LANDSCAPE AND BODY IN THOMAS HARDY'S *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

Angus EASSON
University of Salford

To enter Hardy's Wessex, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in particular, by way of Spain may seem a roundabout route but it helps to establish a relationship between terrain and people and so underpins the pattern of human geography in what follows. In 1846 the English traveller and writer Richard Ford[1] opened his *Gatherings from Spain* with an overview of the peninsula:

> The kingdom of Spain, which looks so compact on the map, is composed of many distinct provinces, each of which in earlier times formed a separate and independent kingdom; and although all are now united under one crown by marriage, inheritance, conquest, and other circumstances, the original distinctions, geographical as well as social, remain almost unaltered. The language, costume, habits, and local character of the natives, vary no less than the climate and productions of the soil. The chains of mountains which intersect the whole peninsula, and the deep rivers which separate portions of it, have, for many years, operated as so many walls and moats, by cutting off intercommunication, and by fostering that tendency to isolation which must exist in all hilly countries, where good roads and bridges do not abound. (1906: 9)

Such a description, all differences of scale, history and nationality allowed for, might well characterize the Wessex of Hardy's imagination, a Wessex deeply founded in physical and social reality, a region of hills and valleys, within which communications are often laborious (the railways skirt rather than penetrate this

landscape) and where the terrain separates groups of people who, while geographically close together, are yet distinct in the cultivation of the varying soils that give their livelihood and distinct in their natures, attitudes and customs. At the opening of Phase the Second of the novel, Tess, returning home from her disastrous stay at Tantridge, ascends the rise towards the Vale of Blackmoor: as she does so Hardy makes clear the differences of soil and scenery, of character and kinship, of the two lands and the two peoples that respectively live around Tantridge and live in the Vale of Blackmoor. At Marlott, Tess's native village, the field-folk "shut in there traded northward and westward; those on [the Tantridge] side mainly directed their energies and attention to the east and south" (123)[2].

Geographical and social differences such as this are used by Hardy with accuracy and intensity in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, underscoring the different phases of Tess's life. The terrain is given to us with great specificity, with an awareness of the differences of soil, whether the cretaceous nature of Flitcomb Ash or the richness of the heavy clay of the Vale of Blackmoor that can be detected, even unseen, as Tess walks at night, by tread and smell (427). And not only is there this technical acuteness, underlying the abounding richness of description, there is also a constant utilising of the relationship between the land and the individual, so that the hills and the fields are not merely background but are integral to the activities and experiences of the human beings that work and live and love and die. If it is sometimes felt that Hardy's landscapes are indifferent to mankind (the permanence of Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*, against the feeble and transitory people that crawl like ephemeral insects over its surface), in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* at least there is a crucial interrelationship between landscape and mankind, between geography and the body, so that the terrain in all its variety and difference underpins the drama, while the human is integrated into this material world.

This geographical distinctiveness of Wessex, its small compass split into sharp divisions by its geology, the various communities in each vale with a distinct way of life arising form an underlying composition of rock and soil, some ways easy, some harsh, is vital to the nature of the novel and is vital in a way that is more than the usual tribute paid to Hardy for his scene-painting and his descriptive powers in picturing nature. We need to be aware of how finely discriminated are the different physical areas of the novel's action and how these differences at each stage of Tess's experience are underscored, and how the intertwining of the geographical and the social is not part of a homogeneous view of processes in Wessex, but the representation of subtle and local distinctions between one valley and another, between one kind of soil and another, the distinctions between dairy and arable farming, between a cow and a turnip.

