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LITERATURE, INTUITION AND FAITH

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is entitled 'Literature, Intuition and Faith' and it aims to create a new critical perspective of Thomas Hardy's novels by examining four of his best-known works.

I will suggest that the novels of Thomas Hardy reveal a particular narrative concerning the idea of spiritual intuition and the Hardyean protagonist.

The discussion will use as its methodology a close analysis of the sub-textual impulses of the novels rather than the considerable biographical information that is already available on Thomas Hardy.

The contention of the thesis is that in contrast to Hardy's expressed allegiance to agnosticism, an unspoken and so far unrecognised narrative of intuitive spiritual faith inhabits the text.

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My husband Ian has been the main source of support. I dedicate this thesis to him, and our children.

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LITERATURE, INTUITION AND FAITH

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to examine novels by the nineteenth century writer Thomas Hardy in the context of the interactions of literary narrative, intuition and faith. The investigation proceeds from the (sub)-textual evidence of Hardy's novels alone (as the ground from which the investigation develops), rather than entering into dialogue in detail with the now substantial body of Hardy criticism and scholarship. However, insofar as the concerns of this project can be located in one compatible narrative in existing work on Hardy, it may be found in a few brief comments made in Michael Millgate's revised biography of Hardy. I quote from the chapter titled 'Pessimistic Meliorist':

Where Hardy differed from so many of his contemporaries was in the absoluteness, the literalness, with which he believed that not to be born was best, that consciousness was a curse, and that while death might distress the bereaved the dead themselves were not to be pitied.¹

Whilst Millgate considers the interesting notion of Hardy's apparent pessimism, this thesis leans towards notions concerning Millgate's assertion that Hardy thought 'consciousness was a curse'. Notwithstanding the value Hardy placed on consciousness, this thesis discusses, through the prism of Hardy's novels, what may lie underneath depictions of overt consciousness. We may understand 'consciousness' to mean not only the use of mental faculties but additionally, the potential to analyse our use of that cognition. This understanding of what consciousness means is amenable to aesthetic analysis. If we understand art and literature to be conscious manifestations of the artist's intent or state of mind, then we too may join a narrative that sites consciousness (as opposed to dreams, wishes etc) within the dubious paradigm of 'truth', or at least the truth of intent.

¹ Millgate, M., *Thomas Hardy, A Biography Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p380

But this thesis does not focus on consciousness – it focuses on the subconscious, although it is important to emphasise at the outset that this is not the model we associate with Freud. Specifically, in relation to ideas of literature and faith, it focuses on the idea of a subconscious spiritual intuition. The OED describes *intuition* as ‘the ability to understand something immediately without the need for conscious reasoning’ and *intuitionism* as a ‘philosophy – the theory that primary truths and principles are known by intuition’. Moreover, the latter, that is *intuitionism* gained precedence in the nineteenth century as an area of interest. Jenny B. Taylor and Sarah Shuttleworth’s anthology *Embodied Selves* brings together a diverse collection of works on mental science. It supports the idea of an intellectual culture in the nineteenth century that was energetically attending to complex pre-Freudian narratives:

..it is still often assumed, for instance, that the Victorians firmly believed in a unified, stable ego, that the English concept of the unconscious was of a crude physical reflex, or that medical and psychiatric discourses represented a monolithic, almost conspiratorial desire to construct and police dominant notions of gender.²

Taylor and Shuttleworth make us aware that nineteenth-century psychological culture was more complex than a superficial notion of ‘typical Victorians’ may suggest. Taylor and Shuttleworth (and certainly many who have closely looked at Thomas Hardy’s works) contribute much to the debate on identity, but this thesis will regard identity in the context not of a social self, but through the prism of the Hardyean protagonist as the possessor of a unique, spiritualised intuition. However, this thesis does not assume that a spiritualised intuition is the means by which a social identity is created. Instead it is the *mode* through which the protagonist demonstrates a deeper

² Taylor J. B., & Shuttleworth S., (eds.) *Embodied Selves* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998) xiv

apprehension of material life and the idea of a spiritual universe. Moreover, intuitive energy operating through Hardyean protagonists is invariably oriented towards a meeting of the individual with an omnipotent metaphysical unity. We may describe that phenomenon as the One, the Good, or God. Whatever name we give it, the contention of this thesis is that throughout Hardy's novels there is a subconscious narrative which speaks of a desire, even if it is eventually unfulfilled, to meet that unity and to reach it through the intuition.

The intolerable nature of consciousness for Hardy (implied by Millgate) seems to be allied to some proof of Hardy's so-called pessimism. However, I argue that Hardy's ambivalence towards the idea of consciousness may have been less a pessimistic belief that it is better not to have any cognitive faculties (as a dead person has not) but more, on closer inspection, a silent valorisation of intuition. The trope of intuition is fraught with subtleties and complexities. A detailed study of the power of intuition and its philosophical overtones may be found in the work of the philosopher *Hénnri Bergson*.³ However, Bergson's approach on the subject of intuition tended to emphasise the notion of the *élan vital*, the life spirit or force which powers human existence. We cannot disagree that a substantial sense of a life force exists in the work of Thomas Hardy. However, this thesis attempts to site intuition in a direct relationship with the metaphysical One, and it hopes to show how a nineteenth century writer of fiction such as Hardy achieved this through complex and subtle development of characterisation.

A thesis on the subject of intuition and its conjunction with what Hardy called the novel of character and environment involves a methodological approach that any fair critique may assert is a creative one. It is impossible to prove the intuition of a

³ Bergson has written widely on intuition and his concept of the *élan vital*.

writer or that of any character the writer creates, therefore it must be stated at the outset that this thesis makes no claim of absolute truth, instead it creates a discussion of the potentialities that lie in a faintly concealed narrative in a particular writer's literary production. The contention of this thesis is that ultimately Thomas Hardy does allow us to see the intuitive impulses of his novels quite clearly if we look a little closer. Specifically, I hope to illuminate how a spiritual intuition is demonstrated through the carefully developed sensibilities of key protagonists in Thomas Hardy's fiction.

Hardy develops his protagonists as a means through which a particular awareness is activated. His perspective is allied to the spiritual narrative of his time which is predominantly Christian, but his complex and subtle handling of the idea of intuition in the sub-text of his work allows for other discourses to enter the ether of such an intuition, including narratives of Christian Scholasticism, Islam and Jewish Mysticism. This study is not a definitive account of these modes of practice and belief, neither does it demonstrate or aim to prove that Hardy definitely followed or did not follow one line of religious thought. Rather, it aims to show how the hyper-sensibility of key characters in Hardyean fiction gives us access to these narratives and can be explained in terms of them, so that we may question overtly clear categorisations concerning Hardy, that is, that he was an implacable agnostic. The central belief of this thesis is that Hardy was highly spiritually aware, thus the label 'agnostic' is rather ambivalent. We may consider modes of 'not knowing' – there may be different modes of knowing rather than material proof. Whilst the idea of mysticism is familiar to us, perhaps the evasive nature of concrete knowing or 'proof' may be described in terms of the limitations of the tools we have available to us. As Keith Ward explains it:

Just as our perceptions are caused by some reality that is different from them, so our mathematics describes some reality that is almost

certainly different from the models we use (because we do not know how to interpret them realistically). There is an unknown external cause. Our mathematics, like our perceptual consciousness, is a tool that enables us to understand the observed world, the world that is the result of an interaction between the unknown cause and the perceiving subject. Further than that we cannot go.⁴

Keith Ward rightly observes that we are limited by the structures of the models we may use to apprehend anything at all. Moreover, the fact that Hardy showed an ability to question the tenets of Christianity was obvious. However, I would like to give a voice to what is present, but silent in his work – human spiritual intuition. Spiritual intuition is a universalising phenomenon that people of any religious, agnostic or even atheistic leaning may nevertheless give some credence to. It defies explanation but the aim of this thesis is to attempt to allow its silence to speak.

There is of course nothing new in the idea of a debate about Thomas Hardy and spirituality⁵ but this discussion aims to reveal a deeper understanding of the ways in which the author's literary methods revealed a particular spiritual narrative. Whilst the characters I discuss across all four novels differ in personality and gender, this study aims to demonstrate the ways in which all of them inhabit something in common - a force-field of intuitive energy, which, as well as revealing something of the author's complex sensibility, also leads us to consider how these impulses attach to pre (and post) Hardyean narratives, alive but largely un-named in the text.

In Chapter One the idea of the isolated and intuitively silent person as a trope of an enduring spiritual narrative in the west is discussed through the prism of *The Woodlanders*. In Chapter Two we will discuss *Jude the Obscure* and the way Hardy's novel reveals a valorisation of the spiritual intellect over material knowledge. This gives us the opportunity to look anew at other narratives such as Medieval notions of

⁴ Ward, K., *The God Conclusion* (London: Darton, Longman Todd, 2009) p44

⁵ See Pamela Dalziel's essay 'The Gospel According to Hardy' in *Thomas Hardy Reappraised: Essays in Honour of Michael Millgate*, Wilson, K., (ed.) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006)

a spiritualised intellect. As the thesis progresses, I will consider if the idea that intuition and intellect are two implacably separate forces is necessarily accurate, especially when we consider the unique achievement of writers like Hardy.

In Chapter Three the thesis investigates the idea of spiritual illumination in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and identifies a close connection between the ideas of illumination and ethics. Chapter Four will discuss *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by looking at elements of the narrative of Christ and the Trinity. It is a structure that is capable of a flexible and new perspective. In this final chapter I will comment on the ethical perspective revealed in that narrative and conclude with some perspectives on the idea of the enlightenment of the soul through the experience of a life lived on earth.

Underpinning my discussions is the suggestion that questions on how much and to what extent Hardy believed in the Christian God are somewhat superfluous. As this thesis hopes to show, perhaps Hardy believed in the only thing he knew he had – his intuitive intellect. This is the gift he channelled through his protagonists. Moreover, by doing this, as this thesis shall demonstrate, he moves the genre of Romanticism on to something new and entirely unique which is manifested in his novels, before the phenomenon of Naturalism and Realism take over in the literary paradigm.

It is perhaps not a wholly whimsical idea to put forward the notion that analysis of the spiritual subconscious elements of the text may also reveal the subconscious impulses and perspectives of the author. Few would disagree that a work of art may have its surface embellishments and form, but may also contain in its composition something of its deep structure. The idea of spots of perception and intuition across the metaphorical canvas of a book is, I think, appropriate to the way

this thesis regards the novels of Thomas Hardy. Whilst his poetry may be regarded (as most good poetry should perhaps be regarded) as replete in meaning and form, the contention of this thesis is that it is the novels that lay out a more variegated constellation of ideas and ambiguities which invite exploration. The intuitive protagonists speak indirectly to us from the intuitive author. It therefore seems that a good way to start an investigation of Hardy's novels in this context is without preconceptions, without the imperative to follow one line of scholarly thought, without obsessive attention to biographical details on Hardy and without, in the first instance, a bold claim that the thesis sets out to prove anything.

This thesis sets out to suggest rather than prove, because, and in accordance with the tenor of its approach, nobody can prove the intuitive impulses of anyone else. The thesis instead revolves around the idea that Hardy's novels give us the chance to experience something of the phenomenon of spiritual intuition. Hardyean scholarship which has gone before, which every thesis is indebted to, has provided important insights into areas of significant cultural importance, notably, class, feminism, place, rural England, time, chance, and of course, religion. Penny Boumelha has contributed significant insight into forms of narrative, and social relations ⁶Merryn Williams has documented the influence of rural England as a trope of Hardyean fiction⁷, F. B. Pinion has given a detailed account of autobiographical and authorial influences that impact on Hardy's work⁸, Patricia Ingham's work is replete with both autobiographical and social influences and factors that contribute to the vast landscape of Hardy's work.⁹ Hardy's poetic vision which extends to the novels as

⁶ See for instance Penny Boumelha's 2005 introduction to Hardy's *The Woodlanders* (ed. Dale Kramer) (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005)

⁷ Williams M., *Thomas Hardy and Rural England* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1972)

⁸ Pinion F.B., *Hardy the Writer* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1990)

⁹ Ingham P., *Authors in Context – Thomas Hardy* World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

well, has been acknowledged by many critics, for instance, Harvey Curtis Webster's 'On a Darkling Plain'¹⁰ and Ernest Brennecke's 'Thomas Hardy's Universe – A Study of a Poet's Mind'¹¹ are especially relevant to this thesis, given that they consider the twinning of the ideas of the poetic mind and perception. There is no doubt that the concept of intuition is in these critiques too.

Other contributors to the discussion of Hardy's spirituality and mental processes include Jedrzejewski in *Thomas Hardy and the Church*¹² and Paul Turner in *The Life of Thomas Hardy*.¹³ J.B. Bullen in *Thomas Hardy – The World of His Novels*¹⁴ alludes to ways in which the natural environment enhances contemplation in Hardyean fiction. Robert Schweik in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* points out that Hardy's work tends to 'embedded in a densely intricate web of imaginative connections and qualifications so complex that a consideration of them can hope only partly to illuminate the manifold ways they may have influenced his writings.'¹⁵ In 2009 Wolfreys comments of Hardy's fiction that 'the untranslatable is of greater significance, and so remains, encrypted and in full view, on almost every page.'¹⁶ Most recently, and after the completion of this thesis (2013) Norman Vance in *Thomas Hardy in Context* discusses 'Faith and Doubt'.¹⁷ In the same edition, Jenny Bourne Taylor discusses 'Psychology.'¹⁸

¹⁰ Webster, H.C., *On a Darkling Plain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947) and reprinted with new preface (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1964)

¹¹ Brennecke, E., *Thomas Hardy's Universe – A Study of a Poet's Mind* (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1924)

¹² Jedrzejewski J., *Thomas Hardy and the Church* (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996)

¹³ Turner P., *The Life of Thomas Hardy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998)

¹⁴ Bullen J. B., *Thomas Hardy – The World of His Novels* (London: Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2013)

¹⁵ Schweik R., 'The influence of religion, science and philosophy on Hardy's writings' in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* (ed.) Kramer D., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.54-72

¹⁶ Wolfreys J., *Thomas Hardy – Critical Issues* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p.1

¹⁷ Vance N., 'Faith and Doubt' p.274-284 in ed. Mallet P., *Thomas Hardy in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013)

¹⁸ Taylor J.B., 'Psychology' in (ed.) Mallett P., *Thomas Hardy in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013) p.339-350

Literary criticism, written to be perhaps more accessible for the newcomer to Hardy notes one main strand of critical reception the author's work has received. It becomes apparent, as Harvey demonstrates in a brief but helpful overview that much Hardyean scholarship has revolved (and continues to revolve) predominantly on the material and social facts of the lives of his characters.¹⁹ This is understandable in view of the drama of impoverished lives addressed in Hardy's fiction, and perhaps morally right if we assume literary criticism also has a duty to illuminate those material facts. It would be impossible to ignore the economic fact of nineteenth century rural culture, and not to use that knowledge to give to Hardyean scholarship the opportunity to discuss the many ways Hardy's novels enhance that debate. We may also consider religion, although a metaphysical category, to nevertheless be a part of that material and social context. The ways in which religious doctrines are interpreted will affect the material lives of those influenced by them, and those metaphysical debates invite us to investigate power relations in the ways religious strictures may be administered.

However, it is a fact that Hardyean scholarship, which embodies both categories of material and metaphysical influences, is a well-trodden path, darkened by a very rich growth of important work. Nevertheless, a small lamp may be shone on that darkened path, and on closer inspection reveal small, singular diversions, other paths that cannot take into account all the economic and social factors that impact on the study of Hardy's fiction. This thesis represents a small off-shoot from the main path if we try to think in terms of the linear progression (if indeed there is one) of the debates concerning economic, political and social structures in Hardy's works. It is a diversion, but it is important at this point to comment briefly on the implicit ethics of appearing to divert away from the economic factors inherent in the social realism of

¹⁹ Harvey, G., *The Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003)

the lives of Hardy's fictional characters. This thesis does not repudiate those economic facts, but it aims to concentrate almost exclusively on the idea of a spiritual intellect. This is not to rationalise the uneven social relations of the fictional world of Wessex - but instead to perhaps illuminate (and this can only be achieved by creating a small diversion) the particular gift that Hardy has given to some of his protagonists. No judgement is made on the rights and wrongs of such an authorial literary device which I argue Hardy has used – it has to be recognised that ownership of an intuitive intellect may seem poor compensation for a starving farm worker. But the thesis aims nevertheless to reveal something metaphysical the author has created, in conjunction with his own intuition, and moreover, without leaving a material trace of that action.

But it may also be argued that if Thomas Hardy could give nothing else to the impoverished lives of some of his characters he could at least give them the one thing he sensed he knew he, and they, had - a metaphysical intuition. As Hardy stated, 'Spencer was right in saying that the energy devoted to finding out the meaning of what one reads is spent at the cost of what might have been given to appreciating it.'²⁰ The contention of this thesis approaches what Hardy may have meant in this quotation. How can we appreciate a novel by Thomas Hardy? We may focus our energy on sifting out the material meanings in the text, or search for that elusive notion of the truth, either of his own beliefs or those of his characters, but the mode of 'appreciating' a work of literature (the action he alluded to in the brief quotation above) may be a sign of his subconscious valorisation of the intuition, not only as a subject matter worthy of exploration in his own work, but also as a faculty for his readership to adjust to in order to appreciate it.

²⁰ Collins, V.H., *Talks with Thomas Hardy at Max Gate* (London: Duckworth 1928) p21

It may be concluded therefore that by giving the gift of intuitive intellect to some protagonists in his novels, Hardy paradoxically did help to describe the material facts of their lives too. By giving to his readership a perception of the world of Wessex and its curiously isolated and intuitive characters, we may contrast his method with for instance, that of Dickens. Where Dickens had a substantial ability to materially describe the hunger, pain and deprivation of the workhouse and the conditions of the urban environment, Hardy had an equally substantial ability to give us a sense of impoverished rural life by illuminating the idea of certain individuals with hyper-sensible intuition, small spots of light in a dark universe. The idea of the isolated and hyper-sensible human mind adds tragic power to the social concerns of the time. But where Millgate pays attention to Hardy's pessimism and his Sophoclean belief that it may be better not to have been born, this thesis re-writes that philosophy and attempts to suggest that Hardy may have been sceptical about the life of the body, but he showed, throughout his Wessex novels, his profound appreciation of the life of the mind.

