "a city of light", the very place wherein the "tree of

180 Thomas Hardy, Jude The Obscure (New York: Dell Publishing Co.Inc., 1973), p.18 (Hereafter this book will appear abbreviated as JO.
181 JO, p.28
182 JO, p.29.
183 JO, p.30.
knowledge grows" and a place of "scholarship and religion". Jude's climbing a ladder by the rick in order to have a more clear glimpse of the city shows how deluded he is by his dreams of learning and scholarship. He almost worships Christminster with blind devotion of a naivete. In this regard Duffin can pertinently be quoted:

Here begins that passionate and pathetic longing of Jude's for academic distinction that follows him throughout his life.\[185\]

The desire for abstract learning is strong within Jude, so much so that surmounting all obstacles and limitations, he grinds up Latin and Greek as he goes on his baker's round. Next to scholar, Jude wishes to be "a Christian divine". Lost in his reveries, he dreams of settling down comfortably in Christminster in the course of a year or two and thinks that he will achieve such great heights in academic fields that his "present knowledge will appear ... but a childish ignorance". He hopes to be a bishop by leading "a pure, energetic, wise Christian life". Quite lost in his fantasies and fancies, he ruminates:

Christminster shall be my Alma mater and I'll be her beloved son in whom she shall be well pleased.

In fact, at this stage, Jude is, what Stewart says, "a pious youth who aspires to be a great scholar, a doctor of

184 JO, p.31.
185 H.C. Duffin, The Tragic Novels of Thomas Hardy, p.61.
186 JO, p.39.
187 JO, p.42.
188 JO, p.42.
189 JO, p.45.
Divinity", and is "marked by a pious conformity and theological interest". Being immature and inexperienced, Jude follows his instincts and emotions imperceptibly. He is unable to distinguish between illusion and reality, between subjective and objective truth. He cannot comprehend the discrepancy between the consistency of his illusions and the inconsistency of his life as it really is. Under the magical effect of his dreams, the city appears as a shining star, a glittering vision while the countryside around him appears to him only a dark "Chimaeras". Very soon Jude is jerked into reality through the throwing of a pig's fizzle by Arabella, a young sensuous wench. He is made aware of the presence of the fourth dimension ... sex by the touch of something that "smacked him sharply in the ear". His dream is broken and he is made to discover" what (is) simmering in the mind around him". Jude looks at the ground as though his future were thrown there on by "a magic lantern" and discovers a male pig's organ. The illusion of Christminster and learning is shattered, but it is immediately replaced by a more bewitching, alluring and hypnotising illusion. He is infatuated irresistibly with the strong sexual appeal of Arabella's physique and looks at her in such a way" as if he had never seen a woman before".

In fact, Jude is "as simple as a child" at this stage and can be "had by any woman ... if she likes to set herself

190 J.I.M. Stewart, Thomas Hardy, p.192.
192 JO, p.43.
193 JO, p.43.
194 JO, p.46.
195 JO, p.47.
to catch him right way". Arabella's "voiced call of woman to man" is so "distinctly" heard by Jude in the very first instance that it becomes "a hitch in the gliding and noiseless current of his life". Totally oblivious of his academic dreams, he feels as completely transformed mentally "as a snake must feel who has sloughed off its winter skin", and feels as dazed as the snake "who cannot understand the brightness and sensitiveness of its new one". This newly awakened sexual passion overpowers him and sways him like "a violent school master driving him by the collar ... towards the embraces of a woman for whom he had no respect, and whose life had nothing in common with his own except locality". Charmed and enthralled by this new sensation, Jude feels himself "to be another from the Jude of yesterday", so much so that "his books" and "his intentions hitherto adhered to", are nothing to him now. He determines to give up his academic plan:

It was better to love a woman than to be a graduate or a parson.