I stress this link between people and landscape, and the varied nature of it within a single, apparently uniform geographical region, as projected by Hardy in his novel, since I came to consider that link by rejecting the influential yet essentially wrong-headed account of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*[3] by Arnold Kettle in the second volume of his *Introduction to the English Novel* (1953). Kettle's thesis, frequently reprinted and much used by students, has the direct appeal of simplicity and of a key to the novel that promises coherence. Kettle notes, only to reject, what Hardy himself declares is the subject of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* : "the fate of a 'pure woman'" (Kettle, ii, 45). In fact, Kettle declares, with an assurance that seems authoritative, the novel's subject "is the destruction of the English peasantry" (ibid.). Now Kettle is a Marxist, hence his concern with certain historical processes, and of course since his book, many people have written with subtlety and delicacy on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. To look at the novel is quickly to be convinced how little Kettle's "destruction of the English peasantry" is what occupies its bulk. There is singularly little detail of that process. The only substantial passage comes as late as chapter 51, when, John Durbeyfield having died, the Durbeyfield family must leave their cottage, wanted by the owner for a labourer and so dispossessing a family that has been independent of employers. Certainly, Hardy, at this point, discourses upon a process of decline, yet it comes remarkably late in the book and bears little relationship to what has gone before. Other references mitght be seized upon: Chaseborough, where the dance takes place on the night of Tess's seduction, is a "decayed" market town (105), but no hint is offered as to the cause or even the period of its decline; at Flintcomb Ash there is talk of a past when threshing was done with hand flails rather than machinery (406)[4]. But this change is not part of a destruction of the peasantry. If we look at John Durbeyfield, who must therefore be the chief peasant, we are made aware not of a class representative who is being destroyed, but of a drunken, inefficient individual, already weak before he takes on the glory of his D'Urberville ancestors (and if he is a D'Urberville who has declined, in what sense is he an independent peasant rather than a decayed gentleman?)[5]. It is his character, not his circumstances or role in history, that account for his muddling on, even to the family eating the seed potatoes—"that last lapse of the improvident" (429), and his death is from fatty degeneration of the heart, not social or economic pressures. If John is individual rather than typical, then how much the more is Tess exceptional rather than typical, in her person and in her fate. What concerns Hardy in larger historical terms (despite what he himself may say, as indeed he does in chapter 51) is not the destruction of a class but a pattern of flux and reflux (a point he emphasised at the end of chapter 50), which means decay, but also means growth. The D'Urbervilles have gone down, as also has Retty's family, but others have come

up. Certain things persist—the need for sustenance, as the flour mill works still even though the abbey that it belonged to is now in ruins: "food [is] a perennial necessity," while "creeds [are] transient" (303-304). Indeed, as in the novel's flux and reflux Tess dies, so its final moment gives hope of new life as Angel Clare and Liza Lu (who, Tess has declared, has all her goodness without her faults) depart hand in hand, an image charged with Milton's ending of *Paradise Lost*, a poem both directly and indirectly invoked in the novel. As Adam and Eve in Milton leave Paradise, with wandering steps and slow, some natural tears they shed, yet still, the world lay all before them where to choose. Angel and Liza Lu are to make a new start, however charged with the sorrow of Tess's destruction. Angel and Liza Lu go forward not into a social union (even if they underwent a ceremony, they could not be legally married in England at this time, as Angel has already pointed out to Tess) but into a natural union.

Now Arnold Kettle is concerned with the coherence of the novel and coherent his thesis is. But if the novel is not itself coherent, then how can a thesis help? In fact, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is coherent enough, but it does have contradictory elements, things that Hardy never resolved and which no single theory can tidy up. If Hardy is concerned about the decay or destruction of the independent peasantry (as his lengthy but sudden analysis in chapter 51 certainly might suggest—and it is a topic Hardy treats elsewhere and not only in the fiction), then why is this destruction introduced so late and why does it seem to contradict Hardy's own idea of flux and reflux? The idea of historical circularity rather than decline is especially clear in his ironies, where Hardy wants to bring out the contrast between the influence of the D'Urbervilles and the conditions of the Durbeyfields, setting against this decline how others have risen, whether the Duke of Wessex or the Stoke-D'Urbervilles. Again, in this matter of things unresolved and irresoluble in the novel, that defeat all coherence, Hardy is inconsistent in his references to Nature, which, particularly near the beginning, seems not a beneficial force. Hardy scorns Wordsworth's reference to "nature's holy plan," setting against this the six helpless Durbeyfield children, who, like captives, are compelled to sail in the ship of the Durbeyfield household (61-62), yet this very nature is later set against and preferred to society, while Nature seems accepted in Angel and Liza Lu, even if (again, how do we reconcile it?) nature seems to tell Tess that she is Alec's "natural" wife.