I will briefly set out the terms of this thesis' understanding of the collusion of 'Literature, Intuition and Faith'. The term 'literature' is self-explanatory, the term 'intuition' is what I mean to be the developed and applied natural instinct which I shall eventually argue is not separate from the intellect, and the term 'faith' denotes a particular state of mind, not a particular religion. Nevertheless, that there is a predominantly Christian sensibility in the perspective of Hardy, certain philosophers and other commentators who appear in this thesis is obvious. To suggest a definitive 'point' (that is, a chronological meeting-place) at which these various belief systems relevant to notions of intuition and faith definitely meet is perhaps reductive.

However, for the purposes of this thesis I argue that these perspectives all share the following characteristics:

- (a) The belief that creative activity, for instance, art or literature, is the result of an imperceptible but definite link to a state of intuition and a state of faith.
- (b) The belief that intuition is a human experience which resists concrete explanation, even if it is occasionally relegated to the realms of scientific determinism, that is, psychology.
- (c) The belief that a state of faith, for all its complications, is a human necessity – a cultural activity which appears to uphold the underpinning of existence and may even enhance the working of the intellect.

This project aims to discuss some points where certain belief systems forwarded by notable thinkers are relevant to our discussion on intuition and faith. The contention of this thesis is that the human power of intuition enables key protagonists in Hardyean fiction not only to demonstrate but to activate modes of perception and understanding. At this point I would like to point out that the thesis attempts to show ways in which Hardy's fiction and characters differ from Romantic discourse even though it may seem that their attributes fit Romantic notions of perception such as Wordsworth's privileging of the communicative power of nature. The sense of an isolated spot of light in a dark void fits well with the idea of the Hardyean protagonist, but I hope to demonstrate that the trope of Hardyean intuition in his novels is more rational than Romantic, and underpinned by established discourses of spirituality rather than poetic ecstasy. A comprehensive account of all western philosophical thinkers and their ideas is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I would like to consider briefly some of their ideas in the context of what this thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of Hardy's spiritual perspective.

Aristotle

The earliest investigations into the nature of human existence invariably reflect cosmological structures; there is a sense in ancient texts of an outward view - literally, looking to the skies for knowledge and inspiration. Atomist philosophy (500 B.C.) - emboldened by Leucippus' dictum that there is no random element to the universe, only reason and necessity - suggests the idea of a finite cosmos which nevertheless experiences flux. From this background Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) developed his treatises on rationality behind the apparent chaos of existence. However, as Heath discusses on Aristotle's *Poetics*, 'humans are unique in their capacity to derive universal judgements from their experiences'²¹ It is the paradox of gaining what Heath calls 'universal judgements' from the Aristotelian rationalist tradition which I suggest is relevant to the idea of Thomas Hardy and the confluence of literature, intuition and faith. The thesis aims to demonstrate that via the intuitive protagonist in Hardyean fiction, certain universalising impulses are activated, and importantly, that the process is intuitively rational and does not represent a Romantic chaos of ecstatic identification.

Aristotelian philosophical ideas represent contemplation on the nature of life – in terms of the early cosmological philosophical stance, we travel from 'the universe' to 'the universal', and notably, at the level of a type of rational sensation. The literary element is provided by Aristotle in the text of the *Poetics*, in which the exteriority of rational apprehension seems to become allied to the interiority of human experience. Likewise the Platonic phenomenon of the cosmos as a significant feature of human observation, brings with it psychological sensations of awe, inspiration, but nevertheless a desire to 'understand' its magnitude. Greek texts therefore give

²¹ Aristotle, *Poetics* intro. by Heath, M., (London: Penguin, 1996) p. ix

credence to the idea of the unknown, and the notion of creation, but Aristotle, as opposed to Plato, appears to ground these mysteries in epistemology. I suggest that we receive a sense of this undercurrent in Hardy's works, as if, despite the presence of the Hardyean Immanent Will, which seems to strike with unpredictable indifference, we as humans nevertheless seek to 'understand'. The Hardyean protagonist appears to be on a journey of hoped-for enlightenment, even if the enlightenment, whilst they are existing on earth, seems tragically elusive for some of them. I would argue that there is a significant narrative of a desire for rationality in the work of Thomas Hardy, rather than a purely Romantic and somewhat Platonic sense of awe.

Aristotle's notion of *tekhne* rationalises human processes. As Heath considers the *Nicomachean Ethics* he states in his critique of the *Poetics*:

Animals act by instinct or acquired habit, but humans are capable of acting from understanding: they know (as a dog might know) that this is the thing to do in a certain situation, but they may also understand (as a dog cannot) *why* it is the thing to do. This is what Aristotle calls in Greek *tekhne*; the word is conventionally translated as 'craft', 'skill', or 'art', but Aristotle defines *tekhne* as a productive capacity informed by an understanding of its intrinsic rationale'. (ix)

Craft, skill, or art, are in Aristotelian terms, touched by rationality, and not expressed as a divine and chaotic influence on the impressionable mind. However, significantly, Heath states that Aristotle does concede that understanding is not always present, that is, accessible to the reader/consumer, in any art that is done well. I believe that this is a profoundly important point to bear in mind when we consider an artist such as Thomas Hardy. Hardy's technical skill in creating a sense of intuitive protagonists is in my view the component of a successful communication to his readership's intuition. Where an ancient philosopher such as Aristotle can articulate the intuitive and unexplained impulse and achievement of creativity we may identify a writer like Hardy as a prime exponent. We may hesitate to use the word 'genius' but at this point

we consider if the unexplained element in art that is ‘done well’ approximates the unexplained agency of intuition. In Aristotle we become aware that in the text there are acutely subtle and multi-stranded discourses forming on the ideas behind the production of art, and its relevance to notions of human intellectual and spiritual enlightenment.

Nevertheless, as Heath describes it, *tekhne* is, in Aristotelian terms, the production of the *necessities* of existence, and this emphasis on its teleological value contrasts sharply with Aristotle’s position on poetry. The *Poetics* gives much significance to the idea of language, and specifically, metaphor. And it is through his indulgence towards the importance of poetry and metaphor where we find an Aristotelian paradox – his ideas begin to steer away from their rational base and move towards the metaphysical. Stable notions of the ‘truth’ and ‘understanding’ and ‘knowledge’ enter a site of potentiality rather than determinism. As Heath puts it:

Aristotle did not believe that the theology built into traditional Greek myths was true; but (unlike some earlier philosophers, including Plato) he had no objection to poetic plots based on them (60b35-61a1). A poem which recounts the actions of a vengeful deity is not an imitation of something which (in Aristotle’s view) does or could exist in the real world; but it is an imitation of the kind of thing which would necessarily or probably happen if the traditional beliefs about the gods were true. (xiv-xv)

Aristotle therefore creates a fine balance between the idea of *tekhne*, which has a rational and useful flavour (hence ‘technical’), but he also gives credence to poetry in all its indeterminate boundaries, especially on the idea of truth. This raises an interesting question – does something always have to be true in order for us to understand it? Is the notion of ‘understanding’ automatically based on truth? Perhaps something can only be true in its own essence, but it cannot be true in a universal sense. If we reverse the idea that (a) we do not understand rationally how God can

exist, therefore he cannot exist, we may nevertheless say (b) God still may exist because we do not actually have to understand God's existence rationally. Something does not have to be true for us to understand it. Therefore we do not have to understand something that is true. This indeterminate situation is, I would argue, the realm of the aesthetic – and the religious. Perhaps, and in accordance with the discussion around which this thesis revolves, intuition is the means by which we access these indeterminable entities.

For the 'truth' of fiction such as Thomas Hardy's is true enough – it is not necessarily a concrete universal truth, only it may lead us to universal understandings. In some way, Hardy posits his characters in that metaphysical void of competing narratives. They may not rationally know that God exists (neither did Hardy at times) but they intuitively acknowledge that what one doesn't know rationally does not negate the truth of its essence. Therefore Hardy's characters, as this thesis hopes to demonstrate, are constructed as intuitively aware of the void, and the metaphysics of the void, and finally, the ultimate possibility of a Prime Mover.

On the *Poetics* Heath further states: 'Aristotle leaves it an open question whether poets proceed by *tekhne*, by instinct, or by trial and error..' (xii). It may be worthwhile to consider this paradox in Aristotelian aesthetics, that is, the Aristotelian paradox involving the idea of poetry as *mimesis*, or imitation, (also translated as representation) - which is not strictly accurate, (it may be argued that poetry does not imitate everything), but the idea of it is perhaps beneficent to humankind. This resonates, I suggest, with the confluence of notions of literature, intuition and faith. We cannot prove the truth of them, but there is a subliminal relevance to these narratives. Firstly, Aristotle gives credence to the idea of literary fiction, through what could be described as his rather democratic acceptance of the vagaries of metaphor

and poetry and its rather loose association with the ‘truth’. Secondly, he creates (and pre-figures psychology) by forming a delicate and unanswerable dilemma between notions of *tekhne* and pure instinct, the phenomenon of intuition, if we assume intuition to be the developed and applied natural instinct. Thirdly, he creates by these subtle boundaries, the potentiality of a site for faith. It is faith which holds all these ambivalences together.

But how did Aristotle express the idea of universality, in terms of human experience? I would suggest that he contributed to the idea of the individual’s response to a sense of universality mainly by his discourse on plot in the *Poetics*. That is, he de-centred the idea of the individual in terms of dramatic potential. In the *Poetics* Aristotle elevates the idea of plot (over character) as being superior in its evocation of the human, and invariably tragic, condition. His interest in poetry is therefore philosophical, emanating from a desire to understand human impulses, but only in the context of what happens to people: ‘tragedy is not an imitation of persons, but of actions and life’. (Heath xx) In Aristotelian terms, this potential for understanding human impulses must be framed by a tragic plot, a structure which enables the audience to access its own emotions of pity and fear. Rather than illuminating any primary importance of character, Aristotle instead considers plot as the right method by which the social imperatives, and the shaping influences on the human spirit, become relevant to us. As Heath describes it: ‘His point is (only) that if such a tragedy is possible in principle, then character cannot be essential to tragedy in the way plot is.’ (xxii) The foregrounding of plot is therefore essential to Aristotelian ideas on poetic tragedy. Moreover this emphasis on the tragic plot seems to suggest the primacy of an external and creative shaping mechanism, something which I suggest is akin to Hardy’s ideas of the Immanent Will. Hardy’s notion of the

Immanent Will fits with the idea of an external shaping force; it is, in the sub-text of Hardy's fiction, also a highly unpredictable force. The primacy of character is asserted in Hardy's titles which often feature personal names or identities – mayor, or native, or woodlanders, if not Jude or Tess. But we may consider that ultimately characterisation is subordinated to a more general sense of the power of a general intuition operating throughout his works. In this way, character is important in that Hardy must create his intuitive protagonists to realise the idea of a spiritual intuition. But the most powerful force throughout the works is intuition itself.

Hardy's fiction, in addition to the complexity of plot throughout his novels, and in addition to a subconscious desire for a rational world, therefore contains unique modes of characterisation. Critics may argue that it is the complex plotting involved in Hardy's fiction which drives, in Aristotelian terms, the drama of the whole work. However, this thesis argues that whilst Hardy undoubtedly acknowledged the importance of plot, he also created the idea of the strangely unique spiritual intellect in key characters, and in dramatic terms, it is this quality which the literary 'audience' intuitively grasps. It is an intellect that is also intuition – both are categories that have become aggressively separated in modern times. But in Hardy's fiction, the audience/reader is transported through the world of the plot by the intuition of the Hardyean character – it is the active but silent intuition of certain characters which creates the centrifugal force in Hardy's novel, not the plot. To summarise, Hardy's novels contain a unique sense of competing magnetic energies – there is the wide-ranging plot, and there is, in the centre of it, or even de-centred from it, the isolated and gleaming intuition of a key protagonist. The focus of this thesis is to regard more closely how and why Hardy creates this effect.

The human aesthetic impulse to observe a universal plot, (in which individual characters either succeed or fail to reconcile their lives), creates a dual sensation. In one way, there is an experience of exteriority; the audience watches (or reads) a drama unfolding before them. In another way, that same audience (individual or collective) has an experience of interiority; inner experiences, whilst engaging with this particular aesthetic mode, creates effects within the consciousness. The ‘gap’ between this interiority and exteriority, is, perhaps ‘faith’. Importantly, whilst Hardy’s characters seem to inhabit that fine boundary between faith and the potential for the loss of faith, they do not lose their peculiar spiritual intellect. If Hardyean characters seem inconsistent, fearful, dismayed or ecstatic at varying points throughout their lives, but also revealingly, through their intuition, vaguely aware that a metaphysical force governs their lives, then they have been successfully created as vehicles who express all the energies, (some of them competing ones), circling the idea of faith. The locking intersections between literature, intuition and faith are the ways in which artists and writers are able to convey all the insights and complexities of those human concerns whilst also approaching some indefinable sense of the ultimate.

‘Faith’ - Tennyson’s idea on believing what we cannot prove, by which I mean a sensation of apprehension towards some concrete site of universal energy which is perceived outside oneself but which also chimes with inner experience, is the binding human cognitive experience which crosses boundaries between aestheticism, psychological insight and metaphysical experience. And Aristotle introduced a literary dimension to this discourse in the *Poetics*. Fundamentally different from Platonic notions of Ideal Forms, Aristotle’s ideas bring the notion of metaphysical experience into the realm of rationality. If Plato opened the route towards the idea of ecstatic apprehension towards the Ideal, then it may be argued that Aristotle, by way

of compensation, showed us that some understanding of human striving, and indeed our relevance in the universe, may be accessible by the perhaps more prosaic experience of the craftsperson who creates poetry and fiction.

Augustine

What it means to ‘understand’, and the methods we use to achieve that understanding, are fixed elements in key questions emerging in early western intellectual history. The material realm of the investigation (the realm of human mind/intellectual activity) is constantly forced to confront the polarised realm of the metaphysical. St. Augustine (354-430) in the search for ‘truth’, nominates religion as a superior force by which truth can be accessed, citing clearly-defined religious faith as the only means by which this can be achieved. Faith therefore has to be the precursor to rationality; this Augustinian view rather elevates the phenomenon of faith away from accusations of emotive irrationality. Conversely, it may be argued that in a somewhat circular way, there is already in place a subjective dogmatism present in this view; faith cannot be argued against, because we have argued in an Augustinian way that it has a monopoly on the rational.

Augustine, however, brings to the debate a logical approach in his analysis of Scripture – his valorisation of the idea of repentance, the notion that there is no fixed assurance of a sublime after-life, contains a social contract of responsibility between individuals and society. There is a pragmatic tension in Augustinian philosophy which reflects an Aristotelian heritage. Although the *Confessions*²² is expressed in vigorously expressive language, religion is not regarded as an ecstatic sensuous experience, but as an implacable guide, via faith, to insight. It may be useful to consider here that although the *Confessions* is regarded as one of the first great

²² Augustine, *Confessions*, transl. with an intro. by R.S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Books, 1961)

narratives of individual character, it in fact subordinates character and personal autonomy to the divine or numinous.

Augustine defines with some precision the way in which sense impressions become embedded in our cognition: 'The things which we sense do not enter the memory themselves, but their images are there ready to present themselves to our thoughts when we recall them'. (p215) It is interesting to note that Augustine considers impressions to be '*images*' and in this way he gives a particularly visual cast to his idea of cognitive memory. Augustine gives literary exposition to the ever-present sense of incomplete knowing. He therefore articulates the core of the search for complete understanding of the memory, the mind and the soul as separate conceptual strands. He locates the mystery in two realms – the realm of material cognition, that is, explicitly the idea of the organic brain, but also, implicitly, in the realm of the un-named phenomenon of intuition. Though suffused with faith in orthodox Christianity, and after a varied journey on the road to faith, Augustine nevertheless demonstrates a remarkable apprehension of early psychological enquiry, notable for its rationality.

Aquinas

In this way, a discourse towards the subtle connections between literature, intuition and faith is put in progress. The strand of rationality is continued by Medieval philosophers such as Aquinas (1225-1274), who rediscovered Aristotle's texts (now translated (for the first time) from Greek (and), previously known only or mainly to Arabic scholars such as Avicenna (Ibn Sina 980-1037) and Averroes (Ibn Roschd 1126-98). Aquinas accommodated Platonism, but steadfastly foregrounded Aristotelianism. As Timothy McDermott explains it:

Aquinas never abandoned his criticism of Platonism, never abandoned his Aristotelian position, but he uncovered within Aristotle's emphasis

on this-worldly individual existence and agency a far more potent pointer to God than Plato's emphasis on the other-worldliness of spirit. In Aquinas's view nature does not play second fiddle to supernature: God is in fact not supernatural but the source and author and end of the natural. For this reason Aquinas believed human reason has its own natural autonomy given it by God and respected by divine revelation; secular natural philosophy and sacred revealed theology must collaborate to reveal truth, aiming at harmony, not discord.²³

It is interesting to note that McDermott uses the term 'author' to denote God (a biblical term – 'Author and finisher of our faith' Heb. 12.2, *auctor* in Latin bible where it carries a sense of producer, progenitor or father, translating the Greek *archegos* or 'originator' or 'author'). A cast of literariness is placed over the idea of the 'creator'. McDermott also suggests that Aquinas views reason as autonomous, and yet respected by divine revelation. From Aquinas's medieval perspective, if this human agency is separate from, but acknowledged by, the divine - we need to consider what separates them, and what may be used to bridge that distance. If secular natural philosophy and sacred revealed theology must 'collaborate' as McDermott states Aquinas's imperative to be, then faith emerges as the cognitive action in which that collaboration can be realised.

At this point it is useful to consider the anti-Platonic stance of both Aristotle and Aquinas with regard to Form. Instead of the fixed and supernatural presence of the Platonic Ideal, both adhere instead to the notion of Form as a shaping phenomenon: 'In Aristotle's world, *the mind is a form* (my italics) shaping matter rather than a conduit into the immaterial; it is a skill or ability we have to let the forms which shape the matter around us shape us also'. (Heath p16). If we consider the idea of the mind as a 'shaping' mental form, and if we remember that Aquinas considered human reason to be respected by divine revelation, then we must also consider the

²³ McDermott T., *Aquinas* (London: Granta Books, 2007) p3-4

question: ‘What reconciles this ‘shaping’ Form (this mind) towards the divine?’. My response would be - the dual action of intuition and faith.

We have considered two connections. The connection between secular natural philosophy and sacred revealed theology, two broad terms which describe human concerns. The other connection (if we regard them as psychological states of mind) is that between intuition and faith. These may be teased out as separate elements from the organising principles from the organic, rationally thinking brain. But I argue that they in themselves are organising principles too. Intuition powers the senses towards Faith – the latter being a sense of a concrete ‘other’ in metaphysical unity.

