CHAPTER II

INDIVIDUAL VERSUS SOCIETY: HARDY’S CHARACTERS
After discussing men's unappeased rage for self-preservation, his struggle to make the earth his home, his unremitting effort to provide himself with enough to eat and wear, his anxiety to protect himself and his property, his propitiation of the unknown God and the contradiction in him of wasting himself by begetting children and after citing the parables of the poppy seed blazing at the top and the phoenix rising from the ashes, Lawrence refers to the more advanced system of self-preservation. Attributing the sickness of men to their sex degradation and money degradation Lawrence says, "the laws made by the state can only modify an earlier law, but cannot replace it." He says any number of laws made will not remove the sickness. The origin of the sickness has to be searched out so that the disease is cured at its source. Although man has fought wars against enemies he must fight against self-love and caution, fight for freedom of the bonds of cowardice and sluggish greed of security and well-being.
So diagnosing sickness of man to be in his heart Lawrence says that once sex wholeness and money healthiness are restored the individuals would achieve true individuality and sufficient completeness. In Chapter III of the Study Lawrence concedes that Hardy's characters are less interested in the claims of immediate self-preservation than in a higher system of self-preservation. They are in an endurance struggle: struggle into love and struggle with love. Once they have achieved and accomplished love they cease to exist. The talk in Hardy is about either becoming complete or about the failure to become complete.

Referring to the common criticism that Hardy's characters do unreasonable things, that they burst the bonds of convention and it is this which destroys people each with a real, vital, potential self, Lawrence says that the tragedy in Hardy develops more out of a confrontation with the State and with the community from which they cannot break loose. In novel after novel Hardy suggests that an attempt to break the convention results in the death of the pioneer. In *Desperate Remedies* Manston breaks a convention and meets with death for it. In *Under the Greenwood Tree* Fancy settles
down to conventional life and leaves her social ambition, renounces imagination that for all physically satisfactory married life she remains sick. In *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Elfride becomes innocent victim of passion because she is not strong enough to fight against the conventional ideas. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Bathsheba although in love with Sergeant Troy is made to marry Gabriel Oak because she is made to believe that it is this marriage which gives her a good husband and security. The thought of imaginative first love is dead for her because her passion for Troy only leaves a scar. In *Hand of Ethelberta*, the heroine, a woman of exceptional character, meets with a failure in her pursuit of social success. She gives up her lover and sacrifices her heart and becomes pathetic.

In all the novels mentioned above there is the theme of the self-division in the characters. Every infringement of the instinct and denial of passion, almost all attempts to break the convention result in either failure leading to death or despair. Lawrence gives a more elaborate treatment to *Far From the Madding Crowd* to substantiate the charge made against Hardy's characters that they do unreasonable things.
In *The Return of the Native* Lawrence points out, "all the exceptional people, those with strong feelings and unusual characters, are reduced, only those remain who are steady and genuine, if common place. Let a man will get himself, and he is destroyed. He must will according to the established system." The exceptional people are Eustacia and Wildeve, the former wildly passionate and conscious of her desires, has no respect for tradition. Since Eustacia's passion seeks some form of self-realisation and since she wants to be herself, to attain herself she escapes the security of the convention which ultimately leads to her death. This is true of not only Eustacia but of the bold women characters in Hardy. Deeply fond of parties and dances, of Parisian life, Eustacia has found out that Egdon Heath has no charm. She lives in a dream world untouched by the rustic ruggedness of rural life. It is this desire to make real a dream, it is her desire to be herself, to attain herself which makes her marry Clym Yeobright who had just returned from Paris. It is only after she marries Clym she realises how allusive the dream is. Clym with his contempt for Paris and its vanities decides to become a teacher for the Egdon boys. The hatred of material system makes him shun the moral
system of community. Lawrence says,

there is as much vanity in this, easily
as in Eustacia's Paris. For what is the
moral system but the ratified form of the
material system? What is Clym's altruism but
a deep, very subtle cowardice, that makes
him shirk his own being whilst apparently
acting nobly; which makes him choose to improve
mankind rather than to struggle at the quick of
himself into being. He is not able to undertake
his own soul, so he will take a commission for
society to enlighten the souls of others. It
is a subtle equivocation. Thus both Eustacie
and he side track from themselves, and each
leaves the other unconvined, unsatisfied,
unrealised. Eustacie, because she moves outside
the convention, must die; Clym, because he identi-
fied himself with the community, is transferred
from Paris to preaching. He had never become an
integral man, because when faced with the demand
to produce himself, he remained under cover of
the community and excused by his altruism.²