Again, in the use of imagery, Hardy's delight in an effective comparison often outweighs for him its jarring or ineffective tone. At the dance in the peat house in Chaseborough, where in the "mist of yellow radiance" the dancers and audience are like "satyrs clasping nymphs—a multiplicity of Pans whirling a multiplicity of Syrinxes" (107), an abandon of Pagan sensuality that points on to Tess's seduction, even while her standing apart underlines her separateness of

feeling at this point, Hardy wonderfully but incongruously describes "a young man . . . his straw hat so far back upon his head that the brim encircled it like the nimbus of a saint" (108). What, we might legitimately ask, has the association of holiness to do with such a moment as this? And in asking, the atmosphere of the scene is, at least momentarily, lost. This point raises the larger critical question about whether we can, in some sense or another, "rely" upon Hardy's imagery, as we rely upon Shakespeare's, for example, in coherence of interpretation. Not always, must be the answer. Though, and especially since I will be drawing upon imagery in my argument, accumulatively and with the text as a whole, I think we can place a reasonable degree of reliance on it.

We must, however, recognize that in some respects *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is incoherent and that no one thesis or key can be found to make it totally self-consistent. Yet if like Tess's own appearance and nature, the novel is not perfect, it is the more attractive for the imperfection. Nor do I pretend, having tilted at Kettle, to have myself *the* critical solution to the coherence of the novel. But what seems to me most obvious about the novel (and has been obvious to many other readers and not a few critics) is the central presence of Tess and the central presence of landscape, between them virtually overwhelming all other considerations. There is detail here of processes (not of the destruction, but of the activity, of the peasantry) and of work, meticulous and accurate. At Talbothays, the milkers, if women, lean their cheek on the cow; if men, their foreheads. The difficult cows are stalled for milking; the cows have preferences amongst the milkers, though practical considerations of milkers leaving must break this up. All this we learn and so are drawn into the rhythm and actuality of dairy farming. The landscape offers us a variety of perspectives, some of which overwhelm the human figures, even Tess, who as she enters the Var Valley, where lies Talbothays, is reduced to a fly on a billiard table, and again is pictured as a fly when she and Marian toil at Flitcomb Ash. Other critics have considered the novel by way of Tess in herself and in the landscape. The picturing of Tess is part of the argument that Tony Tanner, for example, makes for a structural coherence[6].

What, though, I want more particularly here to think about is the relationship of the landscape and the body in the novel. It is an approach that rejects the strait-jacket of theses like Kettle's, yet which will, I hope, reinforce aspects of the novel's power. Tess moves from place to place, each place, however local to the other, being distinctive in its nature, just as Tess's experience at each stage is distinctive and integral to that place; and Tess's own body intermeshes with the earth which she inhabits. There is a picturing of both terrain and body, but I am concerned more with geography than with scenery in a pictorial sense, concerned with what I might call metaphorically the map of

Tess's story. This is geography used as narrative. The localities exist physically, of course, and exist simultaneously over one hill from another; they exist as "realities," vividly and wonderfully so, within the world of the novel; and they exist as landscapes in Tess's being. Hence their effectiveness in enforcing Tess as the central figure and in enforcing their meaning in her progress. The novel again and again links the physical conformation, the nature, of the landscape's structure with the physical conformation, the nature, of the human body's structure, in ways that are not casual but morphological. Each, landscape and body, has a structure and the structure of each is related to that of the other. The landscape offers itself as geological formations, hills and valleys, soil, stones, crops, weather, perspectives; the body too has its skeletal formation, its flesh, its sowing, fullness and harvest, its moods, its aridity, and perspectives. So one is linked structurally and not just metaphorically to the other in nature.