Taking into account the anti-Platonism of Aquinas, his perspective nevertheless has some of its roots in Platonic Idealisation. It may eschew the notion of the Ideal, but in its own idea of Form as a shaping mentality, I argue that it accommodates the ideas of both intuition and faith, which are not fixed processes, but significantly powerful mental states to access what lies beyond. However, the organising principles of intuition and faith differ in their individual metaphysical components. I would describe it thus, and in relation to the works of Thomas Hardy that we will be examining: intuition is a phenomenon which captures and processes random information, whilst intuiting that its apparent randomness may be significant. Faith is a recognition that a certain phenomenon, and not a random idea, exists. Faith acknowledges a (perhaps un-categorised) sense of what it knows is there, intuition is the initialiser which apprehends the idea of the source in the first instance.

In this way, both intuition and faith may be described as functions of the mind. But the mental state of intuition has a peculiar agency. It is the projectile by which the massed information gathered by it is contained, and then mobilised, so that Faith follows. Faith is implacably rooted in metaphysical certainty. Intuition is the means to

get there. In terms of the claims of this thesis, I will attempt to demonstrate that Thomas Hardy's characters whilst appearing to be compromised by their material lives, paradoxically also seem to possess a unique energy which elevates them from most of the external facts of their communities, and in some cases exceeds the notion of their material lives altogether. In this thesis I discuss various narratives including the idea of asceticism, a hidden strain in the characterisations of key Hardyean characters. Hardy's characters are surrounded by two monolithic forces - the constraints of their material lives, and the potentiality of their spiritually inclined intellect. The end result may be faith.

In this way we may consider how in this thesis, in Chapter One, the isolated Marty South in *The Woodlanders* becomes the moralising ameliorative effect on the material impulses of her community, Jude in *Jude The Obscure* represents the valorisation of the metaphysical as opposed to material intellect, Gabriel Oak in *Far From The Madding Crowd* becomes the ethical frame through which others progress towards illumination, and finally Tess in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, replicates a singular and courageous vision which leads us to consider the Christological narrative of immanence.

Intuition apprehends chaos. But as Nietzsche has described chaos, it is a phenomenon from which profound ideas may emanate. However, it may be argued that both intuition and faith are irretrievably linked, whether one is considering the secular or religious sphere. Aquinas's utterance, however, may be apt. Secular philosophy and sacred theology should collaborate. If human autonomous reason (according to Aquinas), is respected by divine revelation, it may be illuminating to consider the relationship that reason has towards the notion of the divine. All of Hardy's intuitive characters are possessed with something of the divine. They are not

perfect exemplars of good behaviour, they are not possessed with material learning or riches, they do not inhabit high positions in society and they do not preach to those whom they may regard as inferior. Indeed, in the context of the place they have in society and in many of their relationships, they are the 'other'. This thesis does not concentrate on the facts of economically impoverished rural workers in the work of Thomas Hardy. But it does posit one key idea – that key protagonists in his work have been given a gift by the person who created them - the phenomenon of a special intuition. These unique protagonists sense that their lives are overseen by a force greater than themselves, and their notions of faith are tested, but all without exception have been illuminated on the canvas of the writer's work, by the light of his or her intellect.

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CHAPTER ONE - ISOLATION

The aestheticism of Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders* (1887) metaphorises both the potential and the limits of intuition and faith as metaphysical concerns. A *limit* may be considered as a site for pragmatic literary use – when Hardy describes the woodland setting within which its characters circulate, he creates the woodland as an enclosed void, a consciousness which is placed apart from the external world. This presents a fictional exposition of dualism. In *The Woodlanders* dualism is expressed not only as a geographical phenomenon, but as a condition of human consciousness, that is, the subject, the inner (or intuitive) 'self' and the object, what is experienced as the outer world. In considering this duality, I will discuss how the idea of human isolation contributes to notions of intuition and faith in *The Woodlanders*.

The idea of isolation in human experience may fall into diverse categories such as the geographical, socio-political and psychological. There is also the category of a more complex isolation – the voluntary retreat from a prevailing mainstream culture by some individuals or groups of people. The primary causes of conditions that bring forth most isolated states may be commonly regarded as predominantly external factors; that is, isolation is often seen as an experience enforced on an unwilling individual or group by oppressive regimes or similarly oppressive factors. This chapter will be considering the idea of a benign isolation, not without its depredations, but one nonetheless that is a component of a necessary state of mind, what may be described as the right landscape for an intuitive approach to, and response to, the idea of a higher reality. This idea centres around what I argue is the subconscious legacy of western religious practice in the work of Thomas Hardy - but not in the sense that Hardyean fiction always reflects a definitive narrative of

Christianity. Clearly it doesn't. But the trope of isolation in Hardy's works, and particularly in works such as *The Woodlanders*, points to the authorial use of multiple and subtle narratives that are, I would argue, a tenet of Hardy's novels, even if those narratives are not on first apprehension, plainly obvious to the eye. These narratives centre around a somewhat reformed Christian cultural inheritance but are, as this chapter will specifically argue, delivered to us through a particular atmosphere of isolation.

In *The Woodlanders* the isolation is most obviously geographical, but it is also personal and social, factors that are relevant to the characters of Marty South and Giles Winterborne who both demonstrate a spiritualised awareness. It is through characters such as these that Hardy speaks of his own complex intuitions of the metaphysical, but more specifically he also demonstrates a significant regard for the notion of the separated, or indeed the reclusive individual who is more likely to possess such intuitions. Hardy rescues the marginalised in society, so that they are not regarded as powerless victims of class and economic and social factors. Instead, the intuitive and isolated in Hardy's novels, and no less in *The Woodlanders*, are often possessed of a finer sensibility than the prevailing and power-orientated structures of the immediate communities they inhabit. This mode of characterisation, that is, the idea of a socially disadvantaged person possessing a finer sensibility, may be criticised as a somewhat patronising literary device. It is a literary device which may also be criticised for being representative of poetic wishful thinking, an excessive romantic desire for a lost Edenic idyll at the expense of a more socially oriented narrative of the rural poor. I nevertheless argue throughout this thesis that Hardy gives to key characters in his novels a gift of intuition, not out of lofty sympathy, but because they can be the vehicles through which he may express the idea of access to

the metaphysical. Moreover, it seems significant that in order to offset the vulnerable openness to the possibility of metaphysical awareness in these characters, they are often framed in the context of social and psychological isolation. The character of Marty South in *The Woodlanders* is such an individual; she is the agent of moral rationalisation in the novel, but she is also a figure who does not seem to ‘fit’ into the idea of centrality. Marty South is at once enigmatic and ordinary, and not granted an extensive speaking part throughout the novel. But if she is not at the social centre of the world of *The Woodlanders* and placed instead as an eccentric outsider, she ironically retains the authority of the central energy of the novel. Aided by the character of Giles Winterborne who upholds moral authority by an act of self sacrifice, Marty’s ameliorating and ethical intuition is the reference point doing duty for a central protagonist’s consciousness in a novel that, paradoxically, does not create a traditional central protagonist at all.

In the novel, Hardy disguises the efficacy of Marty’s strength of character and her perception by occluding her from centre stage – this unusual authorial device needs some consideration. *The Woodlanders* appears to lack a singular, vibrant protagonist in its surface construction, from which, in the tradition of the nineteenth century novel, an inference would be drawn based on the idea of one unifying linear consciousness. But I suggest that by the abandonment of an obvious protagonist, the particular achievement of *The Woodlanders* is its development of transparent layers of human experience and awareness - a sense of a multi-layered consciousness - one which permeates the narrative and which achieves an effect of metaphysical luminosity. As our attention is not fixed on a key protagonist, we instead consider the sensation the novel effects. What emerges in place of a fixed linear consciousness (the type we find in an easily identifiable protagonist) is the intuitive perception and moral

sense of Marty South, even if she appears to exist at the margins of the novel. It is in this context that we consider how the characters of Marty and Giles create a moral paradigm in *The Woodlanders*. With specific reference to Marty's particular perception I will investigate how her role is a sub-textual articulation on the idea of the 'Good', particularly in the closing pages of the novel, and relate this to the western spiritual legacy of the religious recluse. In terms of dualism, we may therefore conclude that in *The Woodlanders* a dualism operates in the sense of the inner world of the subject (represented by the separated state of Little Hintock) and the outer world of the object (the world outside of it). But we may also say that a dualism operates in the style of characterisation of *The Woodlanders* – the multi-vocal consciousness of all the characters, offset by a particularly isolated and intuitive perception owned by Marty.

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In *The Woodlanders* the isolated characters of Marty South and Giles Winterborne inhabit a hinterland between modes of material existence in Little Hintock and metaphysical modes of existence in their intuition. Moreover, in the novel isolation in nature is presented as a somewhat ambivalent experience – the experience of nature in *The Woodlanders* is not sublime, but it is the right condition for two main characters to reveal a narrative of moral awareness through their intuition. However, both Marty and Giles have been placed by Hardy on a precarious paradigm – for possessing the gift of intuition, they are also simultaneously involved in a discourse of separateness and loss. By the end of the novel, Marty has lost the potential for realising her love for Giles, and Giles has lost his life. A key tension in the work therefore is what lies between optimistic hope (not certainty) in the idea of

an after-life expressed by Marty South at the end of the novel, juxtaposed with the irredeemable sign of suffering that marks what it is to be human. Both she and Giles experience the failure of their wishes and importantly, both, from the beginning of the novel through to its conclusion, are marked by isolation. Thus two characters who form part of the cast of *The Woodlanders* exist in a rural and isolated landscape and we may ask if nature has compensations for that isolation.

Significantly, nature is not presented as a major catalyst in the novel, an ironic perception when we consider the title of *The Woodlanders*. Although the novel recognises Marty and Giles's close affinity with it, nature fails to reassure them (and us) that there is a guaranteed site of redemption in it. On the matter of redemption – a narrative which is often present in any consideration of western notions of the after-life – *The Woodlanders* presents nature as containing only the tension of unknowing. In the closing pages of the novel, there is only Marty South's intuition – and faith – that Giles's goodness will be recognised in the after-life – but this is accompanied by a sense that such an intuition is the perception of her lone, alienated voice. If this phenomenon may be expressed in more prosaic terms, we may say that in *The Woodlanders* Hardy has not removed the idea of God from Nature entirely, but he has made the relationship less certain. 'Nature' therefore, in *The Woodlanders* represents less a site of resolution, and more a landscape upon which the compensation of intuition and faith operates.

Isolation and the significance of loss in the novel make space for what I argue is the sub-textual philosophy in *The Woodlanders*, that is, a narrative which examines the moral meaning of death. Sarah McNamer's work *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* describes the involvement of women as part of a cultural movement in Medieval times that moved away from notions of the fear of

God and towards a position of compassion for the idea of the suffering Christ.¹ Faint echoes of these narratives exist in the work of Thomas Hardy and circulate around figures such as the isolated Marty South. Moreover, the apparent de-centring of the role of the protagonist and the way Marty is given an acute perception as an observer at the margins is a device which actually strengthens the effect of her intuition. This complexity of the novel's form achieves the effect of the isolated individual as having agency. When we consider Marty South in this context, we also arrive at the historical legacy of the isolated and intuitive religious/spiritual woman in Western cultural discourse.

I would like to suggest in this chapter that in the characterisation of Marty, we may consider if Thomas Hardy draws subconsciously on the Medieval legacy of the figure of the anchoress. The prototype of the anchoress – a devoutly religious woman who chose a life of complete solitude, eschewing the outside world (and often associated with a life of contemplation in a bolted cell) is the conceptual paradigm of the Medieval religious woman. But what also existed in these times and was perhaps occluded by hierarchical theological writings, was the phenomenon of the recluse or female hermitess in the forest. We shall discuss further the subtle difference between these two ideals and how Hardy's construction of Marty South may be relevant to the idea of the recluse, specifically in a natural setting. It is not that the nineteenth century fictional creation of Marty South in *The Woodlanders* is developed as a wholly religious, devout and ascetic woman exactly in the way that we conventionally understand the phenomenon of either the Medieval anchoress or the recluse. However, what I wish to consider is that the culturally historical echo of these female religious prototypes reverberates in *The Woodlanders*, for instance, in the way that Hardy

¹ McNamer, S., *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010)

places Marty somewhat apart from her society, but also in the way she is constructed as a humble woman who comments indirectly on the morality of the lives around her. Moreover, Marty also appears to have a deprecating acceptance of the limitations of her own material life, a sharp sense of what is fair and just ownership, and yet a calm centre to her character which contrasts markedly with more excitable characters such as Grace and Fitzpiers.

If we pause and consider the legacy of the spiritually aware and isolated woman in the religious history of the west, we also become aware of the characteristics that mark those who are spiritually attuned – one being the quality of silence. It is interesting to note that juxtaposed against the sense of a strong intuition which emanates from Marty in *The Woodlanders* is the fact that she has little to say throughout the entire novel. A quality of laconic silence therefore envelops her, and it is notable that it also exists around the character of Giles Winterborne. Of course they both speak, but on close inspection of the novel, they are identifiable by a sense of reserved expression. On this notion of silence therefore, or at the very least, moderate speech, it appears that a quality of silence is not confined to the female character of Marty alone in *The Woodlanders*, but also to the male character of Giles. This leads us to consider that as well as the legacy of the reclusive, wise woman in Hardyean fiction there may also exist examples of the legacy of the silent, male sage. In other novels of Hardy's, such as *Far From The Madding Crowd*, silence reverberates around the figure of Gabriel Oak. Indeed, silence as a way of accessing the numinous is a familiar trope of religious life.²

Scott G. Bruce, a commentator on medieval history, has researched the phenomenon of silent communication in monastic communities and specifically at

² Norman Vance in *The Sinews Of The Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p66 discusses Carlyle's identification of strength and silence in Cromwell's spiritual demeanour.

Cluny, in France. He states that the idea of a visitation by an angel was so profound an experience in medieval expectation that religious observers such as monks sought to replicate angelic behaviour – literally ‘unearthly’ behaviour:

Cluniac monks imagined angels in terms of three fundamental qualities, the emulation of which became central to their monastic vocation. The first of these was sexual purity. The monks of Cluny preserved their chastity by denying their desire for carnal pleasure and by cleansing their minds of sinful fantasies. The second was the celebration of an elaborate and protracted psalmody, that is, the intonation of biblical psalms sung in praise of God. Gathered together in their church, the brethren of Cluny directed their voices to heaven in imitation of the celestial chorus that glorified God throughout time. The third expression of angelic mimesis fostered by the Cluniacs was also the most innovative and contentious: the cultivation of a profound and reverential silence. (p3)³

Scott G. Bruce marks out the spiritual landscape of the brethren at Cluny – the profound desire to live a life like no other on earth because the aim is to attain a perfection of spiritual purity. How does this connect with the idea of male figures like the somewhat ordinary rural worker Giles Winterborne in *The Woodlanders*? We may consider the unusual way he has, like Marty, a quality of detachment. In one scene both Marty and Giles are together alone as he plants young trees:

The holes were already dug, and they set to work. Winterborne’s fingers were endowed with a gentle conjuror’s touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress, under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth. He put most of these roots towards the south-west; for, he said in forty years’ time, when some great gale is blowing from that quarter, the trees will require the strongest holdfast on that side to stand against it and not fall.

‘How they sigh directly we put ‘em upright, though while they are lying down they don’t sigh at all,’ said Marty.

‘Do they?’ said Giles. ‘I’ve never noticed it’.

She erected one of the young pines into its hole, and held up her finger; the soft musical breathing instantly set in which was not to cease night or day till the grown tree should be felled – probably long after the two planters had been felled themselves.

³ Bruce S. G., *Silence and Sign Language in Medieval Monasticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p3

‘It seems to me’ the girl continued, ‘as if they sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest – just as we be.’
 ‘Just as we be?’ He looked critically at her. ‘You ought not to feel like that Marty’.⁴

This scene demonstrates the confluence of the metaphorising of both earthly and metaphysical energies that exist around both Marty and Giles. There is a sense of both characters embodying those categories – Giles is described as having ‘a gentle conjuror’s touch’ as he plants the trees, but the scene is winsomely innocent. Marty creates the narrative of melancholy describing how the trees, once planted, appear to ‘sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest’. This tragic undertow leads Giles to reprimand her, to tell her she ‘ought not to feel like that’, but there is an irredeemable sense of both of them as already set on a trajectory by the phrase which describes the projected age of the trees. The trees will last ‘probably long after the two planters had been felled themselves’. And despite the setting which implies an erotic nature poem, there is also an unequivocal physical distance between them. By the end of the scene we retain a sense of their being potentially intimate, but irrevocably deemed to be separated. This adds to both Marty and Giles an aura of asceticism – a giving up of earthly desire, even if desire may be felt in the silence of their feelings.

More specific is the example of Giles’ reticence later on in the novel to physically approach another woman, Grace, whom he is attracted to. By the final pages of the novel, Giles fulfils the potential for unearthly perfection communities such as the monastic Cluny brethren may have attempted to attain centuries before – he not only eschews physical contact with Grace, but he also gives up his life for her. This is ‘angelic’ behaviour by the standards of any religious community - even though as a fictional personality, Giles does not inhabit a Medieval monastery, but instead, an isolated place in a nineteenth century woodland setting. The faint echo of characters

⁴ Hardy T., *The Woodlanders* World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p59

who are drawn from a devout and historical sense of ascetic isolation makes itself apparent in the work of Hardy. And in common with Marty who seems somewhat 'silent' in her attitude to life, Giles too has less to say - but rather more to give - when compared to other characters in the community who may be regarded as self-seeking and ambitious, for instance, Grace and Fitzpiers.

Indeed it may not be inaccurate to state that there is something curiously radical about the personalities of Marty and Giles, who seem to be unthreatening in their eccentric behaviour, whilst also managing to be vehicles of transgressive energy in their innocence. Marty's stout defence of moral boundaries is allied to a rebellious mind-set and Giles' mannerly and considerate attentions to Grace are, as stated, allied to an oddly astringent refusal to become intimate with her. This curious blend of obedience and rebellion in both of them reflects aspects of the robust spirit which inhabited some monastic communities. As Scott G. Bruce explains, the radical privileging of silence was not always welcomed by religious contemporaries:

In the early tenth century, the Cluniacs roused indignation among other ascetics, who claimed that they introduced unprecedented novelties at the expense of age-old traditions governing the cultivation of silence in cloistered communities. They responded to these criticisms by defending their custom of silence with biblical authority as a virtue sanctioned in the Old and New Testaments and witnessed by the saints of Christian antiquity. In doing so, the monks of Cluny articulated a new ideology of Christian asceticism that married the glorification of silence to the ideal of an angelic life realized in mortal bodies. (p3)

Here, we witness the ways in which devotional practice changed according to different religious communities. It may be argued that through literature, writers like Thomas Hardy also find new ways to describe an attitude of striving for the Good. If Thomas Hardy's characters are altogether human in their failings, he makes it apparent in most of his novels, including *The Woodlanders*, that at least one or two key characters will have an intuitive aptitude for accessing the Good. This aptitude in

his fictional characters may not be immediately apparent through any expression of traditional modes of worship or indeed behaviour. Rather, I would argue that Hardy mobilises, as a literary device, the sense of an intuitive openness and understanding, one which emanates from him and is then placed on to the metaphorical ‘wings’ of his characters. In a more earthly re-working of the extreme and un-earthly ideals of the Cluny brethren, Hardyean characters could be described as not perfect, but flawed angels.