In the above passage Lawrence suggests that Clym
refuses to realise his passionate being. Instead of living
a passionate life, to go into business with his whole being,
body and soul as well as mind he narrows down his life to
a small purpose. He suppresses and contains his feelings.
He works according to the system which is imposed on him. Although Egdon goods him to be his true self he fails to burst the system, rather the idea of the system in him. Consequently he transforms himself to identify with the system.

Lawrence with his romantic tradition within him stresses the value of instinctual life as opposed to artificial, which is false. William Blake and Shelley, and later Freud had stressed the importance of the 'Id' and understressed the super-ego. That sickness, the disease of the flesh has its origin in mind was the theme of many romantic poets. Lawrence accounts for the disease of Clym, the loss of physical beauty to his inner strenuousness. He says that the inner strenuousness in Clym's nature was fighting against his physical symmetry, but against the limits imposed on his physical movements "by nature, as a passionate, violent product of Egdon, he should have lived and suffered in flesh and in soul from love, long before his age. He should have lived and moved and had his being, whereas he had only his business, and afterwards his inactivity. His years of pupillage were past, "he was one of whom something original was expected," yet he continued in pupillage. For he produced nothing original in being or in act, and cer-
tainly no original thought. None of his ideas were original. Even he himself was not original. He was over-taught, and his activity turned into repetition. Far from being emotionally developed, he was emotionally underdeveloped almost entirely. Only his mental faculties were developed. And, hid, his emotions were obliged to a readymade label.

In these lines Lawrence is critical of Hardy for reducing the character of Clym Yeobright to a mere human carcass. Intellectually Clym was developed but not emotionally. Clym returns to Egdon not so much to share its vitality, to understand the unexplored morality of life but to preach. His marriage with Eustacia was fraught with dangers. He identified himself with the social system. He did not know that Eustacia had a different being beyond his and his system. He also did not know that Eustacia was Egdon, the powerful, eternal origin seething with production. Lawrence says that Clym not only does not know Eustacia, he does not know himself. He too has his roots in Egdon but he ignores the moral system of Egdon for the moral system of the community. He was according to Lawrence utterly blind to the tremendous movement within himself. It is this blindness which causes the calamity. He does not learn the primal
impulses that rise in him and so he perishes.

This is, Lawrence says, the theme of Hardy's novels: the moral system of man fighting a losing battle against the greater morality of nature. In this Hardy is like Shakespeare or Sophocles or Tolstoy in all of whose work the small action of the protagonists are set against the terrific action of unfathomed nature. The limitations of the human consciousness which sets up the system of morality is shown to be incompatible with incomprehensible and unsurpassing morality of nature. While in Shakespeare or Sophocles the protagonist actively transgresses fate or a higher morality and faces the consequences leading to death, in Hardy it is the man-made system, the walled city, as Lawrence calls, that is transgressed. Eustacia, Tess, Sue, and Jude fight against the human morality and die. Lawrence is critical of Hardy for suggesting that Eustacia fights against the human morality and for that reason punished. According to him Hardy should have made Eustacia fight Clym for his own soul. Likewise Tess ought to have fought for Angel. If they had been shown to be unfaithful to this greater unwritten morality their suffering should have been convincing. Lawrence says that the experiences of Eustacia, Tess or Sue are at best
painful but not tragic because they were not at war with 
God, only with society.