In considering more closely this fusion of place and person in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* I want to begin by enforcing the link by a hint (and it is more than a hint) from the novel itself. As Tess at Flitcomb Ash unties the sheaves so that they can be fed into the steam thresher, evening comes on, and "as the evening light in the direction of the Giant's Hill by Abbot's-Cernel dissolved away, the white-faced moon of the season arose" (414). Abbot's-Cernel is Hardy's Wessex name for Cerne Abbas and the Giant's Hill is where the Cerne Abbas Giant is displayed. Like other such figures in England—the Great White Horse of Uffingham, the modern Lion near Whipsnade—the Giant (possibly prehistoric, possibly Romano-Briton), 180 feet high (57 metres), is a figure outlined on a hillside by cutting away the grass from the underlying chalk. The Cerne Abbas Giant is a man, holding a long staff or club and with an erect phallus: presumably a fertility figure[7]. It bears witness quite literally to the human body in the landscape. Other, less direct references, enforce this continuity between land formation and the body, as when Tess, approaching Flintcomb Ash, comes to the "irregular chalk table-land ... bosomed with semi-globular tumuli (small smooth round hills, often grave-mounds)—as if Cybele the Many-breasted were supinely extended there" (355), like those pictorial phantasies that show a landscape which can simultaneously be viewed as a recumbent human figure; while later, amongst the myriad flints that give Flintcomb Ash its name there are "bulbous, cusped, and phallic shapes" (360). These references help perhaps to give a new meaning to the "human geography": which is, in its more academic sense, the study of human activity on the land but which, as here, might be thought of also as the study of the human body as a geographer might undertake it. The images of the breast-like tumuli of a supine goddess; of stones like the phallus; and the reference to a hill with a giant form erect upon it help to suggest how entangled by likeness man and land are.

In a very ordinary sense, Hardy offers us human geography. The land is inhabited and worked by human beings, who are themselves responsive to and conditioned by the nature of the land. Talbothays yields rich milk, while the Vale of Blackmoor's milk is less rank, and Flitcomb Ash has wheat and turnips. At the same time, as I have already begun to suggest, the particular human body, *the* human figure in this land, is Tess's, which is treated (by Hardy himself and within the narrative by some of the characters) as part of this landscape, not the spirit of the place or its goddess, virtually nothing by symbol or metaphor, but rather by an analogy of structure which claims an identity rather than parallel between the woman and the earth. She is ploughed and crops, her tissue is bare to assault, she is penetrated as the farm tools penetrate the soil. Yet not only is she subject to these activities, she is also centrally placed in the narrative. We see her constantly and constantly see how she is made distinct, made unique. At the clubbing dance of the novel's opening she is famously made distinctive by her peony mouth and by the red ribbon in her hair, a decoration exclusive to Tess. At the Chaseborough dance in the peat house, she stands apart, watching; in the Chase, she is foregrounded, so that though we move in the narrative away from her with Alec into the mist and back to her with him, we are still made aware of Tess first and foremost, and, as as sleeping figure and as an object of narratorial commentary (119), she is as prominent for the reader as the traveller in these landscapes would find the breast-like tumuli or the Giant on his hill-side.

The novel's human patterning, a geography that takes in the land and Tess, as well as settlements, houses and farms and churches and tumuli, as my opening quotation from Richard Ford tried to suggest, is very much conditioned by and responsive to the physical conformation. To move from one area to another means going up one hill and down another: every such journey in the novel is marked by these inclines and declivities, notably though not exclusively when Angel gallops the horse downhill to make Tess cling tight to him or when Angel, looking back as he leaves Sandbourne, notes "a moving spot intruded on the white vacuity of its perspective" (473), which proves to be Tess running after him from the lodgings where Alec lies slain. Such heights offer too the chance to change perspectives. They can become markers in the narrative, Hardy using the landscape's structure to mark the structure of the narrative, as a character (Tess in especial) makes the transition from one stage or phase to another. The need to pause *after* climbing a hill naturally allows one to look ahead; the need to pause *when* climbing a hill naturally allows one to look back. Yet since each such journey implies a positive decision or crisis, some phase of life, it is also invariably the occasion of thinking back in time or forward in prospect, in remembering or envisaging, with the associated emotions. The landscape patterns the experience and perspectives shift. The Vale of Blackmoor viewed

from the cresting hill is almost miniature, as though the land of Swift's midget Lilliputians in *Gulliver's Travels*, in the command that height gives and its small fields: here "the world seems to be constructed upon a smaller and more delicate scale" (48). By contrast, the Var Valley, where Talbothays is situated, is an expansive tract, with its great dairies, as though we had moved to Swift's Brobdingnag, the land of giants. If these prospects are literal and physical, they are also metaphorical and human once viewed in time and memory. The Vale of Blackmoor, for instance, is a world of innocence, where every "contour of the surrounding hills was as personal to [Tess] as that of her relatives' face" (75); and when she returns from Tantridge, a maid no more, Hardy draws on the possibility of the physical scene to hold Tess for us, to make her pause in her journey, and so explore what has happened since that night in The Chase and how she views her lost innocence. She now moves up the same slope down which she had gone with Alec, and at the top the "familiar green world beyond" is "now half-veiled in mist" (123)—a detail which may carry some suggestion of a veil drawn between its innocent purity and Tess's own state, though in that case a veil imposed by Tess's sense of pollution, not by any true separateness from the natural world.