It is the impulse to apprehend the Good even if it cannot always be found, which marks what it is to be a ‘good enough’ human; this seems to be the moral sub-text of Hardy’s fiction. This notion reflects the Kantian ideal that even if we cannot prove there is a God (and, on the assumption that he is good and creates goodness) – we must at least act as if there is one. In common with the female character of Marty South in *The Woodlanders*, certain key male characters in Hardy’s fiction, who also have a laconic silence around them, also seem to implacably occupy the place of the ‘Good’. They are, give or take one or two idiosyncratic inconsistencies in their moral stature, inherently the embodiment of the decent or at least ameliorating effects in instances of some moral turpitude in some of the novels. For the purposes of this chapter’s consideration of isolation, we may consider the community of *The Woodlanders* in its entirety, and note the somewhat isolated male figure of Giles Winterborne. But we may consider firstly the unusual literary construction of the figure of Marty South, an elusive and to some extent un-heroic female on the margins of her society. This may justify a brief examination of key roles in western society such as that of the medieval anchoress.

Anneke-Mulder Bakker’s work *Lives of the Anchoresses* describes the individual stories of the lives of several such women in Medieval Europe. Her focus is

on the urban recluse, but she nevertheless acknowledges the general idea of the female recluse, especially in England:

The Continent may have had its beguines and other devout women, but England had an almost exclusive claim to hundreds of recluses. More recently, English scholarship has concentrated mainly on the anchoritic spirituality of the *Ancrene Wisse* and devout literature. As a result, it is now largely the domain of literary historians ⁵

Mulder-Bakker cites the literary quality of the legacy of the English recluse, but if we consider the basic phenomenon of the reclusive religious woman in several contexts, whether it be in the form of the ‘beguine’, the ‘recluse’, the ‘nun’ or the ‘anchorite’, we find across all the categories, and relevant to Europe-wide and specifically English discourses, one common characteristic – an individual’s largely silent full or partial retreat from her own society and the general world of material concerns. However, although Mulder-Bakker pays significant attention to some differences between all categories of religious women, her statements on the figure of the religious recluse or *Reclusio* reveal one interesting factor:

Reduced to their etymological essence, recluses were therefore (the) faithful who freed themselves from the confining bonds of society but did not necessarily remove themselves from society as such. They sought a spot where they could devote themselves completely to the love of God, without a fixed rule and without an imposed form of life. Like the Groningen anchoress, they typically chose to live in a cell near the main church of a town or some other strategically located church or chapel. (p6)

An area for consideration lies in the sentence ‘They sought a spot where they could devote themselves completely to the love of God, without a fixed rule and without an imposed form of life’. This sentence and in particular, the phrase ‘without a fixed rule and without an imposed form of life’ is relevant to our discussion not only on the quasi-spiritual and morally aware figure of Marty South but also on the notion I have

⁵ Mulder-Bakker, A. B. *Lives of the Anchoresses* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) p4

suggested – that Hardy’s fiction may be representative of a channel through which he too could express his own complex spirituality ‘without a fixed rule and without an imposed form of life’. In other words, the idea of intuition links not only with the idea of the largely independent medieval anchoress or recluse, but with the metaphysical awareness of the author himself, and something that he could perhaps express through characters such as Marty in *The Woodlanders*.

The isolated individual has been recorded throughout history in both religious and secular literature (perhaps culminating in Wordsworth’s ‘solitaries’) as tending to be possessed of a special gift of intuition – it is a literary and social commonplace which has resonance with the milieu of *The Woodlanders*. Mulder-Bakker explains a key dualism between medieval modes of knowledge – the difference between religious awareness that is learned via knowledge of Latin and religious texts, *scientia* or ‘the second route of (orally) inspired wisdom, *sapientia*, or *cognitio*.⁶ (p39) *Scientia* belongs to the domain of theologians and scholars but *sapientia* is a deconstructed state, and, as Mulder-Bakker states: the ‘highest form of wisdom or knowledge attainable by a human being’.⁷ (p41) Here we see in a very brief example of Medieval attitudes to knowledge that a difference is identified between what may be described as either formal or intuitive learning. It is relevant to an approach which seeks to investigate ways of knowing, and the sub-text of *The Woodlanders* implies, I argue, that it is Marty’s intuitive ability to know that is the centre of the novel’s consciousness.

It is interesting to consider the idea of tropes of isolated, religiously aware but unique characters in western discourse informing Thomas Hardy’s work, and of his perhaps subconscious desire to effect an integrity of apperception through his

characters. In Biblical terms this legacy has resonance with the initially unrecognised reappearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus. We may not materially recognise who is before us, but we may in fictional terms through characters such as Hardy's, discern traits which are significant to religious narratives. Whilst debates may flourish on what Hardy 'believed' in, and how far his adherence to Christian practice went, it is a contention of this thesis that his fictional works alone spoke most eloquently on where his spiritual sensibility lay, albeit subconsciously, than any conscious proclamation he may have been tempted to vocalise in an interview. We may say that without his stating it specifically, Thomas Hardy's true religious status was that of being the isolated, intellectual, illuminated artist who felt the immanent presence of the One unmediated by any specific religious practice, and no 'word', but instead accessed through intuition alone. It is the 'I' in the void who apprehends the One – isolation is not only an ideal for such perception, but a mandatory component of it.

Marty South therefore approximates, along with Giles Winterborne, the idea of the intuitive and isolated recluse, and in the case of Marty in particular, we have a different and radical treatment of the female in late nineteenth century fiction. The author has released her from conventional narratives of being wholly good or wholly bad, binary excesses we are introduced to in some other nineteenth century works, for instance, Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Instead, Hardy creates a tableau of intuitive and complex female characters in his works who are able to access a sense of spiritual and moral perception. Scholars who focus on Medieval theology such as Andrea Janelle Dickens have analysed some interesting categories into which the idea of female mysticism may fall. Dickens cites the first two categories: firstly, one that views medieval women's writings as a literary phenomenon, secondly one that views female religious communities as a delineation between the institutional and the popular, but

thirdly, and perhaps interesting for our purposes, the category of Foucauldian ideas on power relationships. This category implicates the female mystic as a transgressor, one whom circumvents the hierarchies of male religious power and instead receives divine communication alone.

As Dickens states:

According to Foucault, knowledge is power, and it has become increasingly popular for scholars to discern axes of power, in both the lives of women and the texts by and about them. For cultural historians, this has meant attempting to discern the place that an individual or community inhabited within the larger social sphere of their time, order and geography. The way in which these individuals have interacted within these spheres, particularly the ways in which they have subverted or transgressed the boundaries established by their own separate spheres has become a major exploration. Often this Foucauldian reading emphasizes the unique claims that mystical writings contain: the claim to a divine authority having commissioned the work, which demanded the women speak. In such a setting, obedience becomes power, but God's power trumps human forms of power. The conveyance of power allows mystical commission to trump earthly authority, and thus the weak women have a stronger power (and deeper wisdom or truth from God) than theologians.⁸

In this quotation Andrea Janelle Dickens sets the historical context for the idea of the intuitive, religiously-aware medieval female who may not adhere to established structures of authority. Through a personal communion of silence with God, she speaks, and in one sense 'obedience becomes power'. Some centuries later, Thomas Hardy does not describe his literary fictional character Marty South as an overtly religious ascetic, but what *The Woodlanders* does achieve is the embodiment of the historical characteristics of the female anchoress or recluse, and in this way, Marty has become the reflection of those who have gone before her. She is the (paradoxically socially de-centred) but central consciousness which gives us the opportunity to consider the idea of isolated intuition as it meets, in the material sense,

⁸ Dickens A.J., *The Female Mystic* (London & New York: I. B.Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2009) p5-6

axes of power in society, and in the metaphysical sense, narratives of dualism inherent in the narrative of *The Woodlanders*.

Rene' Descartes, the philosopher associated with the notion of dualism, that is, the separateness of mind and body, gives credence to the primacy of the mind as the main faculty which may give us some sense of experience:

I will suppose, then, that everything I see is unreal. I will believe that my memory is unreliable and that none of what it presents to me ever happened. I have no senses. Body, shape, extension, motion, and place are fantasies. What then is true? Perhaps just that nothing is certain.⁹

Here, Descartes brings to our attention the sense that what may be regarded as true is open to interpretation and that exteriority may be regarded as unreal. In Hardy's *The Woodlanders* there is a pervading sense that the interior world of the woodland is full of potential to access the metaphysical, whilst, simultaneously, the outside world – the landscape which exists beyond the limits of the woods, is precariously unreal. Thus the isolated becomes real and the socialised, external world becomes unreal, an implication made more effective by the idea of Marty South as a somewhat sceptical observer. The placement of the woodland as separate from the outside world therefore marks a boundary, or limit, between one world and another. Furthermore, the idea of a separate space implies interiority, and has connotations of a sacred space chiming as it does with western notions of spiritual space. The woodland becomes a place which is imbued with a special power to access the metaphysical, and this is achieved most simply by placing it 'elsewhere', that is, 'outside the gates of the world'.

The idea of a separate space – the physical act of withdrawing from the world which is also allied to the idea of a cognitive and/or spiritual separation away from material matters, is a common trope of western experience, rooted in early

⁹ Descartes, R., 'Minds and Bodies as Distinct Substances' in *Philosophy of Mind* ed. Heil J., (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004) p36

Christianity. Elaine Pagels, a scholar of Gnostic belief and practice, describes the social relevance of early Christian religious discourse on the idea of isolation:

Those attracted to solitude would note that even the New Testament gospel of Luke includes Jesus' saying that whoever 'does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my own disciple'. He demanded that those who followed him must give up everything – family, home, children, ordinary work, wealth – to join him. And he himself, as prototype, was a homeless man who rejected his own family, avoided marriage and family life, a mysterious wanderer who insisted on truth at all costs, even the cost of his own life. Mark relates that Jesus concealed his teaching from the masses and entrusted it only to the few he considered worthy to receive it.¹⁰

In this quotation we are introduced through the iconic figure of Christ to the idea of 'a mysterious wanderer who insisted on truth at all costs, even the cost of his own life'.

Pagels goes on to acknowledge however, that New Testament gospels also promoted marriage, and engagement with society, by Christ showing compassion for the suffering of others. But she also illuminates the presence of the idea of the solitary versus the need for social structures in spiritual discourse, citing how conflict arose when some sought an independent, and solitary framework to their religious lives:

We can see, then, how conflicts arose in the formation of Christianity of those restless, inquiring people who marked out a solitary path of self-discovery and the institutional framework that gave to the great majority of people religious sanction and ethical direction for their daily lives.' (p153)

Pagels describes here how the legacy of Christian faith contains a tension between both solitary and social impulses in Western culture. Isabel Colegate delegates the intuitive aspect of metaphysical engagement which seems to belong to the 'solitary' in the history of Western culture, as opposed to the organisational, indeed potentially political arm of organised religion: 'The mystic is often looked on with suspicion by the established Church, whose hierarchy he or she bypasses in making a direct

¹⁰ Pagels, E., *The Gnostic Gospels*, (London: Phoenix/Orion Books Ltd., 2006) p152

approach to God.’¹¹ Porter articulates some tropes of social isolation steeped in self-denial, asceticism and celibacy, as forms of transcendence towards divine love, referring to St. John of the Cross as seeking the annihilation of the self.¹²

These are brief examples from the history of formal Christianity and creative mysticism which allude to the phenomenon of isolation – the solitary individual is regarded as having some heightened agency in the idea of an approach to the One, or God. This notion of isolation and self-denial is implicit too in *The Woodlanders*; it is not stated as fact, instead, it is a sensation of spiritual awareness, sited mainly in the lonely characters of Marty and Giles. A sense of the otherness of the place where they are sited is generated from the opening pages of the novel, when the travelling barber approaches Little Hintock. The novel becomes haunted by a luminous construction of literary devices by the author – the road towards Little Hintock is described as a ‘deserted highway’ which ‘expresses solitude’. The journey towards the woodland world is therefore anticipated as representing both a geographical lapse, and a cognitive lapse too; a sense that change occurs on the very road to the place between where the traveller has come from, towards where he is going to. The journey towards Little Hintock implicates both a material *and* a metaphysical change and it is steeped with a metaphorical sense of stepping literally from one world to the next, an allusion which shades into spiritual allusion:

To step, for instance, at the place under notice, from the edge of the plantation into the adjoining thoroughfare, and pause amid its emptiness for a moment, was to exchange by the act of a single stride the simple absence of human companionship for an incubus of the forlorn. (p5)

¹¹ Colegate, I., *A Pelican in the Wilderness* (Washington D. C.:Counterpoint, 2002)

¹² Porter, R., *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Penguin, 2003)

This vivid passage into isolation, a moving forward into a presence summarised in the phrase, ‘an incubus of the forlorn’ is also replete with implicit meaning on the power of isolation.

If the experience of isolation, what Hardy’s narrative describes as, ‘the simple absence of human companionship’ is therefore characterised as ‘an incubus of the forlorn’ the term ‘forlorn’ leads us to consider the concept of melancholy. Melancholy does have a place in the discourse of Western human contemplation; it has been regarded historically as allied to notions of psychological interiority, the benefits of which can be allied to creativity, deep cognitive impulses, and spiritual meditative states – often expressed in human activity such as literature, intuition and faith. In this way, Hardy’s authorial construction of the lonely road from the external world to the interior world of the woodlanders is fraught not only with the potential for melancholy, but also, and perhaps in a more affirmative way, with the potential for insight.

William James considers melancholy as, in its extreme, a barrier to joyful appreciation of religious enlightenment. However, he does acknowledge that melancholy is for many an inescapable road to varying modes of spiritual experience, including creativity:

Tolstoy has left us, in his book called *My Confession*, a wonderful account of the attack of melancholy which led him to his own religious conclusions. The latter in some respects are peculiar; but the melancholy presents two characters which make it a typical document for our present purpose. First it is a well-marked case of *anhedonia*, of passive loss of appetite for all life’s values; and second, it shows how the altered and estranged aspect which the world assumed in consequence of this stimulated Tolstoy’s intellect to a gnawing, carking questioning and effort for philosophic relief.¹³

¹³ James, W., *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Longmans Green, 1902) p149

James notes the ‘altered and estranged aspect which the world assumed’ during Tolstoy’s melancholic period, concluding that this ‘stimulated Tolstoy’s intellect’. Moreover, he notes in his own work, *The Varieties Of Religious Experience* that the pursuit of religious (or spiritual) enlightenment is a serious pursuit. It is, as James describes it:

‘...the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine. Since the relation may be either moral, physical, or ritual, it is evident that out of religion in the sense in which we take it, theologies, philosophies, and ecclesiastical organizations may secondarily grow.’ (xxi)

James notes that ‘feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men’ which are conducted ‘in their solitude’ are the right state for approaching the divine. The tripartite connection, therefore, between notions of isolation, melancholy and metaphysical illumination is plausible. Moreover, I suggest that the nature of melancholy (when it is involved in a triad of isolation and illumination) is transformed away from being the pathological state which James has noted lies in a sense of bleakness. Rather, we may consider if cognitive isolation (as opposed to emotional isolation which makes the world look bleak) is the right state for apprehending the metaphysical because it is a separate space, a separateness which is not the same as rootlessness – it is simply ‘outside the gates of the world’.

This delicate balance on the tripartite notion of isolation, melancholy and illumination is the framework of the sensate structure which is *The Woodlanders*. Little Hintock is a pragmatic site for the potential to access the metaphysical, it is not a place devoid of hope wherein pathologically melancholy people reside. When the barber experiences his first sight of Little Hintock, the narrative states that it is: ‘sunk in a concave, and as it were snipped out of the woodland’ (p7) so determining its

rooted existence. Furthermore, its inhabitants are composed of a mix of earthliness and metaphysical awareness:

It was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation: where reasoning proceeds on narrow premises, and results in inferences wildly imaginative; yet where, from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the passions and closely knit interdependence of the lives therein. (p8)

This condensed explication of the power of the woodland and its inhabitants, not without humour, causes the fear of melancholy, the fear of the incubus, to dissipate. The description of Little Hintock as ‘one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world’, gives to the place an ultimately benign isolation. The people within are described as meditative, listless and imaginative. Hardy therefore gives to Little Hintock an unusual mix of potential *and* limitations – the stuff of humanity and art, reflecting the Aristotelian origination of the art of tragedy. The people of the woodland community may have a tendency towards ‘inferences wildly imaginative’ but their dramas have ‘a grandeur and unity’. As if to emphasise the integrity of this isolated spot, the narrative insists that these dramas are, ‘enacted in the real’. This is the ‘known’ of human existence as opposed to the ‘unknown’ which now lies beyond the limits from which the traveller came.

The narrative therefore achieves the idea of walking across one dimension of human experience towards another – and after a brief conversation with Marty South, when the barber insists that Marty must sell her hair, he recedes from the narrative of the novel, and so the outside world seems to recede as well. Once the barber (who may be described as the linking consciousness between the outside world and the inner world of Little Hintock) leaves the scene, Hardy resists the development of one central and strong protagonist. Instead, the characters of the novel, their perspectives,

motives and aspirations are gradually introduced and diffused throughout the novel. But there is a shadowy cast to the beauty of the woodland - a sense that the protective woods may also enclose darker forces. On his journey towards the village, the barber is initially told by some travelling women: 'A very clever and learned young Doctor lives in the place you be going to – not because there's anybody for'n to cure there, but because they say he is in league with the Devil'. (p8) This reference to the local Doctor being 'in league with the Devil' raises the tension of ambivalence around the woodland community. There is a suggestion of a Faustian pact which alludes to Goethe and Sophocles as part of subliminal and darker narratives underpinning ideas of the natural world in the novel. At the novel's end, however, Dr. Fitzpiers is revealed to be a flawed and ordinary human being, with no significant engagement with the metaphysical. In this way, the idea of a lack of reason in Little Hintock's inhabitants, alluded to in the narrative when the barber first sees the place, is emphasised by Hardy, but this does not negate the suggestion that there are impulses in the community which cannot be explained by rationale alone.