Lawrence's understanding of Hardy-esque tragedy, of 
modern tragedy, is that the human judgment causes destruc-
tion. It is not so simple as that. In this Hardy goes 
beyond the consequences of social transgression and focusses 
on the psychological effects of being ahead of one's time. 
In The Return of The Native Clym is shown to be one who is 
ahead of his time attacking the inert mass of crystallised 
opinion. Clym is the advanced young thinker. For Hardy 
he is "a modern problematic consciousness." In the explo-
ration of this character Hardy is ahead of his times antici-
pating Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and a host of modern writers. 
Hardy did what Lawrence was to do later, "to make new feelings 
conscious." As for Eustacia, Rosemary Summer observes, 
that Lawrence sees her as a "natural aristocrat, but in doing 
so he is reusing her as one of his own characters. Hardy 
is much more uncertain about the value of aristocracy. He 
stresses how she often, and often consciously, deludes 
herself in her longing to escape from the world as it actually 
is."
Here is some justification for a comment of this kind because in the *Study* Lawrence projects his characters as aristocrats in his sense of the term. Lawrence believes that Hardy's heroines failed to fight for love whereas his characters, Ursula, Gudrun, Lady Chatterley, all of whom fight for love. They don't submit to the tyranny of man symbolized in the social code. Unlike Hardy's Eustacia, Tess, Sue and others, Lawrence's heroines come out victorious. So Lawrence seems to be making out a case for art of his kind. What Lawrence seems to miss in his description of Eustacia is that she is shown to be a maladjusted girl. The truth about this character to is otherwise. Hardy conceived this character to the strangeness and power not easily to his readers. Eustacia's affinity with the Heath co-mingling with her antagonism to it makes her complex and mysterious. The use of the point of view and an unidentified onlooker and Hardy's use of it to conjecture about the inner life from its outward manifestations, for all its limitations shows his interest in analysing psychological complexities which recede beyond human consciousness. In this Hardy's affinities with Lawrence are striking. "He (Hardy) has the sense, developed so much further, of pushing out the frontiers
of consciousness, of looking into unconscious processes, while always acknowledging that a human being cannot be wholly known... enigmatic Eustacia is a forerunner of his later "conjectural creatures" and of Lawrences. Her nature is of the tormented, complex kind which always absorbed Hardy as a novelist. By relating her so closely to the most vividly imagined part of the book, the Heath he makes her mysteriousness convincing.  

In Chapter XII of *The Return of the Native* called "Queen of Night" Hardy gives a fine description of Eustacia Vye and all that he finds in her. He apotheosises her in calling her "raw material of divinity." Her passions and instincts, Hardy says, make a model goddess. She is shown to be an uncommon woman with a flame like soul. Her physical beauty is, Hardy warns us, out of tune with the grim Edgdon. So Edgdon proved to be her Hades. Hardy's account of Eustacia suggests that she is alienated from everything. Born in Budmouth, a fashionable sea side resort she had been removed to Edgdon. This is the beginning of Eustacia's career of rootlessness and the consequent desolation. Deprived of parents at an early age she has been forced to live with her grandfather at Edgdon which was fanciful to her grandfather. Eustacia never was at home at Edgdon. "She hated
the change; she felt like one banished; but here she was forced to abide." Hardy says that Eustacia's brain had the strongest assortment of ideas. She always lived in the world of imagination thinking of love. Little did she realize that the abstraction called passionate love was beyond herself. Her loneliness had only deepened her passion. "On Egdon, coldest and meanest kisses were at famine prices; and where was a mouth matching hers to be found?" By her social non-conformity, forwardness of going she created a distance between herself and the heath- men. Her living on a Heath without studying its meaning was like, as Hardy says, weding a foreigner without learning his tongue. "The subtle beauties of the heath were lost to Eustacia; she only caught its vapours. An environment which would have made a contented woman a poet, a suffering woman devotee, a pious woman a psalmist, even a giddy woman thoughtful made a rebellious woman saturnine." 

(Chap. I)

It is this maladjustment to the place and a vision of marriage characterised by inexorable glory which coupled with an uncompromising seat for fulfilment which drive her
As Hardy says, "As far as social ethics were concerned Eustacia approached the savage state, though in emotion she was all the while an epicure. She had advanced to the secret recesses of sensuousness, yet had hardly crossed the threshold of conventionality."