Blackmoor is fertile and sheltered, with grasslands, hedgerows, and a few surviving traces of the ancient woodlands. The Vale of the Var, though also dairy rather than arable, has the larger fields already mentioned, and everything seems on a richer fuller scale, so that in spring, rays "from the sun-rise drew forth the buds and stretched them into long stalks, lifted up sap in noiseless streams, opened petals, and sucked out scents in invisible jets and breathings" (185). This may not be the language of the geography text book, but the interaction of soil and water and heat are here, as in the "oozing fatness and warm ferments... when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization" (207). By contrast Flintcomb Ash is on the higher and drier uplands (350), a cretaceous tableland (371), chalky and with those myriad flints. It would be possible, with more detailed examination, to trace the geographical details more precisely, indeed to set them against geographical studies and maps. I hope I have touched sufficiently on details, though, to show that just as a painter should know the anatomy of the human form to paint it well, so Hardy knows the anatomy of the characters he presents, and represents their geography in a way few other English novelists have: D. H. Lawrence comes to mind, in *The Rainbow*, and there is Dickens's account of the storm in *David Copperfield* (chapter 55), but few others can match or even approach Hardy in this. And we should not, again I stress it, simply see these successive landscapes in which she is placed as symbolic stages in Tess's life. That they are analogies, even with symbolic value, is true, but they are also regions coexisting physically and temporally, not some series that

represents the social or agricultural process of decline or of the peasantry's destruction. There are significant differences from place to place: at Tess's native village of Marlott the harvest is facilitated by the horse-drawn reaper; at Flintcomb Ash, threshing is by steam-power. Marlott is behind the times, as any one area, particularly if isolated by geographical factors, may be behind another. The railway brings people from London in four hours; yet it skirts round the whole region, to cross which slower forms of transport, determined by availability and purse, are needed. The places appear successively in the novel not through some theory of historical process, but through Tess's progress, which is matched to this series of locales, so that she is driven to Flintcomb Ash not by historical or economic determinism, but by the wish to avoid any place where she might be known, whether the Vale of Blackmoor or the Vale of Var, and in Flintcomb Ash the steam-thresher is part, not of some vague generelization about machinery and agricultural change, but of a process of Tess's will being undermined, by grinding work and by Farmer Groby's persecution (founded in Tess's past) and by Alec's persistence.

I compared earlier Hardy's knowledge of the anatomy of the physical structures of Wessex to a painter's knowledge of anatomy and (without suggesting any necessary direct connection)[8], it is to those artists that show most an anatomical interest—Michelangelo, Signorelli, and in England, George Stubbs—that Hardy might be compared. Just as their interest is shown in their depiction of the body's structure, so with Hardy's places in *Tess* we have geology, meteorology, the seasons, soil, crops, human activity, and set within them, by virtue of that labour, and become the setting for the human beings as they grow familiarly into them. At Talbothays, Angel sees something new in life and humanity by associating with Dairyman Crick and the farm-folk, while he also "made close acquaintance with phenomena which he had before known but darkly—the seasons in their moods, morning and evening, night and noon, winds in their different tempers, trees, waters and mists, shades and silences, and the voices of inanimate things" (174). This is more than impressionism: it is *knowing*. And we notice too how the ambience is coloured with the human—moods, tempers, voices. And by these presences we may cross over to Tess herself and see how Hardy handles her body as landscape in that other sense of human geography that infuses the novel.