In this way, Hardy creates a sense of complexity in his construction of Little Hintock and its characters. This complexity suggests a fluidity of concepts of reality, or indeed truth. Gradually, as the novel develops, a sense of what is 'fixed' in conceptual terms, whether pragmatic, moral or emotional is always open to doubt. It is against such a conceptual fluidity that the growing awareness of Marty South's intuition begins to suggest itself in the narrative. If we therefore consider for what end is the means of isolation in *The Woodlanders*, I believe it illuminates the idea of a developing transcendental-existential human energy, that energy which in theological terms would be described as humankind's absolute transcendence towards God. It is Marty who, in what may be described as the role of a sub-character, gains

metaphysical strength as the novel progresses. If humankind is *a priori* locked into a transcendent inevitability of meeting with God this raises questions on human actions and their consequences in life – and death. In other words – what is the moral meaning of death? In *The Woodlanders* Marty's character, initially constructed as a somewhat unobtrusive force in the narrative, emerges as the central force around which the idea of the illumination of the Good is vocalised by her. In a sense, Hardy causes Marty to observe the very phenomenon of absolute transcendence towards God.

The idea of humankind, which is composed of individual entities, in a direct and mysterious relationship with the metaphysical implies a lone journey of introspection and in this way, a climate of isolation is unsurprisingly a component of such introspection. Hardy implacably divides his community from the rest of the world. In stating that Little Hintock lies 'outside the gates of the world' he is joining a long discourse in the West which has its roots in the language of faith. Looking past the boundaries of the wood and towards the external world, there is a sense that the woodlanders perceive a void which is somehow external to them. The Kantian perspective implied in the novel is that what can be 'known' in terms of the object is only the world we cognitively inhabit. All other worlds are unknown to us. This perspective in *The Woodlanders* heightens a sense of transcendental longing in the characters, and more specifically, a developing intuition in Marty.

Little Hintock is surrounded by implacable 'limits' – the sentinel trees that stand guard around it have a two-fold purpose. By their limiting nature, that is, their appearance as boundary, they also paradoxically create opportunity – the opportunity for the enclosed void to become alive, and alive in a unique way in Hardy's imagination. The enclosure is the right context for the development of the intuition, most strongly developed in the character of the somewhat isolated Marty South.

When the barber approaches Marty on his errand to retrieve some hair from her, to adorn Felice Charmond, he tells her how she was noticed by Felice: ‘You sat in front of her in church the other day; and she noticed how exactly your hair matches her own.’ (p12). Marty is placed in a first sighting in the novel in the context of a church. The metaphorical gift to her, therefore, is the idea of her as a metaphysical force of nature, who is simultaneously struggling not to be the victim of the loss of an organic and personal aspect of her material self - her hair. (I would also suggest that this seemingly innocuous event concerning Marty is subconsciously allied to historical notions of asceticism and specifically the idea of religious women, for instance nuns, having to shed their hair in order to negate the possibility of vanity). The narrative places Marty as suggestible to the idea of having something material that other people want, although the contrast between such a material possession as her hair, and what Hardy delicately constructs as her intuitive skill is obvious. Marty’s response, and the barber’s response in turn, demonstrates a dualist energy between the material and the ideal:

I value my looks too much to spoil ‘em. She wants my curls to get another lover with; though if stories are true she’s broke the heart of many a noble gentleman already.

and

Lord – it’s wonderful how you guess things, Marty’ said the barber.
(p13)

Marty, like Mrs Charmond who wants to buy her hair, has human vanity too. She does not want her looks spoilt by having to sell her own hair, but displays her moral sensibility by making a judgment about Charmond: ‘she’s broke the heart of many a noble gentleman.’ In this sense the narrative constructs Marty as embodying unspoilt intuition as a morally enhanced virtue: ‘...it’s wonderful how you guess things, Marty’ said the barber.

Marty is not ‘saintly’ however; there is appropriate light and shade in her characterisation. It may be argued when she writes a letter detailing the truth about Mrs Charmond’s hair (that most of it is in fact hers, artificially placed on Mrs Charmond) that this act is representative of nothing more than comedic spite. But in *The Woodlanders* Marty’s is the character which is the least inclined to flux. Dr Fitzpiers is ardent in his love for Grace, then loses that interest in favour of Felice Charmond. Giles Winterborne is ardent in his love for Grace Melbury and betrays a sense of shame at his modest home when he attempts to entertain Grace and her family. Marty, however, remains constant - but the steadiness of her character and intuition is not presented as dull simplicity. Rather, she quietly seeks to re-dress the moral balance between the idea of innate integrity of honest existence, versus acquisitive energies, embodied by characters such as Fitzpiers and Felice Charmond. In terms of how Marty’s moral intuition reflects a discourse of ‘faith’, the conflict of innate integrity versus acquisitiveness is also at the heart of William James’s treatise on ideas of ‘saintliness’. James, a younger contemporary of Hardy’s, also responded to religion through the sensitivities of an intellectual prism rather than through dogma:

‘lives based on having are less free than lives based either on doing or on being, and in the interest of action people subject to spiritual excitement throw away possessions as so many clogs. Only those who have no private interests can follow an ideal straight away. (p319)

James’s statement that ‘lives based on having are less free than lives based either on doing or on being’ illuminates the division between key universal human impulses. In *The Woodlanders*. Felice Charmond wishes to have Fitzpiers’ heart, and Fitzpiers wishes to acquire her aura of moneyed lassitude. Melbury wishes to have a respectable education for his daughter, Grace. Grace in turn wishes to have a more sophisticated lover than Giles – but having rejected him, wishes to have him back

again. These vaulting ambitions give a superficial cast to the energies of some of the characters, but by contrast, the isolated Marty South and Giles Winterborne are constructed as significantly less acquisitive in their make-up.

Instead of wishing to 'have', they wish to 'be', that is, they may 'wish' for what eludes them – (Grace's love for Giles, Giles's love for Marty), but these factors are received by them as fateful components of life. The motives that power them are a sense of *inner* rather than *outer* completion. In this respect, a dualist energy reverberates in *The Woodlanders* around the idea of *having* or *being* which is consistent with a Jamesian perspective on the notion of saintliness in the human character. Whilst Felice and Fitzpiers have largely acquisitive natures, Marty and Giles live their lives in Jamesian terms as *being* (that is, congruent to themselves) and *doing* (that is, engaging in honest labour) rather than desiring to 'have'. Moreover, the site of their characters' actions is inevitably framed in isolation.

In the context of *The Woodlanders*, therefore, a Jamesian philosophy pervades the idea of life in the woodland community where most of those involved work in order to live, rather than to 'acquire'. When Marty's dying father frets that they will lose their home, she pragmatically and fairly responds that she wishes to keep her home, as it is the acquisitiveness of Mrs Charmond, who has the power to render Marty and her father homeless, which threatens her. Hardy constructs Marty, therefore, not as one who fights to accumulate, but as one who fights for what fairly 'belongs' to her - her hair or her home. The dualist tension of right and fair ownership as opposed to acquisitiveness is pervasive in the novel, not only in the sense of materialism, but in relationships too. Fair 'ownership' is compromised as Grace finds the sanctity of her marriage compromised when her husband Fitzpiers becomes

interested in Felice Charmond. Finally, the hubris of ownership is played out in Melbury's realisation that he treated his daughter Grace as a tool for his own ambition.

Where Marty and her father are presented in the novel as a united force against the materialism of characters such as Felice, Grace is constructed as the means by which her father will ensure an on-going collusion with material forces:

‘But since I have educated her so well, and so long, and so far above the level of the daughters hereabout, it is *wasting her* to give her to a man of no higher standing than he.’ (p17)

Melburys' sense of unease at the prospect of Grace marrying the rustic Giles, even though he feels honour-bound to encourage the arrangement, is condensed in the term '*wasting her*'. In this way, whilst Melbury is at the heart of the woodland community as a successful timber merchant, Hardy has placed Melbury also as the prime exemplar of the apotheosis of materiality. It is therefore Grace who suffers from a psychological and spiritual crisis, for no other reason than the metaphysical limits of her father's ambition - whilst Marty suffers no such crisis. Despite being the object of her father's ambition by suffering a crisis of melancholy, Grace's moral vision is nevertheless improved. She is eventually enabled to see Giles' purity despite his status as a rural worker. She is also able to forgive her husband Fitzpiers. It is interesting to note that it is a crisis of *melancholy* which aids Grace's vision – once again, the discourse of *The Woodlanders* shades into religious discourse on the moral virtue of the isolated and melancholic. The legacy of a seventeenth century narrative on two types of melancholy is perhaps relevant here – the 'black dog' of bleak depression versus a thoughtful intuition gained through a type of perceptive melancholy, celebrated in works such as Milton's 'Il Penseroso'. However, despite the potential that melancholy may offer Grace in her spiritual education, she only

vaguely apprehends metaphysical illumination; by the end of *The Woodlanders* she renounces all philosophical enquiry.

By contrast, in the developing sense of Marty's intuitive presence in the novel, whilst Hardy does not give a crisis of melancholy to her, she is familiar with melancholy as a quiet and enduring companion; one of several marks on her which she bears with fortitude. What is bestowed upon Marty instead is the idea of dignity in honest, simple, hard work, which enhances the idea of her in the novel as a morally superior force. As she works through the night preparing 'spars' from the wood, she is constructed by Hardy not as a weakened victim, but as a strong force of nature – and this scene emphasises once again, her isolation. Delivering the bundle of spars before dawn, she walks from her cottage into the night whilst the narrative states that: 'there was no street lamp or lantern to form a kindly transition between the inner glare and the outer dark.' (p15). This sentence most acutely describes what I believe to be a key dualism inherent in the tone of *The Woodlanders*. The 'inner glare' is the energy of the woodland versus the ambivalent external energy of what lies outside, that is, 'the outer dark'. More specifically, ideas of an inner glare and an outer dark pertain to an image of a blazing intuition and moral sense working against unpredictable and material external forces.

Marty is forced by circumstances to sell her hair, and suffers the indignity of her appearance, but Grace's appearance is described by Hardy as the superficial result of the construction of another's fantasy:

What people therefore saw of her in a cursory view was very little, in truth, mainly something that was not she. The woman herself was a conjectural creature who had little to do with the outlines presented to Sherton eyes: a shape in the gloom, whose true quality could only be approximated by putting together a movement now and a glance then, in that patient attention which nothing but watchful loving-kindness ever troubles itself to give. (p36)

Grace cannot be seen for who she is, unless someone has the time to give ‘nothing but watchful loving-kindness’ in order to see the kernel of integrity in her. The irony of her father’s ambition is that she has only become, at the end of such an education, ‘a shape in the gloom’. It is noteworthy that Hardy’s moral sense seems to lie in the contrast between the constructions of both Marty and Grace, in the dualisms inherent in the idea of a spiritually enlightened character versus one whom is ‘cultivated’. The cultivation of feelings is therefore articulated by Hardy as superfluous if those feelings present themselves as only superficially ‘civilised’ in the sense of societal mores. Instead, Hardy seems to advocate an inner, deeper cultivation of feelings which I argue, suggests the cultivation of moral intuition, a human phenomenon which, it is implied throughout the novel, has metaphysical value.

The notion of the cultivation of the feelings resonates with the work of John Stuart Mill. Specifically on the notion of morality, Skorupski explains Mill’s perspective thus:

He defines a moral wrong-doing as an act for which the individual ought to be punished ‘if not by law, by the opinion of his fellow-creatures, if not by opinion, by the reproaches of his own conscience.
14

I would argue that Mill’s perspective creates an emblematic marker around fictional characters such as Marty South. On the evidence of Michael Millgate’s biography, Hardy read and admired Mill and may be regarded as someone who adopted moral and conceptual attitudes from him.¹⁵ In accordance with a Millian appreciation, Hardy has created characters such as Marty’s in the nineteenth century novel genre who are benign, though somewhat powerful moral forces. By this phenomenon, a force which a nineteenth century cultural commentator such as Mill describes as the ‘opinion’ of

¹⁴ Skorupski, J., *Why Read Mill today?* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006) p34

¹⁵ Millgate, M., *Thomas Hardy, A Biography Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

‘fellow-creatures’ and furthermore, by the ‘reproaches’ of ‘conscience’, we discern pragmatic Christian values. It is also interesting to note at this point the different perspective accorded to the word ‘feelings’ between that of Mill and that of the Romantic philosophers and aesthetes – in Mill’s terms, ‘feelings’ are moral intuitions which benefit from being honed, but in Romantic terms, ‘feelings’ are more often associated with sensual identification with nature or the love object. Following what I argue is a Millian sensibility towards the idea of moral ‘feeling’, Marty, in her written missive to Fitzpiers where she reveals that Felice Charmond’s hair is not her own, (whilst taking part in what may be regarded as a quasi-comic vengeful turn in the novel) is in fact, restoring the moral balance of the story.

For all the humiliation Grace suffers at the collusions between her unfaithful husband and Mrs Charmond, Marty restores balance by causing humiliation to Mrs Charmond in turn. Importantly, this is done without any particular spirit of loyalty or sisterhood towards Grace. Marty is not acting specifically as Grace’s friend - rather, her decision to humiliate and write of Felice Charmond’s vanity is described as an autonomous, somewhat private decision of hers which comes from what Mill may recognise as the collective moral conscience of ‘fellow-creatures’. This cultivation of the feelings in Marty, therefore, significant in its fusion of intuition and moral insight, is in marked contrast to the cultivation of Grace Melbury. Giles notices something about Grace Melbury which reveals an important difference between Grace and Marty, even if he is not consciously aware of this difference himself:

It was true. Cultivation had so far advanced in the soil of Miss Melbury’s mind as to lead her to talk of anything save of that she knew well, and had the greatest interest in developing: herself. She had fallen from the good old Hintock ways. (p40)

Here, ‘cultivation’ which we infer is of the superficial kind, has only caused Grace to be ‘fallen from the good old Hintock ways’. Implicit in this line, especially

concerning the word ‘fallen’ is the idea of a fall from Grace, an ironic play on the name of this character. Grace *has* fallen from the simple, moral intuition (which is developed in Hardy’s fiction as almost supernatural in the form of Marty) but which is also recognisable in the more material sphere as a form of Millian social commentary – the imperative for individuals to work autonomously and collectively as a society to prevent moral anarchy.

Whilst Fitzpiers’ infidelity may be seen to be morally corrupt, there is also a strong implication in the text that Grace’s biggest sin is aping her father by pursuing the aims of her flawed ‘cultivation’. I would argue therefore that Hardy’s novel *The Woodlanders* may be read in respect of Millian philosophy as a treatise on the limits of superficial cultivation. Hardy in fact makes a statement about the relative values of certain types of ‘cultivation’, demonstrating in the final pages of his novel, the idea of value attached to a spontaneous and honest metaphysical intuition, which has a moral undertow, rather than the idea of a self-centred, superficially ‘cultivated’ mind.

Hardy’s suspicion of ‘cultivation’ is also demonstrated in his treatment of the idea of ‘faith’ in the metaphysical via the description of Dr Fitzpiers’ dabbling with alchemy and philosophy. Here, there is an implacable sense that as a general idea, the ‘metaphysical’ as novelty, as something somehow external to one’s inner intuition, is seen to be a flawed concept, and something only charlatans engage with. Hardy’s notion of the Immanent Will, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four of this thesis, implies the presence of an external force. However, I would argue that perhaps more accurately, it also importantly implies the necessity for a human intuition to access that monolithic power. In this way, the Hardyean Immanent Will as a conceptual phenomenon relies on the need for an interiority of agency, an immanence, which is, in the sub-text of all Hardy’s novels, its cohesive force. In his

superficiality and ‘dabbling’, the character of Fitzpiers in *The Woodlanders* is the humanised allegorical opposite of such an agency.

After gaining for himself a reputation as a mysterious young Doctor who may have dealings with the Devil, Fitzpiers is developed by Hardy to reveal himself as a much more prosaic character. He in fact has little skill with the metaphysical realm, and abandons these activities in pursuit of Felice Charmond. On the question of metaphysics, he has found his limit, but this characterisation is also a statement on Hardy’s view of hubristic faith. It is Grace who motivates Fitzpiers to abandon dabbling in the metaphysical - and unsurprisingly, not for any other reason than the fact that she wishes he would advance his medical career. In some way, Grace has internalised her father’s ambitions and is now playing them out in respect of her new husband. She advises Fitzpiers:

G: I wish you would concentrate on your profession, and give up those strange studies that used to distract you so much. I am sure you would get on.

F: It is the very thing I am doing. I was going to ask you to burn- or at least get rid of – all my philosophical literature. It is in the bookcases in your rooms. The fact is I never cared much for abstruse studies.
(p310)

Fitzpiers therefore responds to Grace’s appeals to give up ‘those strange studies that used to distract you so much’. She has brought full circle the trajectory of her father’s ambitions via the career choices of her husband.

Ultimately, and unlike Marty, the cultivation of feelings in Grace towards an intuitive metaphysical realm has reached a limit. She has learned to appreciate the rural innocence of Giles Winterborne, but it is too late to redeem that relationship. She has learned to forgive her husband, but she still retains an opaque materialism in her fear of any tendency in Fitzpiers to explore philosophy, even if, flawed character as he is, he may have difficulty in doing so. After all, he says: ‘The fact is I never cared

much for abstruse studies'. What is clear by these articulations is that there is an absence of an intuitive faith, or appreciation, in metaphysical endeavour. Moreover, Grace, the girl who left the woodland community to become 'cultivated' will no longer be a part of the woodlanders' community, and this is underscored by Fitzpier's news to her that he has purchased a practice elsewhere: 'I have taken a little furnished house for a time, till we can get one of our own.' (p323). After this juncture, the narrative states where Grace's 'roots' are: 'He described the place, and the surroundings, and the view from the windows; and Grace became much interested.' (p323)

In this way, Hardy presents the idea of the metaphysical realm as subject to hubristic, de-motivated and potentially insubstantial methodologies – metaphysical limits. Although it is true to say that Grace has shown Christian commitment to her marriage, Hardy develops around her and her husband, a sceptical discourse on the idea of formalised access to transcendentalism. Rather, he almost imperceptibly gives that 'gift' to the unmarried, indeed unloved, Marty, who is never represented as having a relationship with formal learning. Instead, Marty has an 'uneducated' but transparently wise 'faith'. Her faith resides in a sense of an inner knowledge of *both* worlds of experience, that is, the material and the metaphysical. In these ways Marty South's intuitive knowledge is coherent with the Medieval idea of *sapientia* – knowledge which is gained by a kind of religious intuition, and, in a reflection of the historical figure of the recluse, as we have discussed in earlier pages of this chapter, this intuition is embodied in the independent figure of a female who is slightly set apart from society. At the juncture of tragedy, that is, when Giles dies after a supreme act of sacrifice in attempting to save Grace's reputation, Marty is depicted as the epitome of taciturn realism when she tells the weeping Grace:

He belongs to neither of us now, and your beauty is no more powerful with him than my plainness. I have come to help you ma'am. He never cared for me, and he cared much for you; but he cares for us both alike now. (p290)

With these words Marty realises the material facts of the existence of the lives of herself, Grace Melbury and Giles Winterborne. Her phrase, 'he cares for us both alike now' is shocking in its finality. Here, Marty is revealing to Grace that the desire to 'have' love from the object of one's love, is ultimately a needless pursuit. The moral meaning of the highest good in Jamesian terms, is not to 'have', but rather 'being' and 'doing'.