It is true sensuousness is undoubtedly her prominent characteristic and it is this which makes her conspicuous among Hardy's women. She is an epicure in emotion who does not know the limits. Although Eustacia is heroic enough to glorify any of her characteristics and although it is tolerable in Eustacia it is not so in other women. As Duffin remarks, "her (Eustacia's) sensuous nature is incapable of thought. She is built entirely of highly potentialised feeling." Her indolence covers, as Mrs. Yeobright perceives, very strong passions. Her every act is the instant product of impetuous desire. Her cry that she has tried to be a splendid woman is bitterest ignorance of self, conscious and deliberate effort to be anything at all — to effect any change in her nature, to resist any impulse of virtue; her soul dissolved in her hot blood, the restraint of reason absent she has no guide but emotion and animal wants."
While one grants the analysis of Duffin's argument in the context of the novel, it would be proper to judge Eustacia in the light of what Lawrence himself has done in his work. In his book *The Love Ethic of D.H. Lawrence*, Mark Spilka discusses Lawrence's concept of organicism. He says that because of his belief in the life force Lawrence has generally been called a "vitalist." He feels the word organicist would be more appropriate for him because the role of life for Lawrence was organic wholeness. In Lawrence's novels one gets the whole man or the whole woman. As he explains it in *Women in Love* men struggle with their unborn needs and fulfilment. New unfoldings struggle up in torment in him, as buds struggle forth from the midst of a plant. Any man of real individuality tries to know and understand what is happening even in himself, as he goes along. This struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art which is a great part of life. It is not superimposition of a theory. It is a "passionate struggle into conscious being." Lawrence means, Spilka explains, the emergence from some partial or mechanical state of being into organic wholeness. The Lawrence hero undergoes this process and his experience becomes the reader's knowledge of
a very great part of life. So there is in Spilka's phrase "Love Ethic" in Lawrence's novels by which he meant radical commitment to spontaneous life and phallic marriage as the fount of life itself.

Lawrence showed less interest in vice and virtue than in specific elements of being such as will, sympathy, spirit, flesh and intellect. He wanted a balance of these elements and the harmony that is achieved would make men and women to live spontaneously. Any imbalance would lead to emotional atrophy and predatory behaviour.

In the *Study of Thomas Hardy* Lawrence argues the same thesis which his fiction does later. He says that man has circumscribed, hampered, imprisoned himself within the limits of the system which he himself developed. Man has allowed himself to be tyrannised over by his greediness and its system. He has ceased to be a whole being. His life is utterly pot bound but unlike the plant which bursts its pot he limits himself to a narrow existence. Lawrence does not say that Law should be broken. He says that one should say, "those state educations with their ideals, their armaments of aggression and defence, what are they to me? They must fight out their own fates. As for me, I would say to
every decent man whose heart is straining at the enclosure, "come away and be separate in your own soul, and live.

Your business is to produce your own real life, no matter what the nations do. The nations are made up of individual men, each man will know at length that he must single himself out, nor remain any longer embedded in the matrix of his nation, or community, or class. Our time has come; let us draw apart. Let the physician heal himself."

The passage just quoted not only shows Lawrence's attitude to life but also his attitude to art, the novelistic art. His whole aim in his novels was to assert the need for and achievement of organic being. His novels and characters in them always try to defy the tyranny imposed from without. They have been shown to succeed in achieving the wholeness whereas in Hardy any attempt to be authentic on the part of any character, authentic to himself meets with failure. Lawrence cites the example of Eustacia to say that her tragedy is partly due to her defiance of the moral system and partly because of her failure to understand herself and her attachment to Egdon. Lawrence accounts for the failure of Eustacia to the failure of Hardy.
After Analysing *The Return of The Native* in terms of social morality as causing the destruction of a distinct individual like Eustacia Vye, Lawrence begins to examine the aristocratic characters in Hardy's novels. For Lawrence an aristocrat is one who always tries to be himself, to create himself, to live as himself. For him the final meaning of work is the extension of human consciousness struggling to be free from mere self-preservation. Lawrence complains that in spite of Hardy's predilection for the aristocrat he allows the aristocrat to suffer and die. According to Lawrence this is the root of Hardy's pessimism. The aristocrat is shown as having some vital weakness, some radical ineffectuality, Miss. Aloclyffe and Manston, Elfride and her husband, Troy and Farmer Boldwood, Eustacia and Wildeve, Tess and Alec d'urberville and Jude all of whom die. Lawrence cannot account for Hardy's predilection and moral antagonism for the aristocrat. Lawrence asks why it is that the aristocrat is condemned to death. Hasn't the community come to consciousness in him? Lawrence likens it to the French revolutionaries who destroyed all that was not average. In the same way in Hardy's novels all exceptional people, the aristocrats die. Lawrence asks, "but why? is there the germ