Tess's body is well known. It is laid out with loving care by Hardy in the novel, and readers and critics have, with some exceptions, seen it and responded to it. The success of the character's psychology is disputed, of course, as is the relationship of Tess's behaviour to Hardy's idea of a blighted star and also Hardy's concept, however ironically qualified, of tragedy. But the presence, physical and emotional, of Tess is not in doubt and Tony Tanner makes much and

of the thematic uses of red (red mouth, red lips, red ribbon, red blood) in esentation. What we may also notice is that as the landscape has its nd perspectives, so too has Tess's body. She is by turn Lilliputian, a fly Var Valley or the Flintcomb upland, and Brobdingnagian, a giantess: ie sets about baptizing her child Sorrow, she looks "singularly tall and g," and to her brothers and sisters she appears "a being large, towering ul—a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common" (144, ven more like Brobdingnag (though here the perspective is not upon when on the wedding night the tear that rolls down Angel's cheek is so at it magnifies the pores of the skin (300). Such shifting perspective hat we look at and realize Tess afresh again and again. Tess's body is nly one detailed in the novel: yet it receives attention out of all proportion f Car the Queen of Spades' or Angel's or of the other milkmaids'. I need very bodily reference: indeed, it would be tedious to do so, but we are vare of Tess's mass of black hair, hanging down or coiled up or falling f her lips, her mouth, her legs, her fingers, her bosom, her chin, her feet, s, her cheeks, the vein of her inside arm, her eyes even to the fibrils of the see. e.g. 51, 52, 76, 81, 84, 123, 126, 231, 232, 321, 239). As well as this f her "fleshly tabernacle" (388), that stresses a "luxuriance of aspect, a of growth" (82), there is a sense of the phases or layers of Tess—rather ugh the terminology is mine) geological strata; as Hardy says, in the girl ars can be sometimes seen aspects of her twelfth year, of her ninth, and her fifth. Late in the story it is Tess herself who feels her brow and its nd the edge of her eye sockets, thinking as she does so of when the he anatomical structure that underlies the flesh, as the rocks underlie the ill be bare (351).

Nor is Hardy content with details, however many or varied. He extends sense of Tess's body, already suggested by the "luxuriance of aspect," he holds the corn in an embrace like that of a lover (138). Clare knows s him because "every curve of her form showed that" (279). Under the f loving Angel yet seeking to repulse him as husband, Tess flings herself on the spear grass, the moment combining the body's impulses with the tory agony of an animal caught by a steel trap: "every wave of her blood, ulse singing in her ears, was a voice that joined with nature in revolt her scrupulousness [in refusing Angel]. Reckless, inconsiderate accep- him [was what love counselled] . . . to snatch ripe pleasure before the iron pain could have time to shut upon her" (241). The image here identifies

her another landscape or an integral part of the landscape. At the Marlott harvest Hardy makes the general remark that a field woman is a portion of the field (137), and, more specific to Tess, that as she journeys towards the Var Valley, she feels a kinship to the landscape, though she had "never before visited this part of the country" (156). Indeed, as she stands looking down into the lushness of the Valley of the Great Dairies, she is moved to chant a psalm, "O ye Sun and Moon . . . ye Green Things upon the Earth," as a half-conscious rhapsody at the way this place enters into her (158). Again, while travelling towards Flintcomb Ash, in a moment foregrounded by shifting into the present tense, Hardy insists: "Thus Tess walks on; a figure which is part of the landscape" (355).

As Tess is by these incidental but significant comments drawn into the landscape, so in the larger narrative structure there is an interweaving that asserts that process of integration of landscape and body, of physical geography and "human geography," with Tess, moving across this region, responsive to places that seem each in its own particularity to respond to her. In the Chase, just before Alec seduces her, she seems to be absorbed into the scene, nestled amidst the dry leaves, the mist enveloping her, the darkness as the moon goes down ending all distinctiveness between her and her surroundings. The Chase is enveloped in "webs of vapour which . . . formed veils between the treees," while Tess is clad in a white muslin dress, and her substance of "beautiful feminine tissue" is "sensitive as gossamer" (117-119), so that weather conditions, dress material, and the body itself are linked in one world of sensory experience, while Tess's nature is "practically blank as snow" (119). Tony Tanner links the snow to colour suggestions of purity, but it also clinches the idea of landscape, with Tess's body about to receive the impress literally of Alec's body and of the shaping of her fate. Yet like the landscape, even when the snow has been besmirched by human activity and is gone, she remains and is later (in some sense) continued in Liza Lu.