This is the condition of 'saintliness' – a condition which no character in *The Woodlanders* can claim, at least in life. But by a sacrificial act of unconditionally loving Grace, that is, exacerbating his own death by allowing her shelter in his home, whilst he died from cold outside, Giles Winterborne, in Hardy's creative imagination, approximates a level of ascetic appreciation, which is a component of saintliness. In examining the trajectory of the novel with its complexity of characters (and no single protagonist dominating the narrative) it is notable that instead of such a structure, Hardy has instead created what may best be described as a finely wrought discussion on metaphysical impulses via *The Woodlanders*, one key idea being that of the phenomenon of asceticism, which leads to death. Giles's extreme sacrifice – the total abnegation of his own bodily comfort and safety, in order to afford shelter for Grace, points towards such a subliminal discourse of asceticism in the novel. *The*

Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity describes the phenomenon:

The holiness and otherness of the divine lie at the heart of ascetic practice. By making oneself 'other' from the world through such practices, one enhances one's access to the 'otherness' of God. The motivation for using ascetic practices to facilitate the approach to the divine, however, varies,. Fasting and sexual continence may result from demands of ritual purification, divinely imposed penance, or an

anthropological view of humankind that emphasizes the distinction between the eternal soul and the temporal body. Food restrictions may depend upon forgotten ancient taboos (Lev. 11) or on theories of transmigration of souls (Porphyry, Abst. 1.19). Regardless of the motivation, those who undertook the ascetic regimen understood it in terms of its positive dimension or goal. Separation from the lower, sensual, or physical realm enhanced one's relationship with the higher, noetic, or spiritual realm. The ascetic language of separation or withdrawal from the world must be read in terms of the purity, independence, or freedom it offered for the pursuit of a higher calling.¹⁶

This extract details the background to the development of asceticism in Christian discourse and experience. Whilst it is true that Hardy does not specifically create Giles as living an ascetic life as an ongoing discipline, but instead as someone who made one highly dramatic gesture of selflessness, there is nevertheless a substantial sense throughout *The Woodlanders* that an atmosphere of isolation, sacrifice and otherness pervades the landscape and characters of Giles and Marty. What is significant in the description of asceticism in this quotation is the idea of sacrifice creating an opportunity for access to the divine. In its most extreme manifestation, this is what happens to Giles. He makes the ultimate sacrifice and loses his life but we sense he is also released from the pain of ordinary life. Thus, the very idea of otherness is not seen as a disadvantage, but its opposite. In the context of a dialogue of asceticism, being seen to be occupying the site of the 'other' and being seen to indulge in the sacrifice of one's own immediate comforts gives to literary fictional characters such as Giles and Marty a curious power. As stated in the quotation above 'The ascetic language of separation or withdrawal from the world must be read in terms of purity, independence, or freedom it offered for the pursuit of a higher calling'.

¹⁶ Ferguson E., (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity* (Chicago and London: St. James Press, 1990) p104

This attainment is not consciously driven in either Giles or Marty, but is the by-product of their characterisation from the author, who resists clearly-defined religious exegesis in the development of these characters' sensibilities. To live, act and die in a way that suggest a type of asceticism is something that Giles and Marty intuitively inhabit as a mode of consciousness. The idea of physical purity is even subtly alluded to in the novel, as both Giles and Marty are somehow kept apart from the notion of physical fulfilment via their thwarted hopes and aims for marriage either with each other or other characters. Hardy therefore creates something of a 'Babes in the Wood' environment for these isolated characters who, it is faintly suggested, may be too innocent for the completion of what it is to be fully material human beings. It may be argued that there is indeed something unnatural about Giles' physical avoidance of Grace, but I would argue that Hardy gives to Giles, as he gives to Marty too, a veneer of social awkwardness and inwardness of thought, a device which not only greatly enhances the idea of them as socially isolated, but physically isolated too. This physical isolation is redolent of both Gnostic and early Christian ideas of asceticism, the idea of being excluded from notions of the human body on earth, rather as if they are already deemed to be quasi-spiritual creatures. We may briefly consider if these narratives were also created around those whom were perceived to be 'different' a legacy from fearful attitudes to either extreme talent or (at the other end of the spectrum) disablement, a notion perhaps for another discussion.

Whilst isolation and melancholy touched Giles, resolution in the end did come to Marty, who, though unrequited in her love for Giles, nevertheless had faith in that love – and faith in what he represented as a moral force for good. Intuition, however briefly, comes to the more superficial Grace Melbury only when in the depth of her melancholy over Giles she has a crystalline moment of perception as she looks

through the limits of her material life, and sees the true essence of Marty and her peculiar intuition:

Grace was abased when by degrees she found that she had never understood Giles as Marty had done. Marty South alone, of all the women in Hintock and the world, had approximated to Winterborne's level of intelligent intercourse with nature. In that respect she had formed his true complement in the other sex, had lived as his counterpart, had subjoined her thoughts to him as a corollary. The casual glimpses which the ordinary population bestowed upon that wondrous world of sap and leaves called the Hintock woods, had been with these two, Giles and Marty, a clear gaze. They had been possessed of its finer mysteries as of commonplace knowledge; had been able to read its hieroglyphs as ordinary writing; to them the sights and sounds of night, winter, wind, storm, amid those dense boughs, which had to Grace a touch of the uncanny, and even of the supernatural, were simple occurrences whose origin, continuance, and laws they foreknew. (p297-8)

Hardy gives more language to the essence of Marty South's character accessed through this extract describing Grace Melbury's thoughts, than he actually bestows on her in the form of dialogue throughout *The Woodlanders*. This is a complicating factor in any attempt to give concrete proof of authorial intention, as well as character intention. Instead, Marty and Giles are described, via Grace's perception, as being almost formless entities who are at home in nature but who rarely give a full verbal account of themselves. But this apparent complication is, I would argue, a familiar trope of Hardyean fiction, not in its specificity, (that is, some characters, such as Bathsheba Everdene in *Far From The Madding Crowd* are given a voice) but in the fact that all of Hardy's fiction resists concrete analysis surrounding the idea of intention.

However, one key trope of many of the situations and indeed individual stories of certain characters in Hardy's fiction is a sense of isolation. This mystery of authorial intention, plus a pervading sense of isolation throughout Hardy's fiction and particularly so in *The Woodlander*, fits well with the idea of a swirling humanity with all its strands of human failings and fateful happenings, existing as it does under

Hardy's idea of the Immanent Will, a supposedly disinterested force under which humanity may find happiness or tragedy according to chance. Ernest Brennecke alludes to one consolation in the relative gloom of Hardy's idea of the Immanent Will - that it may eventually achieve Consciousness, and perhaps undergo what may be described as an enlightening influence and therefore contribute to 'the possibility of the harmony of the universe'.¹⁷ Marty and Giles do not speak in this scene observed by Grace, but the central energy of their pure intuition is described in the line, 'The casual glimpses which the ordinary population bestowed upon that wondrous world of sap and leaves called the Hintock woods, had been with these two, Giles and Marty, a clear gaze.'

The phrase 'clear gaze' is the distillation of the power of Marty and Giles. The isolated community of Little Hintock has been created by Hardy to grow two individuals who could see through, via their intuition and faith, the 'wondrous world of sap and leaves'. Grace, believing she too saw the supernatural element in the landscape, 'a touch of the uncanny', notes that Marty and Giles saw everything in nature as 'simple occurrences', but she admits, for all her cultivation, in the end, that it is Marty and Giles who have a far higher sensibility. Of the woods and the supernatural forces within she admits: 'They had been possessed of its finer mysteries as of commonplace knowledge'. In this way, the vacuous figure of Grace Melbury ironically articulates a profound recognition of the world, not of cultivation, but of intuitive and isolated sensation, the world which Marty and Giles inhabit.

The Woodlanders is a novel, not of language, but of intuitive sensation. It is a particular sensation grounded in isolation which emanates from the novel; this is its aestheticism. It derives from a sense of the transgression of limits, and it achieves this

¹⁷ Brennecke, E., *Thomas Hardy's Universe* (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1924) p144

transgression mainly through a lack of a central localised energy in narrative form.

Deleuze and Guattari articulate the transgressive power of art, including literature, which is sensation:

Phenomenology finds sensation in perceptual and affective ‘a priori materials’ that transcend the perceptions and affections of the lived: Van Gogh’s yellow or Cezanne’s innate sensations. As we have seen phenomenology must become the phenomenology of art because the immanence of the lived to the transcendental subject must be expressed in transcendent functions that not only determine experience in general but traverse itself the lived itself here and now, and are embodied in it by constituting living sensations.¹⁸

Deleuze and Guattari express the effect of art to not only ‘determine experience’ but to also ‘traverse itself the here and now’ and this achievement is realised by ‘constituting living sensations’. This twentieth century insight is relevant to the nineteenth century achievement of *The Woodlanders* which approximates a Modern sensibility in its diffusion of earlier established discourses on religious faith and Romantic intuition. Hardy’s work in this novel contributes to the development of the novel as art, less as a realist exposition of lives that are lived, but rather as an achievement which embodies the collective sensation of a catchment of humanity in a particular space. Sensation is the appropriate metaphysical language for a representation of the realisation, and the limits, of the metaphysical realm. We must go beyond the fact of lived experience to demonstrate in art the centripetal truth of lived experience. With reference to Hardy’s *The Woodlanders* this sensation is closely allied to the idea of faith. It does not depend on rational processes – it is the ground from which intuition grows, and Hardy’s text implies that this intuition grows most purely in isolation.

¹⁸ Deleuze G., & Guattari F., *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994)p178

It is when we consider the vast and significant history of Western religious introspection that we may recognise such a legacy in the nineteenth century fiction of authors such as Thomas Hardy. It is an undercurrent of spiritual awareness rather than a concretised set of belief and rules that such works evoke. I would consider the western historical phenomenon of monastic life, spiritual contemplation, asceticism and the notion of silence to be particularly significant as hidden tropes in works such as *The Woodlanders*. We may pause here to consider that power of limited speech (which Marty strangely represents) or indeed silence. Peter Damian Belisle describes the phenomenon of fourth century monasticism in the desert regions of locations such as Syria, the Egyptian desert (one of the great sites of early monastic Christianity) and present-day Turkey, a movement that attracted both male and female adherents:

Solitude in the desert tradition is a refuge and a great respite. It makes possible the right kind of atmosphere for union and communion. The simpler the surroundings, the less cluttered will be the mind and the heart. The desert forces the mind to clear and the heart to open.¹⁹

The contention of this chapter is that Thomas Hardy has developed in his novel *The Woodlanders* a narrative which expresses the value of separation and isolation, in both geographical and psychological states, as a means for the intuitive intellect to access forms of knowledge that lie outside the structures of formal learning. The novel subconsciously validates an environment that reflects the legacy of ancient and medieval traditions in Christian practice, but it also radically allows for the idea of independent thought and lives that are lived with freedom of expression. This is achieved through the subtly complex characterisations inherent in the novel, and the unusual practice of de-centring the role of the protagonist. In this way, characters such as Marty South and Giles Winterborne represent new voices that are paradoxically

¹⁹ Belisle P. D., *The Language of Silence* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 2003) p56

quieter ones – their message is delivered through their apperception and their willingness to embrace notions of sacrifice and loss.

Belisle states:

Towards the end of the fourth century, it was no longer enough to simply stay in the cell. How one lived in the cell became more crucial. One could devote a lifetime to the cell without really learning how to live in the cell. The desert cell was no romanticised utopia, but a simple place of encounter and discovery.

It may seem ironic to be paying so much attention to the words of those desert ascetics who tried so diligently to be above all, silent. But they conversed with God in that silence and the fruits of those long conversations were their famous sayings and deeds. (p56-57)

It is notable that Belisle emphasises that the cell was ‘no romantic utopia’ in an effort to underscore the right state for true contemplation. This ascetic appreciation for the paring down of excess fits well with the notion of Hardy’s nineteenth century fictional characters in the novel *The Woodlanders*. They are *of nature*, but they do not see nature as the great redeemer alone. If we believe the core values of Romanticism to obey dualist notions of transcendence, that is, the division between body and soul, then *The Woodlanders*, by the blurring of ‘limits’, that is, by creating a diffuse aesthetic of sensation – moves away from Romanticism towards a subtle and Modern form of transcendentalism.

At the beginning of this chapter I briefly noted Sarah McNamer’s work on Medieval ‘affective meditation’. She states: ‘As men and women engaged in the practice of affective meditation in private, out of reach of ecclesiastical authority, compassion could exert forms of cognitive pressure, provoking new ways of thinking.’ (p19). I suggest that the ‘new’ way of thinking inhabited by Marty South and Giles Winterborne was in fact related to a much older way. They are characters from a nineteenth century novel who are connected to the legacy of the isolated and spiritually aware in history - Thomas Hardy has successfully articulated the idea of

intuitive compassion as opposed to religious observance in its strictest sense and he has chosen an isolated space for his characters to achieve this. In particular, Marty becomes the conduit for a type of transcendental moral sense. He locates in her what Deleuze and Guattari may recognise as the subject 'expressed in transcendent functions that not only determine experience in general but traverse itself in the here and now'. In this way the isolated Marty is the largely silent cognitive narrator of *The Woodlanders*' aestheticism. When she stoops down and sweeps aside withered flowers on Giles Winterborne's grave, replacing them with fresh blooms she states:

'If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven
But no, no, my love, I never can forget 'ee for you was a good man,
and did good things.' (p331)

Marty will never forget Giles for one reason; because he was a *good* man.

Redemption in *The Woodlanders* therefore resides in what John Stuart Mill would recognise as a collective sense of the Good, but it is intuited in a single, isolated individual. The moral meaning of death in the *The Woodlanders* is articulated by Marty through Giles's death; the way in which the end of life, the limit upon which the material may dissipate, is the right condition for the illumination of the Good . This notion of a darkening presence - a death which illuminates, an isolation inherent in the human spirit, is amongst many fluctuating dualisms in the novel. It is experienced by two individuals who inhabit a particular place of landscape and intuitive faith, a place which lies 'outside the gates of the world'.

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CHAPTER TWO – INTELLECT

In the canon of nineteenth century fiction, Thomas Hardy's novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895) represents a polemic on social injustice. Investigated through the critical prism of liberal sensibility, the intellectual ambitions of a rustic protagonist who is denied personal fulfilment by restrictive educational practices and repressive religious dogma is indisputably proven. However, this chapter will argue that the novel also demonstrates a particular narrative on intellect.

A definition of what 'intellect' implies in the context of this discussion lies in the roots of both Platonic intuitionism and Aristotelian notions of the Active Intellect. This chapter will discuss how the integration of that genus has expression in *Jude The Obscure*, a novel conventionally regarded as inherently tragic. Jude's socio-economic situation can indeed be seen as tragic, but I suggest nevertheless that the sub-text of the novel lies in a more affirmative reading of the human experience. In this discussion we will consider how the novel describes the power of the (intuitive) intellect, unencumbered by the body, to represent human experience on earth and the resolution of that experience - the idea of communion with the ultimate mind, or Active Intellect.

The notion of a journey towards enlightenment enabled by the spiritualised intellect implies Christian notions of Heaven and the after-life. Hardy's valorisation of suffering, (and there is no lack of suffering in *Jude the Obscure*) points to the author's awareness that suffering is perhaps an inescapable part of the human experience on that journey. However, the experience of suffering in the novel is also relevant to the author's awareness that the possession of a creative and metaphysical

intellect is redemptive. *Jude the Obscure* reveals two narratives – the idea of suffering, but also the power of the intuitive intellect to create a forward-moving energy which has at its heart a compensatory resolution. The commonplace idea in Hardy criticism that Jude’s life is ultimately ‘hopeless’ is refuted here. Instead, I wish to consider how Hardy reflects through Jude the potential to transcend the material and access a sublime ‘otherness’, a progress which is attached to the idea of a meeting with metaphysical knowledge – or intellect. Intellect, therefore, in the context of this chapter, is seen to be a description of a state of mind which is empowered by extra intuition and one which is non-reliant on the material body. We have briefly mentioned the Aristotelian notion of Active Intellect, originally expounded in Aristotle’s *De Anima*.¹ T. M. Rudavsky in his book on Maimonides explains the idea in more detail, and its influence on later philosophers. What is notable about Aristotle’s belief is that when we consider the pure energy of the Active Intellect, the human body, and even the human personality is left out of the equation. As Rudavsky explains it below:

Aristotle’s theory of the Active Intellect became popular among medieval philosophers for a number of reasons: first, it contained the springboard for theories of philosophical psychology, theory of soul, immortality of soul, etc. Second, it reinforced the importance of hylomorphism as it pertains to perception and intellection, and it raised the question of whether the soul is particular or universal. Further, it raised questions concerning the ‘me-ness’ of the doctrine. The Active Intellect contains no memories, no thoughts or emotions, no personality, no individuality; all these are contained in the passive intellect, which dies along with the body. And so, in an important sense survival of the soul qua Active Intellect has nothing at all to do with *me*. But what theological mileage can we derive from Aristotle’s ‘immortality’ thesis if what is most true and essential about the individual is not preserved?²

¹ Aristotle, *De Anima* transl. & intro. Lawson-Tancred H. (London: Penguin Classics, 1986)

² Rudavsky, T.M., *Maimonides* (Oxford & Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010)

Aristotle's ideas contain what is interesting to bear in mind as we consider a fictional work such as *Jude the Obscure*. And Rudavsky's question at the end of the quotation is relevant. How can we come to terms with any immortality thesis which renders 'what is most true and essential about the individual' superfluous? This Aristotelian effacement of the individual seems at odds with the idea of a human journey towards enlightenment, but it indicates a narrative of pure spirit. And in *Jude the Obscure*, the same narrative occurs. The tragic effacement of Jude paradoxically valorises the idea of the ultimate Active Intellect as Jude achieves redemption in death, via the ultimate Intellect, a tragic poignancy when we consider his search for an education in life. Moreover, by ending Jude's life, Hardy takes away from his protagonist all the factors Aristotle relegates to the 'Passive Intellect', that is, thoughts, emotions, personality, and individuality. These human attributes and indeed the whole notion of human consciousness have been relegated to second place in the Hardyean universe of Jude's life. The conventionally regarded tragic and hopeless death of Jude is instead, I argue, the moment at which Jude achieves his best intellectual achievement – that is, engagement, through the immortal life of the human intellect with the Aristotelian Active Intellect.