Knowing full well that his marrying Arabella is "a complete smashing up of his plans", he acquiesces in her marriage plan. Even the rustic parishners understand his foolishness and exclaim:

196 JO, p. 48. 201 JO, p. 43.
197 JO, p. 46. 202 JO, p. 44.
198 JO, p. 48. 203 JO, p. 63.
199 JO, p. 48.
200 JO, p. 49.
What a simple fool young Fawley was ... he would have to sell his books to buy saucerpans.  

Mrs. Drusilla calls him "a poor silly fellow". Thus blindly and recklessly, Jude becomes a prey to Arabella's husband-hunting trick.

Very soon Jude comes to know that pregnancy is only a myth. At this very point begins the process of his disillusionment. He is shocked at the revelation that Arabella worked as a bar-maid for sometime. Shocked Jude wakes in the morning and seems "to see the world with a different eye". He finds himself entrapped in such a cage from which no escape is possible. He regrets the sacrifice of "all well-informed schemes" for the gratification of "a transitory instinct" which could, at the most, be called "weakness". He realises his stooping to such a folly which will "cripple him ... for the rest of a life time". Contrite Jude realises that he has "based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling" and that they have no "affinities" which "alone can render a life long comradeship tolerable". This realization makes him decide to resume his "intellectual track" with a single-minded devotion.

Out of one illusion, Jude enters the other and pursues it with more renewed strength and emboldened spirit. In fact, he is marked by a blinding self-deception that prevents

\[
\begin{align*}
204 & \text{JO, p.63.} & 208 & \text{JO, p.68.} \\
205 & \text{JO, p.63.} & 209 & \text{JO, p.75.} \\
206 & \text{JO, p.67.} & 210 & \text{JO, p.75.} \\
207 & \text{JO, p.68.} & 211 & \text{JO, p.75.}
\end{align*}
\]
him from seeing his own limitations and the blemishes of Christminster at first sight. J.I.M. Stewart aptly hits the nail on the head when he says that "in some ways he appears to be really rather a stupid youngman". He applies to five selected heads and the "terribly sensible advice" given by the principal shocks him out of his illusion, so much so that he starts drinking in order to drown his sorrow and frustration. By and by, he begins to realise that there is no fun wasting his time in "a vague labour called private study without giving an outlook on practicabilities". He regrets having wasted his time in pursuing such glittering dream:

...it would have been better...never to have embarked in the scheme at all than to do it without seeing clearly where I am going, or what I am aiming at. He is awakened to a sense of his "limitations" and realises that he is "a fool inside".

Christminster leads Jude into the arms of Sue. Frustrated and baffled, he finds an anchorage for his dwindled hopes in Sue. Very soon, she becomes his "ideal about whose form he begins to weave curious and fantastic day-dreams". He is so infatuated with Sue that "the consciousness of her living presence stimulate(s) him". Jude finds it impossible to resist the "bottled up effect of solitude" on his "half visionary form". Jude is so enamoured
with her that he ignores his aunt's timely warning that has a prophetic touch in it:

> Your marrying that woman Amelia was about as bad a thing as a man could possibly do for himself by trying hard ... And there will be a worse thing, if you ... should have a fancy for Sue ... it med bring' ee to ruin. 221

As a matter of fact, Jude suffers from hallucination that leads him to beguilements and deception. His blindness, in fact, becomes a pre-condition of his vision. It is Sue's vocation that blinds him. On seeing her painting the scripture, Jude takes her to be a devout Christian. When the truth dawns upon him, he is much pained and hurt, but the magical effect of Sue is not broken. Jude allows himself willingly to remain under the illusions. Though frustrated, he still sees Christminster as a "beautiful city, vulnerable". Patricia Gallivan aptly comments that to Jude "the vision is more real than the real city". There can be no better example of Jude's willing suspension of disbelief than Hardy's authorial comment at this juncture:

> When the gates were shut and he could no longer get into the quadrangles he rambled under the walls and door ways, feeling with his fingers the contours of their mouldings and carvings. 224