This scene in The Chase is not only crucial for Tess's subsequent story, but also for its importance in the argument about Hardy's attitude to nature and to society in the book. The natural seems predominant, with the birds and the hares and the rabbits, yet the social law blames Tess for a "natural" act committed on her by Alec, which is unnatural in that it is undesired (we believe) by Tess. Yet if the issue is raised whether Tess can ever be part of Nature, since by being human she is different from the birds and the hares and the rabbits, and if Hardy seems to reject the traditional view of nature's beneficience, there is an increasing sense as the novel progresses that nature, with all its faults, is

en"—the presence of the same creatures as in The Chase is both biologically ct and an imagistic reminder of the earlier place and event—"she looked herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence"; yet she narrator insists) is in harmony with the "actual world," she has broken "no nown to the environment into which she fancied herself such an anomaly").

This point about the rejection of the social order, of Tess's harmony with atural scene, is reinforced in the strange, grotesque description (another of ifting perspectives that reorder and challenge our understanding) when, at thays, Tess creeps unseen the better to hear Angel playing his harp:

> The outskirt of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch; and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells—weeds whose red and yellow and purple hues formed a polychrome as dazzling as that of cultivated flowers. She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunks, made madder stains on her skin . . . (178-179).

re here is repugnant or disgusting: offensive smells, weeds, cuckoo-spittle, s, sticky blights; yet I don't think this is so much threatening—not moral it or moral stain (though that might be argued)—as rather a morally neutral ess of nature, which seeks to possess or draw Tess into itself, and indeed is exulted, taken out of herself by the music of Angel's harp so that the k-smelling weed-flowers glowed" and "the waves of colours mixed with the s of sound" (179). This fullness even to rankness (as the dairy production e Var Valley, its butter, its cheeses, is full even to rankness as against the delicate production of the Vale of Blackmoor) is but an aspect of the ness of Talbothays, a lushness shared by Tess, neither good nor evil, because not directed by social or religious laws. And it is here, as Tess and Angel y their love that nature and the human seem the most lovingly and most sely intertwined, both by the elements of the story and by the novelist elf. In particular, chapter 20 is a summation of this human geography, e Hardy's acute power of observation and description combine with the ising power in the human presence of emotion and absorption. It opens in

> The gray half-tones of daybreak are not the gray half-tones of the day's close, though the degree of their shade might be the same. In the twilight of the morning light seems active, darkness passive; in the twilight of the evening it is the darkness which is active and crescent, and the light which is the drowsy reverse. Being so often—possibly not always by chance—the first two persons to get up at the dairy-house, they seemed to themselves the first persons up of all the world. In these early days of ther residence here Tess did not skim, but went out of doors at once after rising, where he was generally awaiting her. The spectral, half-compounded, aqueous light which pervaded the open mead, impressed them with a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve. At this dim inceptive stage of the day Tess seemed to Clare to exhibit a dignified largeness both of disposition and physique, an almost regnant power, possibly because he knew that at that preternatural time hardly any woman so well endowed in person as she was likely to be walking in the open air within the boundaries of his horizon; very few in all England. Fair women are usually asleep at midsummer dawns. She was close at hand, and the rest were nowhere.
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> It was then, as has been said, that she impressed him most deeply. She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them.
> "Call me Tess," she would say askance; and he did.
> Then it would grow lighter, and her features would become simply feminine; they had changed from those of a divinity who could confer bliss to those of a being who craved it.
> At these non-human hours they could get quite close to the waterfowl. Herons came, with a great fold noise as of opening doors and shutters, out of the boughs of a plantation which they frequented at the side of the mead; or, if already on the spot, hardily maintained their standing in the water as the pair walked by, watching them by moving their heads round in a slow, horizontal, passionless wheel, like the turn of puppets by clockwork. (186-187)

This life does not last: these are the "non-human hours" of a suspended, intense idyll and such fatness of soil is not found in every valley or upland of the region. At chalky arid Flintcomb Ash there is another face that looks on Tess, yet her she too in her weariness is also drawn into the land's physical conformation. She and Marian are set to dig up turnips (or swedes):