In this way our modern ideas of Faith as fostered by religious traditions may be seen through an ancient appreciation of notions of the intellect, and Hardy attends to the idea of a spiritual intellect in *Jude the Obscure* as a rather more exciting phenomenon than blind obedience to creed. As Hardy did, the novel clearly values education in all its forms, but by telling the story of Jude in the way it does, with its inherent scepticism of the idea of institutionalised education, it offers instead a compelling appreciation of the intuitive intellect. This has connections with other philosophical perspectives, derived from an Aristotelian legacy, for instance the view

put forward by the Jewish Medieval philosopher Maimonides that the soul we are born with is not the same soul we possess on our death. This interesting notion - that the soul becomes educated, and changes through the lifetime of the body, nevertheless carries the implication that the education of the soul in this context is not Maths and Science alone, but the idea of a human spiritual progress via the intellect. I suggest that these ancient spiritual narratives have implications for Hardy's literary narratives - his intuitive protagonists ultimately desire enlightenment and metaphysical unity with some larger totality, even if that desire is not expressed through a formal religious paradigm. Indeed, a familiar trope of the significant body of critical work on Thomas Hardy is the often repeated view that Hardy was sceptical of religion. Whilst this is true (if religion is understood in conventional and institutional terms) it does not negate some evidence which this thesis hopes to provide, that Hardy recognised and valued throughout his fiction and poetry the idea of a spiritual intellect, something that is distinct from pure human feeling. We may consider how such a spiritual intellect may be embodied in visual terms.

Rudavsky demonstrates that the views of the philosopher Maimonides are sometimes contradictory, but one key idea of his is clearly expressed:

In the world to come there is nothing corporeal, and no material substance; there are only souls of the righteous without bodies - like the ministering angels. (p105)

Maimonides believed that the soul could be divided into mortal and immortal parts and in his view, the immortal part of the soul was the *intellect* (my italics). In the quotation above, Maimonides describes the departed souls of humans as akin to 'the ministering angels.' In this discourse, we see the implication that the intellect inhabits the higher part of the soul. As well as the specific category of the intellect as being the ultimate survivor, we note an ethical element in Maimonides' view – the philosopher

is at pains to identify that in the world to come, those specific human souls are (as well as embodying the immortal intellect) *righteous* (my italics). Here we find a conjunction between ideas of a spiritual intellect and ethical purity. Thomas Hardy modernises this discourse in *Jude the Obscure* - Jude is described as neither perfectly good, or irredeemably bad, but fallible in his vulnerability and his search for knowledge.

When we consider the value philosophers such as Aristotle and Maimonides attributed to the idea of intellect – Aristotle’s notion that the ultimate entity was the Active Intellect, and Maimonides’ view that the immortal part of the human soul was the intellect – we may consider anew writers such as Thomas Hardy who demonstrate this feature of the human spirit in some key characters. Moreover, whilst the idea of spirit is conventionally allied to notions of the Christian Holy Spirit, Hardy gives the notion of spirit a more human form, lit by the light of intuition and questing intellect, the eponymous Jude being the prime exemplar of such a characterisation. In this way Hardyean protagonists cannot be held up to be ideals of Christian probity, but there is a sense throughout all the novels and especially in *Jude the Obscure* that they are the embodiment of potential intellect. In this way we may visualise them as the (albeit flawed) angels of Medieval discourse.

Intellect as defined in the historical context of *Jude the Obscure* naturally absorbs the legacy of European Christianity - the confluence of intellect and religious faith is irrevocably present in the novel. These combined areas of human interest had been the prime concerns of Medieval universities across Western Europe. But the treatment of the human trait of ‘intellect’ in *Jude the Obscure* is a unique one. Critical attention has rightly addressed the social inequalities inherent in the narrative of the novel as Jude finds that he cannot get through the gates of Christminster. However,

this chapter will investigate *Jude the Obscure* as the fictional representation of Hardy's complex post-Romantic and quasi-religious views on intellectual worth. The central notion under discussion is that Jude's search for 'education' may be an unwittingly misguided quest - but not for reasons of hopelessness relating to poverty and social injustice alone. The notion of whether this ultimate intellect is the Christian 'God' is a large philosophical question, but in as much as Hardy alludes to Christian exegesis and iconography in the novel, we must assume that as the material symbols of Christianity abound in the novel, therefore the 'ultimate' intellect may be ascribed to 'God' in broadly Christian terms. Of course, we have to consider that the very idea of an 'ultimate intellect' in the novel is in fact being treated as an ironic one by Hardy. I argue against that notion and suggest that Hardy gives credence to the existence of a metaphysical and ultimate intellect, one that is, (as Jude will find out) beyond the reach of ordinary man or woman in their lifetime. In this chapter 'God' will be referred to via the prisms of various discourses, for instance, Gnosticism, Tractarianism – and Scholasticism, the latter which has at its heart a connection to Oxford, said to be the inspiration for Hardy's Christminster.

When Jude, an impoverished young man from the country who has ambitions to achieve an education approaches the colleges of Christminster (a fictionalised Oxford) on a 'windy, whispering, moonless night' ³ he replicates the trope of the isolated wanderer in Hardy's fiction. He also finds a boundary. As in *The Woodlanders*, we find in *Jude the Obscure* too that there are allusions to spaces which are often 'gated', metaphorising the delineation of both social and metaphysical values:

When the gates were shut and he could no longer get into the quadrangles he rambled under the walls and doorways, feeling with his

³ Hardy T., *Jude the Obscure* World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p72

fingers the contours of their mouldings and carvings. The minutes passed; fewer and fewer people were visible, and still he serpentine among the shadows. (p73)

Here, the phrase ‘the gates were shut’ – reminds us of Hardy’s phrase in *The Woodlanders*: ‘outside the gates of the world’. The leitmotif of isolation is developed in Hardyean fiction, but in *Jude the Obscure* the experience shades into wilful exclusion by social forces - it is not the poetic, somewhat voluntary, isolation of *The Woodlanders*. Rather, it is a more traumatic and tragic sense of displacement, not only in social terms (Jude is the outsider both physically and intellectually in terms of the rarefied world of Christminster), but in metaphysical terms too. He works as a church stonemason, but the tragic characterisation of Jude is not metaphorically hewn in stone by the author. Hardy has made Jude from a more luminous material.

When he finds himself in physical proximity to the colleges of Christminster, the very weight of the institution of formalised intellect is so heavy, that it seems to deconstruct his bodily composition. In his own mind, he loses presence and becomes, through his intuitive intellect, a spectre:

Knowing not a human being here Jude began to be impressed with the isolation of his own personality as with a self-spectre, the sensation being that of one who walked, but could not make himself seen or heard. He drew his breath pensively, and seeming thus almost his own ghost, gave his thoughts to the other ghostly presences with which the nooks were haunted. (p73)

As the theme of Chapter One of this thesis states, it is the quality of isolation which prepares the groundwork for the intuitive sensibility. Here again in another novel, *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy gives to another protagonist a clear validation of the state of isolation. Jude is ‘impressed with the isolation of his own personality’. But in this particular scene, as he surveys the stony citadel of learning he has craved to see, the isolation is not social isolation alone. In the quotation above there is also a strong

suggestion of a particular, bodily absence of ‘being in the world’. Jude becomes aware that he is ‘almost his own ghost’ and this sensation ‘gave his thoughts to the other ghostly presences with which the nooks were haunted.’ This reflects Heidegger’s idea of ‘Dasein’ or ‘being in the world’, and it is significant to consider the way ideas of ghostliness, absence, and feeling as Jude described himself, ‘a self-spectre’ operate in the novel in relation to the idea of intellect.

Jude ‘could not make himself seen or heard’ as he surveyed Christminster in the dark. But instead of the notion of ‘lack’, this description of the intellectual fabric of the protagonist is relevant to his insight. His ghostly self is able to commune with the ghostly presences of the great minds who inhabited Christminster in the past. This is a significant allusion to the idea of an intellectual communion which overarches the physical body and time itself. In a Keatsian allusion to the idea of ‘negative capability’, the ability of the poet to totally immerse themselves in the object, Hardy gives to Jude an outsider’s status, but one that has hidden gifts.⁴ Jude feels like a ghost, but the benefit of feeling absent to himself, is his ability to intuit the ‘ghostly presences’ of the great minds of Christminster. This may be understood as a subconscious description by Hardy of two processes – the intellectual process of absorption, whereby the creative personality ‘loses’ its sense of self in art, and also the intellectual process whereby a spiritual/religious person senses an intuition of God.

The idea of such incorporeality allied to intellect is noted in formal theological narratives. As Glenn Peers states, angels are traditionally seen to be composed of fire and spirit and this has implications relevant to Hardy’s appreciation of the incorporeal body that intuits knowledge:

⁴ Roger Sharrock in his introduction to *Keats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) states that Keats regarded Shakespeare as ‘a great example of negative capability’.

The fire and spirit composition posited a relative value for angelic nature that placed angels somewhere between the radically different natures of humanity and God. Such theologians as Theodotus in the second century called the angels 'intellectual fire, intellectual spirit,' distinct in property from material fire and light. Theodotus thought that angels did have bodies – at least they were seen as such – although these bodies, compared to ours, were without form and corporeality..⁵

Here, we note established spiritual narratives that allude to the idea of intellect as composed of something close to spirit. If angels are according to Theodotus 'intellectual fire, intellectual spirit' then all three narratives of the human, the spirit and the intellect are conjoined. We may consider Hardy's corpus of work to be closer to this paradigm in terms of his 'religious beliefs' rather than more narrow considerations of how much and to what extent the author believed in Scripture. Instead, through a complex character as Jude is, Hardy revives older discourses of intellectual fire in a new way. He removes the idea of God, religion and humankind away from Victorian ideals of perfect morality. Instead, in *Jude the Obscure* the author presents a debate on intellectual and spiritual awareness as no guarantors of justice or happiness, as Jude and Sue's lives demonstrate. However, as characters they nevertheless remain in literary consciousness not as weakened victims, but as heroes in their quests for enlightenment. We may say that Sue represents the honourable pragmatism of knowledge in her attainment as a teacher, where Jude represents the tragic hope for Christminster which is depicted as an unattainable intellectual Eden. Nevertheless, they do sense (as Hardy did) that something of a spiritual intuition also lies closely with the idea of the cultivation of the intellect. Hardy does demonstrate effectively and especially in the important scene as Jude first approaches Christminster, that his protagonist possesses the potential for disembodied, intuitive agency – perhaps it may be argued, that this is the embodiment of Hardy's genius

⁵ Peers, G., *Subtle Bodies* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press Ltd., 2001) p2

accessed through Jude. In terms of the literary paradigm of the novel genre, this unusual creation of Jude's sensibility has some connection with and anticipates Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (influenced by Aquinas and through him Aristotle) and the notion of the artist who refines himself out of existence.⁶

The introduction of Jude to the monolithic and weighty symbol of consolidated and collective intellect as symbolised by Christminster serves as a counterpoint to the idea of his own particular intellect, which is described as free-floating, un-self-conscious and intuitive as he gazes upon the edifice. Moreover, the ghostly presence of the worthy individuals of the colleges, the characters of Newman, Keble, and Wesley, appear to represent to Jude's untutored mind a type of phantom electricity. Jude's apperception tells him that the intellect of such luminaries of the colleges still exists, even if the individuals are no longer there in body. The nooks of the college walls are haunted, not only by the suggestion that the intellectual giants may appear in ghostly form, but in the deeper implication that their intellectual energy remains. This impression in *Jude the Obscure* - that some 'intellect' remains after the body has gone, reflects Christian religious discourse in the belief that the spirit has not died with the body. Jude's awareness of these ghosts therefore becomes a literary and somewhat secularised sensation of 'faith'. In this scene he is not in a church, and he is not thinking of God. But he reflects the religious faithful in his intuitive knowledge that 'something' has remained from 'nothing', that is, that intelligent energy lasts beyond the body. It is interesting at this point to consider views expressed by Newman about his own childhood. As David Newsome states: "As a boy he had felt 'life to be a dream, or I an angel, and all this world a deception.'" ⁷ Aristotle expresses some complex and subtle notions of the soul in relation to the body, believing it to be

⁶ Joyce, J., *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1992)

⁷ Newsome, D., *Two Classes of Men* London: John Murray Publishers Ltd., 1974) p70

in the main an intrinsic part of the body, but having elements that are non-material. It is interesting to note how he expresses one element of it:

Concerning the intellect and the potentiality for contemplation the situation is not so far clear, but it seems to be a different kind of soul, and this alone can exist separately, as the everlasting can from the perishable.⁸

Aristotle states the intellect is ‘a different kind of soul’ whilst quite presciently admitting ‘the situation is not so far clear’. This latter phrase is as relevant today as it was in Aristotle’s time. But it does raise I suggest an opportunity to discuss the way creative intuition is implicated in the experience of the human race. In as much as the intuition operates in mysterious ways we do acknowledge that authors and artists may speak of an unexplained impulse that operates and organises their art. Likewise, the devout may say a broadly similar thing – there is an experience of mental processes of spiritual identification or intuitions that a greater and ineffable power exists in the metaphysical sense. This is of course a sound move away from Freudian explanations which invariably site creative impulses (and everything else) in the libido. It may be worthwhile to put aside the almost exclusive attention paid to Freudian analysis in literary scholarship in this instance, and consider the idea of an intuitive and creative intellect that is not attached to notions of the body.

Taylor and Shuttleworth’s anthology *Embodied Selves* contains evidence of lively nineteenth century discussions on mental and physical experiences. In particular in Eneas Sweetland Dallas’s 1866 discussion, the hidden soul has resonance with the tenor of Hardy’s intuitive protagonists:

When we think of something preserved in the mind, but lost and well nigh irrecoverable, we are apt to imagine it as dormant; when we know that it was unintelligible we are apt to imagine it as dead. On the

⁸ Aristotle, ‘The Soul as Bodily Organization’ in (ed.) Heil J., *Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p33

contrary, the mind is an organic whole and lives in every part, even though we know it not. Aldebaran was once the grandest star in the firmament, and Sirius had a companion star once the brightest in heaven, and now one of the feeblest. Because they are now dim to us, are we to conclude that they are going out and becoming nought? The stars are overhead though in the blaze of day they are unseen; they are not only overhead, but also all their influences are unchanged. So there is knowledge active within us of which we see nothing, know nothing, think nothing. Thus, in the sequence of thought, the mind, busied with the first link in a chain of ideas, may dart to the third or fourth, the intermediate link or links being utterly unknown to it. They may be irrecoverable, they may even be unintelligible, but they are there, and they are there force...⁹

Whilst Dallas' comments may pertain to a subtle variation of mental activity and states, including memory, there is in these perspectives a sense of the mind as a receptor for knowledge, even knowledge that may be perceived as lost. Moreover, the idea that 'the stars are overhead though in the blaze of day they are unseen' gives a cosmological cast to the whole idea of the mind, reflecting ancient discourses such as Plato's. The idea of the hidden soul is indeed closely affiliated to the idea of the intellect, but not always in ways that implacably lead to Freud. The mind, even though Dallas states that it is 'organic' is nevertheless in this excerpt cast in a quasi-spiritual ether. The phrase: 'so there is knowledge active within us of which we see nothing, know nothing, think nothing' may be labelled as a proto Freudian perspective on the unconscious. However, I argue that it suggests more profoundly the idea of the mystery of the spiritualised intellect. In these ways, nineteenth century thinkers and writers such as Thomas Hardy demonstrate their position at the nexus of older discourses of the spirit and more modern ones of the unconscious – but Hardy modernises the idea of the spirit accessed through the notion of the intellect.

⁹ Dallas, E.S., 'The Hidden Soul' from *The Gay Science* in (eds.) Taylor J. B. & Shuttleworth S., *Embodied Selves*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) p149

The idea of a connection between religious faith and intellect has been formalised in the paradigms of Scholasticism and much later, of Tractarianism (just one example of many in the history of the philosophy of religion after Scholasticism) – spiritual and educational codes of learning in universities such as the fictional Christminster.

But Jude's intuition represents a raw, untutored, core of energy, a small and independent new sun blazing in what was an encoded religious universe. Hardy's novel suggests that the metaphysical universe is changing, but not in a way that implacably points to a linear development towards secularisation. Instead, the novel, through Jude, asks us to consider that the progression of metaphysical discourse may involve a rotational action – an acknowledgement of earlier narratives, which are given new light by the complexity of characters such as Jude, who seem poised at the nexus of multi-directional change. I argue that Hardy actually valorises the idea of a spiritual intellect as a modern progression towards faith. This foregrounding of the cognition as having special agency is compatible with late nineteenth century progress across several disciplines including the arts and the sciences. Paul Turner remarks on Hardy's active interest in honing his knowledge:

In 'So Various', a poem written shortly before his death, Hardy reflected on the many and different types of character that seemed to make up his personality: 'I was all they'. His mind was equally various. But one permanent feature of his thinking was a special emphasis on knowledge. For him, like Browning's 'Grammarians', there was 'No end to learning', even when 'with the throttling hands of death at strife'. The day he died he was trying to read J.B.S. Haldane's latest book of popular science, *Possible Worlds*.