However, at this stage, Jude lives between linked moments of vision and hallucination. Penelope Vigar pertinently

---

221 JO, pp. 116-17.
222 J0, p. 86.
223 Patricia Gallivan, 'Science and Art in Jude the Obscure', The Novels of Thomas Hardy ed. Anna Smith, p. 137.
224 J0, p. 83.
There is a continual tension between objective reality and an imaginative or romanticised vision, between the projected viewpoints of Jude and the larger contrasting perspective. 225

The failure of Christminster dream comes as a rude shock to Jude's tender sensibility. On the advice of a priest, Jude now thinks of entering the church as "licentiate". He feels enthralled and mentally regenerated at the idea of "the ecclesiastical and altruistic life", as he would be able to do good things for the suffering humanity. Myopic Jude goes to Melchester assuming that his altruistic feelings would be more highly estimated there. In fact, Jude goes there in order to be near Sue whom he claims to love as "a friend and dear kinswoman". His love is actually, as Hardy tells, and "unmistakably of a sexual kind". In the company of a romantic pagan who prefers railway station to Church, he studies for priesthood "with feverish desperation". He realises that "an earthly and illegitimate passion had cunningly obtained entrance into his heart through the opening afforded for religion". Very soon Jude finds his dreams of being a parson vanishing under the waneful effect of Sue. After a terrible war between his religious aspirations and passion for Sue, "the human" comes out to be "more powerful than the Divine". Henceforth, he is occupied by a haunting passion for Sue, who has checked his

225 Penelope Vigar, Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality, p.230.
226 JO, p. 132.
227 JO, p. 133.
228 JO, p. 134.
229 JO, p. 104.
230 JO, p. 199.
231 JO, p. 201.
232 JO, p. 202-
"aspiration towards apostleship" in the same way as Arabella had checked "his academic proficiency" at an earlier stage.

Under the paganism of Sue, Jude comes to see the hypocrisy and artificiality of the social, academic and religious system which are so much dogma-ridden that they would not allow Jude "erratically" in love with a married cousin, to be a parson or to enter the Church even as a church-restorer. He comes to recognise that as long as he lives with Sue, he will not be considered "respectable according to regulation views". By and by, Jude realises the hollowness of religion and dogmas which turn "the normal sex-impulses... into gins and springs to noose and hold back those who want to progress". Recognising the futility and hollowness of religion, he becomes quite averse to Church and dogma-ridden Christianity, so much so that he digs a hole and buries deep all his theological and ecclesiastical books, and makes Sue "a law" for him. He feels quite weary of "ecclesiastical work" and decides not to accept any even if offered at handsome payment. Jude feels regenerated and enlightened under Sue's rationalism and confesses before her:

You have hall converted me to that view you have said before.

Jude lives with Sue under the impression that nobody will ever bother about their relationship as they do not
bother about others'. But when a fuss is created about their illegitimate relationship in the church where they both are working, Jude realises his folly:

It was not till now that they really discovered what a fools' paradise of supposed unrecognition they had been living in of late. 240

Reality dawns upon them with the blow of a hammer and Jude decides to move to some distant place where people do not know their private history, once again forgetting the fact that they cannot escape the truth by change of place and profession. Gradually and slowly Jude develops "a curious and deep antipathy to ecclesiastical work", so much so that he gives up the vocation of a Church-mason as his rectitude does not allow him to seek a living out of those who would not approve of his ways. Jude gives a subjective approach to everything related to them. In accepting Sue as his wife without any religious stamp, he has done what "was right in (their) eyes", 242 and hence nothing wrong. In fact, by now, Jude has virtually approached the position which Sue had occupied when he first met her. Hardy gives a befitting comment on Jude's transformation:

...hardly a shred of the beliefs with which he had first gone up to Christminster now remaining with him. 243

240 JO, p. 312.
241 JO, p. 275.
242 JO, p. 374.
243 JO, p. 376.
Bitter truths of life have made him renounce the ways of religious world, yet there is still something in the inner recesses of his heart and mind that keeps his religious leanings alive. Jude's making of Christminster even in his cakes shows that his intellectual passions and aspirations have not yet died; they are simply subdued by unfavourable circumstances. Sue is astute enough to see that Christminster is still "a fixed vision with him which — he will never be cured of believing". Even the most gross and insensitive Arabella can see into Jude's illusive nature and concludes that he is "still harping on Christminster even in his cakes".