> The swede-field in which she and her companion were set hacking was a stretch of a hundred odd acres, in one patch, on the highest ground of the farm, rising

and it was the business of the two women to grub up the lower or earthy half of the root with a hooked fork called a hacker, that it might be eaten also. Each leaf of the vegetable having already been consumed, the whole field was in colour a desolate drab; it was a complexion without features, as if a face, from chin to brow, should be only an expanse of skin. The sky wore, in another colour, the same likeness; a white vacuity of countenance with the lineaments gone. So these two upper and nether visages confronted each other all day long, the white face looking down on the brown face, and the brown face looking up at the white face, without anything standing between them but the two girls crawling over the surface of the former like flies. (360)

Tess is reduced in the perspective of this landscape, as she expanded to ɔnary essence of woman" at Talbothays. Part of that landscape, though, ınd if there is an ambiguity when Angel's mother calls Tess "a mere child ɔil," because, as Angel reminds her, "we are all children of the soil" (455), ırth to return to earth, this landscape is no mere painted back-drop. Angel [, in a telling metaphor, stands harshly against Tess after her wedding-ɔvelation, like the upland of Flintcomb Ash, because there "lay hidden [in hard logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam, which turned the [everything that attempted to traverse it" (311). And what determines o return to Tess is the advice of his chance companion in Brazil, who sees than this scroff of social laws; true, he rises above the pettiness of locality, ; image is still geographical, since "to his cosmopolitan mind such ons from the social norm, so immense to domesticity, were no more than irregularities of vale and mountain-chain to the whole terrestrial curve" A new perspective, and one that removes us from Wessex, but one which Angel to that region of valleys and hills, of soil and climate and ture, realized with particularity and sense of difference by Hardy.

I have tried to argue for an intense interlinking of landscape and body, of (and Tess, for a particular kind of human geography. I have said very ɔout character, important though it is and at the centre of much critical because I wanted to stress that Hardy makes Tess and the landscape parts ıtity. I hope I have suggested this as one way of approaching the novel, I do not claim to have offered the sole key to its understanding, because ɔvel singularly rich in possibility, far beyond the reductiveness of a single ce the "destruction of the peasantry." In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* Hardy with variety and particularity a region which is not merely where he grew ɔne which he knew intimately, like a human being, and where he depicts

NOTES

1. Richard Ford (1786-1858), traveller and writer; author of the *Handbook for Trevellers in Spain,* 2 vols., 1845: the *Gatherings from Spain,* 1846, is a rearrangement of parts of the *Handbook,* with new material. The opening reference seemed particularly appropriate, since this paper was first given as a lecture at the University of Zaragoza; my warmest thanks to Susana Onega, who invited me, and to her and all her colleagues who made my visit so delightful.

2. All references to *Tess* are given by page number in the text to the Penguin edition of the novel.

3. A useful gathering and consideration of various accounts of the novel (including Kettle's) can be found in Wright 1987.

4. The hardship of Flitcomb Ash is sometimes pointed to as part of the historical shift in master / man relationships; and hence Tess's progress from Talbothays to Flintcomb as symbolic of social decay (Kettle [ii, 48] says Tess becomes "fully proletarianized"). But Tess's personal circumstances are mirrored in *and* determine her geographical situation. Nowhere is it suggested that Talbothays has perished; Flintcomb is not the historical successor of Talbothays but its contemporary. Tess goes where her story will not be known and the two farms are affective scenery of her psychodrama. See further below.

5. The relationship of the Durbeyfields to the D'Urbervilles is another of the novel's ambiguities, despite the rich opportunities it provides for irony. Even as the family are dispossessed, Hardy cannot resist stressing that their fate is that meted out in the past by D'Urbervilles upon the peasants, thereby further confusing the "decay of the peasantry" issue. And when did the Durbeyfields cease to be gentlefolk? As recently as the eighteenth century, it is hinted (44: they were still being knighted under Charles II); but the point is not clarified: indeed, it is stated that the male line died out, so how does John come to be called Durbeyfield or how can Tringham suggest (even jokingly) that Durbeyfield would have been "Sir John" if knighthoods were hereditary? Such questions, through curious, are not to be answered by the text.

6. Tanner 1968. See also Irwin 1979, both for general discussion of the use of the physical world an in particular for Hardy's in *Tess.*

7. For some account of the Cerne Abbass giant see Grinsell (1958: 227-228, 306 and Plate XII).

8. The connections between Hardy and particular painters are discussed by Grundy (1979: ch. 2).

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