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of death in these more single, distinguished people, or has the artist himself a bourgeois taint, a jealous vindictiveness that will now take revenge, now that the community, the average, has gained power over the aristocratic, the exceptional?" Lawrence accounts for this kind of attitude to bourgeois morality of Hardy which makes every exceptional person a villain and all exceptional traits wicked. However Lawrence finds Hardy sympathetic in his statement of Eustacia. The change is more marked in The Mayor of Casterbridge in which the dark villain is the tragic hero. Similarly Alec d'Urberville is not unlikeable and Jude is a complete tragic hero. In Tess, Mayor, Jude, the condemnation shifts from dark villain to virgin hero. For all this change the aristocrat is made to die. Lawrence says, "this, then, is the moral conclusion drawn from the novels:

1. The physical individual is in the end an inferior thing which must fall before the community: Manston, Hencherd etc.

2. The physical and spiritual individualist is a fine thing which must fall because of its own isolation, because it is a sport, not in the true line of life: Jude, Tess, Lady Constantine.
3. The physical individualist and spiritual bourgeois or communist is a thing, finally, of ugly, undeveloped, non-distinguished or perverted physical instinct, and must fall physically. Sue, Angel Clare, Clym, Knight. It remains, however, fitted into the community.

4. The undistinguished, bourgeois or average being with average or civic virtues usually succeeds in the end. If he fails, he is left practically uninjured. If he expire during probation, he has flowers on his grave.11

In the above conclusions Lawrence accuses Hardy of bad faith in that Hardy goes against the artist's natural predilection for the aristocrat. In spite of his sympathy for the individual he sacrifices him by representing him as one with "a definite weakness, a certain coldness of temperament, inelastic, a certain inevitable and incontestable adhesion to the community."12 Troy, Clym, Tess and Jude all have distinct individualities but their weakness consists in their inability to break away from the old adhesion, cannot separate from the mass, cannot detach from the common. So Lawrence calls them pathetic rather than tragic figures. As opposed to the pathetic characters Lawrence mentions the tragic heroes, Oedipus, Agamemnon.
Clytemnestra, Orestes, Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear, who were all destroyed by their own conflicting passions. They all, Lawrence points out, are involved in a conflict between the forces in the nature of man, the conflict is internal but in Clym, Troy, Tess, Jude the conflict is between the individual and the society. Lawrence compares Shakespeare's tragic heroes with the tragic heroes in Hardy and concludes:

"There is a lack of sternness, there is a hesitating betwixt life and public opinion, which diminishes the Wessex novels from the rank of pure tragedy. It is not so much the eternal, immutable laws of being which are transgressed, it is not that vital life-forces are set in conflict with each other, bringing almost inevitable tragedy - yet not necessarily death, as we see in the most splendid Aeschylus. It is, in Wessex, that the individual succumbs to what is in its shallowest, public opinion, in its deepest, the human compact by which we live together, to form a community." \(^{13}\)

The quintessence of Lawrence's argument here is that Hardy's characters are not aristocratic enough being pulled
... by the conventions which they try to defy. The inevitable conclusion that he draws is that Hardy is not a genuine artist, since in spite of his sympathy for the aristocrat he represents him as upholding the social convention. In a letter he wrote "what a common place genius he has; or a genius for the common place, I don't know which."
REFERENCES

1. Study, p. 27.
6. Study, Chapter I.