Though still under the spell of Christminster dream, Jude is not now ignorant about it, he knows everything but looks toward it with an optimism that it will "wake up and be generous" to unprivileged people like him some day. Under the baptismal experiences of life, Jude attains a rare insight into the practical ways of the world. He accepts the bitter truth that though he is, in no way, inferior, he is a failure and "a fool" in the eyes of the world and his intellectual plans are simply "a freak of his fancy". Through a series of re-assessments he comes to conclude that his "impulses... affection, or vices" have hampered him from making "a sincere effort". He realises that the main cause

244 JO, p. 319.
245 JO, p. 319.
246 JO, p. 327.
247 JO, p. 332.
248 JO, p. 332.
of the frustration of his hopes is the time factor. Even "two or three generations" will not suffice to do what he has tried to do in one "generation". Jude's perception is clear now, for all Cobwebs of illusions, fantasies, fallacies, prides and prejudices are removed. Jude, enlightened and awakened, introspects himself and gives the best piece of self-evaluation:

I am a chaos of Principles -- groping in the dark.\textsuperscript{249}

Jude has seen and experienced tragedy and suffering in life which have in turn, baptised and chastened him. He has acquired a sort of equanimity and magnanimity of character by this time. That is why the tragedy of children does not crush him so devastatingly as it does in the case of Sue. Awakened and enlightened Jude can well comprehend this predicament and replies:

It is only against man and senseless circumstances.\textsuperscript{250}

Jude remains steadfast and reviews the whole situation with clear-eyed vision. The harrowing and soul-crushing experiences which break the spirit of bright and vivacious, bold and strong Sue strengthens and emboldens Jude and "enlarged his own views of life, laws and customs and dogmas"\textsuperscript{251}

His sagacious replies to Sue's bitter self-reproach make it clear that he has attained to the state of heightened

\textsuperscript{249} JO, p. 332.
\textsuperscript{250} JO, p. 348.
\textsuperscript{251} JO, p. 350.
consciousness where he acquires a full and perfect comprehensiveness of life and its dilemmas. He feels convinced that he has at least, come out of the mire of these false conventions, creeds, dogmas and ceremonies. The tragedy of triple murder bestows upon him a deeper understanding and keener vision which make him perceive his tragedy and see into the womb of future. He realises that he is at least fifty years ahead of his time and that "the world is not illuminated enough for such experiments as theirs". So, they will have to pay the penalty for being the "pioneers". Jude's consciousness of the world, religion and other issues of life is quite distinct and clear. He tries to awaken the same consciousness in Sue by making her realise they have committed no sin by accepting a loving bond without religious ceremony. Quite convinced of Sue's "wrong-headedness" he can clearly perceive that under the bereavement, she has "suffered the loss of (her) faculties".

Finally Jude dies with full awareness and knowledge of man's helplessness in a creed-ridden and conventionalist society where people give themselves in "enslavement to forms" which shackle the free spirit of man and thus, obscure his evolution of consciousness. In attaining to that rare insight and distinct comprehensiveness of life, Jude becomes

252 JO, p. 359.
253 JO, p. 396.
254 JO, p. 396.
255 JO, p. 407.
one of those privileged characters who attain to the state of heightened consciousness "whence the junctions and crossings and the inter-weaving of the web of life become clear and explicable".

256 H. C. Duffin, The Tragic Novels of Thomas Hardy, p. 118.