This attitude to knowledge reflected a persistent sense of ignorance. Brought up as an Anglican, Hardy soon started moving towards Agnosticism in the religious sense of the word. But in a much wider sense *not knowing* was always central to his thought. 'I am utterly bewildered', he wrote in 1915, defending Herbert Spencer's theory of the Unknowable, 'to understand how the doctrine that,

beyond the knowable, there must always be an unknown, can be displaced.’¹⁰

Paul Turner describes several layers of cognitive process in Hardy in this example. Of particular interest is the phrase that describes Hardy’s enthusiasm for knowledge emanating from ‘a persistent sense of ignorance’. (This reflects Eneas Sweetland Dallas’s previous comments on an active knowledge within us that sees, knows and thinks nothing.) However, I argue that this sense of ignorance in the author was an encouraging sign of the possession of a free and fluid intellect that regards with suspicion the idea of concrete knowledge. Other factors revealed in this assessment of the author are the fluidity of identity which Hardy experienced, revealed by his allowing fictional characters to become or represent part of himself, his desire for knowledge, for instance the information that ‘the day he died he was trying to read Haldane’s latest book..’. Finally, what is revealed is Hardy’s appreciation of the unknowable, something he appears to regard as immovable, even though he knows he logically cannot explain that phenomenon, a sense that leaves him ‘bewildered’. Hardy literally cannot conceive that the unknown can be ‘displaced’. In these ways I suggest we see how Hardy constructs Jude – his sense of ignorance, his search for knowledge, and his sense that something else may exist beyond the boundaries of material life. All these are shared by the author with his protagonist.

However, the particular achievement of *Jude The Obscure* is that it gives a sense of the discarding of old generic structures - we cannot definitely say that the novel neatly falls into categories labelled Classical or Romantic, Naturalism or Realism. But in a literary narrative which anticipates T.S. Eliot’s literary critical views on tradition and the individual talent, *Jude the Obscure* is building on recognising the importance of the past. For Hardy does not completely discard the

¹⁰ Turner, P., *The Life of Thomas Hardy* (Oxford & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001) p2

legacy of the formal structures of Scholasticism - indeed much of his work, including *Jude the Obscure*, has a sense (rather in the way Jude feels outside the college gates) of being formed from a permeable ether of metaphysical voices, rather than a solid set of beliefs. In this way, the legacies of great discourses remain alive, only in a different format. Joseph Rickaby in his 1908 work summarises the historical context of Scholasticism:

Like the medieval universities which harboured it, it grew gradually from obscure beginnings. It will be convenient however, to fix its rise in the eleventh century, and to call St. Anselm (1033-1109) the first scholastic, as he has also been called the last of the Fathers. The thirteenth century was the golden age of Scholasticism. For two centuries following it gradually declined: the latter half of the sixteenth century saw a splendid revival in Spain, but that was short-lived. Baconian physical science set in, and the Cartesian philosophy, and all the while Scholasticism was dying; at the end of the eighteenth century, the era of Kant and the French Revolution, Scholasticism was dead. It has had something of a resurrection since.¹¹

Rickaby explains the rise of the medieval university and ‘the golden age of Scholasticism’. *Jude the Obscure* is I argue, a sub-textual discourse of aspects of Medieval Scholasticism because its underlying sentiment appears to valorise the idea of the conjunction of intellect and the metaphysical. Jude, perhaps akin to his authorial creator, is aware of both narratives in his life, never wholly rejecting one or the other. But the novel is also an account of a historical and personal journey of the way in which the western intellect has sustained major narratives like Scholasticism, and developed further from them into new spiritual territory. Rickaby cites the rise of physical science as the beginning of the end for Scholasticism, but I suggest Hardy’s treatment of it some centuries later, actually sustains its legacy. *Jude the Obscure* is infused with a sense of the conjoining of the intellect and the spirit, giving this phenomenon a presence via Jude’s intuition. Indeed, it is notable that as far as *Jude*

¹¹ Rickaby, J., *Scholasticism*, (London: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd., 1908) p2

the Obscure is a late nineteenth century novel, there is ironically little emphasis on the phenomenon of Baconian 'new science', although there are some brief references to developments in astronomy and chemistry. In a more universalising sense, the novel instead concentrates on the idea of the intellect as a free-floating agency which searches for its spiritual home.

Christminster, therefore, in the sense that it represents the enhancement of the intellect, is not depicted as an ancient irrelevance. Hardy's condemnation in *Jude the Obscure* is instead limited to three key areas: social codes which exclude the poor from high quality education, excessive guilt suffered by literal interpretations of the Bible, and in a more complicated manner, the hubristic, (albeit sympathetically treated), desire of Jude to achieve knowledge. Why would Hardy seem to punish his unlucky hero for desiring an education when he also demonstrates in the novel sympathy for the marginalised? Perhaps he does so in a faint allusion to a strand of thought in Scholasticism. As Rickaby points out an important tenet of Scholastic thought: 'As God is above the world, so the world is beyond and independent of the knowing mind of man'. (p44). Rickaby's quotation here cites the hubristic human desire for mere knowing. In Scholasticism's terms, according to this quotation, both the world and God are beyond the knowing capacities of humankind. Hardy, perhaps in some compensatory act for Jude, gives to his protagonist for a brief moment outside the environs of Christminster a concealed identity as pure spirit. For both Jude and Sue the prize is not material knowledge learnt rather as the 'new science' must be learnt, but the possession of an intuitive, spiritual intellect. The implication is that class, money, status and even attendance at Christminster cannot change the absence of such a thing, the pure intellect, if it is not sited in the soul. In this way Jude's

personal desire for Christminster is treated by Hardy with ironic ambivalence because Hardy already sees purity of intellect in his tragic protagonist.

Whilst this may seem an ambitious reading of the situation, this perspective must be seen in the light of Hardy's proven and enduring validation of the ordinary man or woman. A recognisable trope of Hardy's fiction is that he gives to the 'ordinary' and usually poor, rural individual, a type of blazing humanity in the darkest circumstances. Norman Vance has noted the Wordsworthian recognition of the common decency of rural people in Hardy's fiction, stating in *The Oxford Handbook Of English Literature And Theology*:

The common sympathetic concern in Hardy and Eliot with 'low life', the moral and spiritual dignity and difficulty of humble, ordinary people, often presented in rural settings, was a shared legacy from the Wordsworth of 'Michael' or 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' ...¹².

In *Jude the Obscure*, I argue that Hardy has developed a compulsion to dignify his protagonist in his most ambitious way yet. Whilst many readings of Jude have rightly pointed to the irredeemable misery of the novel, there is perhaps some credence in considering the idea that in inverse proportion to the darkness of the novel, Hardy has created a point of light – the faint representation of Jude as an unknowing (therefore seeking 'knowledge') and flawed angel who nevertheless is gifted with potential to intuit the unknowable. This sense that the evolutionary material facts of Jude's life will ultimately fail to give him the answer affords him a quasi-mystical presence throughout the novel.

Moreover, the sense of a quest that must end beyond the realm of material existence is passed on and distilled into its most tragic form - his disturbed son, Father Time. Through the boy's actions - murdering his siblings and killing himself - the

¹² Vance, N., 'George Eliot and Hardy' in Hass, A., Jasper, D., & Jay, E., *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature & Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p484

Hardyeian tragic philosophy, that it might have been better not to have been born (a philosophical perspective derived from Sophocles) may be seen to have been fulfilled. But it may be argued that such a sentiment, emanating from the Greek chorus, alludes not to the fact that living is a worthless experience but rather, that life will present us with the intellectual opportunity to reflect on the value of it, through circumstances both tragic and ecstatic. The notion itself (that it may have been better not to have been born) is the darker side of what may be described as the Janus-faced ideology of the novel. It may also, in a more affirmative way, have been better for Jude not to have been born too, but not because life is irredeemably worthless - instead, because his rightful spiritual home is the sphere of the Supreme Intellect. We may conclude that Hardy saw above all other considerations, the nobility not only of the ordinary man or woman, but the ability of the spiritual intellect to transcend all boundaries. Moreover, as if to emphasise the delineation between the compensations of what lies beyond, and the trials of earthly life, Hardy creates in *Jude the Obscure* an almost surreal tableau of horror and tragedy at the centre of the novel. We may consider if this leads to some statement on the idea of Jude as representing a metaphysical sign that bridges the inevitability of tragedy on earth with pure enlightenment in heaven.

The actions of Father Time - killing himself and the other children fathered by Jude - ensures forever the biological stop to the propagation of Jude's flawed inheritance, his displacement from the One or the Active Intellect. Rickaby notes the decline of Scholasticism with 'Baconian physical science', but it is interesting to note his further perception of the legacy of Scholasticism, that is, that 'It has had something of a resurrection since'. Rickaby's view, in 1908, that Scholasticism was enjoying a renewal was articulated only thirteen years after the publishing of *Jude the Obscure*. I suggest therefore that Hardy had caught the intellectual ether of the times –

the juxtaposition of a faint renewal of Medieval Scholastic sensibility, ironically at a time of substantial industrial and social change in the late nineteenth century.

Victorian interest in alterity – the experience of altered consciousness and the supernatural is implicated here. Hardy, it may be argued, has modernised a Christian narrative to encode new ideas of fluid consciousness and spiritual awareness. T. R. M. Creighton gives us his perspective on Hardy at a time of emerging spiritual narratives:

It was just Hardy's institutional attachment to the Anglican Church and his emotional feeling for its beliefs that produced his religious dilemma, the rift between his feelings and his intellect which is the most fundamental and fructifying element in his art. His emotions were pious rather than in any way original, devotional or mystical. He needed a religious belief, an explanation of the universe in supernatural terms, more desperately than most men do. Many possibilities of undogmatic, non-institutional Christian belief were opening up during his lifetime – Tolstoy's revolutionary Christianity for instance, the whole line of thinking which emanated from Kierkegaard, Schweitzer's Christian agnosticism and much else. And there were other religions such as Buddhism which later on nearly claimed Eliot.

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Notwithstanding the emergence of narratives such as Buddhism, it is useful to ask too if Hardy's desire for a reliance on an intellectualised spiritual certainty was a symptom of some sub-conscious apprehension of apocalypse at the turn of the new century - the old structures offer some compensation for the tyranny of new antagonisms. Religious figures allied to Tractarianism, such as John Henry Newman who converted to Catholicism, reveal a desire to find some strand of belief that involves an intellectual engagement:

The energy of the human intellect 'does from opposition grow', it thrives and is joyous, with a tough elastic strength, under the terrible blows of the divinely-fashioned weapon, and is never so much itself as when it has lately been overthrown.'¹⁴

¹³ Creighton, T.R.M., 'Some Thoughts on Hardy and Religion' in (ed.) Butler L. St. John, *Thomas Hardy after Fifty Years* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1977) p67

¹⁴ Newman, J.H., *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, (ed.) Ker I., (London: Penguin Classics 2004) p225

This brief quotation from Newman demonstrates the close affinity religious discourse such as Catholicism has with notions of the intellect, and in revealing a subtle engagement with notions of the intellect in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy's view may not be entirely nihilistic, nor his wavering faith totally absent. Arabella's behaviour and language at the end of the novel whilst Jude lies dying is so irredeemably callous, the choice and timing of the language used so utilitarian and precise, that it becomes possible to argue that a strain of dark humour in the novel reminds us that Hardy is evoking not so much the end of hope, but the end of hubris. A brave, coarse new world needs brave, coarse new people in it, and Jude dies with a smile on his face as he exits it. Dare we speculate that in Hardy's sub-conscious narrative, Jude is actually going on to a better world?

I argue that the novel asks us not to abandon the great discourses of the past but to revisit them anew, in the light of their deeper and more intuitive meaning. It is therefore useful to examine some of the tenets of Medieval Scholasticism and one of its successors, Tractarianism, to take us to the point where Jude finds himself as a naïve pursuer of knowledge.

Rickaby discusses the Scholastic preoccupation with ideas of *matter* and *form*:

Most interesting of all created substances were the substances of man and angel. Of angels, the Schoolmen, prompted by Scripture and Neo-Platonism, said many curious things. The later Schoolmen took them for pure forms: others attributed to them some sort of *matter*, not, however, body. But the most perfect type of *form*, in the scholastic sense, was the human soul. The soul *informs* the body, which is its *matter*: the soul is not merely the *prime mover* of the body, as is the boatman of the boat – but the Schoolmen hold with Aristotle that the soul is the *prime constituent* of the body; soul and body make one entity, one nature, one principle of action. 'Body and soul are not two actually existing substances, but out of the two of them is made one substance actually existing: for man's body is not the same in actuality when the soul is present as when it is absent: it is the soul that gives actual being.'¹⁵(p15)

¹⁵ Rickaby notes that the quotation from St. Thomas Aquinas is from *Contra Gentiles*, ii. 69.

A reading of Rickaby's explication of Scholastic perspectives, and his quote from Aquinas, also sheds some illumination on the unique treatment of intellect in *Jude the Obscure*. Jude searches for the opportunity to study at the colleges of Christminster and this opportunity is denied to him, but in that reduced state, Hardy gives to him all the attributes of the soul as the 'prime constituent'. The earliest allusion to Jude as representative of the 'prime constituent' status of the soul is his character's mournful conclusion that living in the material world was too difficult for his particular sensitivities:

As you got older, and felt yourself to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it. If he could only prevent himself growing up! He did not want to be a man. (p12)

This statement describes the abrasive effect life has on Jude once he senses that he is an adult at the centre of his time and 'not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little'. If we consider this unusual idea of the child as being at a point in the circumference of the potential life, and the adult as being at the centre of it, we see a structure of encirclement. Hardy appears to be valorising through Jude the idea of floating around the circumference of the (metaphorical) life circle, whilst decrying the adult position of being at the centre of it. This structure implies the growing intuition as being encircled, with adulthood eventually fixing the individual at the centre, a cognitive phenomenon Hardy (through Jude) finds unsatisfactory. This is a significant indication of Hardy's desire for a fluidity of cognitive consciousness. Jude finds that in adulthood 'all around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the cell called your life'. The implication here is that once the individual achieves adulthood, life becomes akin to a

‘cell’. Moreover, certain sensory experiences, both auditory and visual phenomena, become potentially distressing, whilst they may have seemed imbued with a kind of benign power when the individual was a child. What Hardy seems to be saying through Jude is that a non-centred and indeed purely fluid intuition (the type a child has) is the best state to be in.

The double meaning in Jude’s longing is self-evident - in one reading it is a Wordsworthian desire for a permanent state of child-like innocence, in another it may mean paradoxically a wish for death. Hardy sets in motion a counter-narrative which erupts through the main narrative of Jude’s questing mind which seeks education, or a more material intellect - we may be reminded of the Aristotelian position on the superfluous nature of human thoughts in comparison to the mighty Active Intellect. Jude does not want to be at the centre of his time, he wishes to remain always ‘at a point in its circumference’. This longing as a child to be de-centred from the occupation of one’s own time is consistent with Jude’s ability as a man to be invisible to himself in his consciousness when he first approaches Christminster with its overtones of ‘intellect’. The implication here is that whilst Jude seeks ‘intellect’, in another, albeit unconscious way, he (or Hardy) wants to be invisible from its outer and more material manifestations. This further gives credence to the idea of the construction of Jude as a free-floating consciousness inhabiting, with some difficulty, an embodied state. Is Jude a flawed angel? It may be useful to consider that the true place for Jude is not Christminster, but a state of bodiless freedom.

Jude’s quest for the every-day materials of formal education are in terminal opposition against the authorial construction of his character as a metaphysical presence. The notion of ‘entertaining angels unawares’ has an ironic relevance here – the notion of ‘unawareness’ is relevant both to the characters who surround Jude, and

tragically, to himself too, as the wounded angel of Hardy's imagination. The intimidation of Christminster's rules at the point where Jude is disallowed from learning there is an example of the unawareness of those around him. The unawareness Jude represents by contrast, is his failure to realise that intellectual worth (in the context of Aristotle and Hardy's perspective) is both material *and* spiritual. Not because Hardy (a self-professed agnostic at times) attempts to force the idea of didactic religious belief on to his protagonist. But because Hardy did know of one immaterial thing that existed both in himself and in his characters – a kind of intuition. There are significant modes in Western thought that merge these strands, notably, as we have discussed, the conjoining of intellect and spiritual refinement in the quest of Scholasticism. If as Aquinas has stated, the soul gives actual *being* to the human state, then it follows that *the soul is seen to be part of the thinking man or woman* (my italics).

In a circular movement of historical and mythological signs (that is, a chronological progressing and regressing) Jude becomes the modern man poised on the seam between discourses of theological Scholasticism and the new world of intuitive intellect. But the irony of this is that whilst there is an almost regressive acknowledgement to Scholasticism in the novel, there is also in the tragic ambivalence in Jude, the construction of a modern angel – a bodiless intellect who is unaware of what he is and what message he sends. By the time Victorian representations of angels occur in the context of Hardy's own lifetime, we find an overt sentimentalising of the figure that once represented the spiritual intellect. *Jude the Obscure* therefore represents a significantly more serious allusion to the idea of spiritual mind rather than Victorian representations of winged, simpering golden-haired children. Do we regard 'intellect' as that which formal institutions have

recognised alone? Or is there indeed an untouched (by education) intellectual capacity in some individuals that should have always remained untouched? The novel resists Victorian idealised visions and ultimately presents the idea of the metaphorical angel in a darker narrative.

Although appropriated by Scholasticism as the somewhat more serious figure which represented an enlightened intellect, the figure of the angel after its Victorian baptism of sentimentality has evolved into the twenty-first century as a significantly less serious representation too. I argue that the visual sentimentalising of the angel figure is both the cause and the representation of the loss of cultural significance attributed to the idea of the spiritualised intellect. In this context, the works of Thomas Hardy metaphorise a Medieval painted screen of angels – Jude is the angel of his narrative, a questing intellect who will only find fulfilment in the spiritual ether. That this narrative exists in the subconscious text of a work of literature is notable, as the figure of the angel has been mainly congenial to visual modes of representation. On the art of angel representation, Edward Lucie Smith states:

While many people have a strong instinctive belief in angelic presences, both good angels and bad ones, they generally find it difficult to visualize them for themselves. Even Joan of Arc found it hard to describe her angelic visitor, the Archangel Michael. What clearly helped her to ‘see’ as well as hear him were the statues and paintings of angels she had seen in churches. If we look at the whole story of belief in angels, we immediately understand how our own conception of them has been formed not only by sacred texts, but also by great artists over the centuries. It is works of art that have been instrumental in creating the strongly established traditions about the physical presence of angels, and about their role as guides, protectors and messengers.¹⁶

Lucie-Smith emphasises the representation of angels in the history of human experience and it may be true to say that there is a particular visuality about their energy. Hardy’s fictional hero Jude works as a church stonemason where we may

¹⁶ Lucie-Smith, E., *The Glory of Angels* (New York: Collins Design, Harper Collins, 2009) p17

visualise in Hardy's novel that in such an environment, angels – Aquinas' figures of the disembodied intellect – metaphorically hang over the protagonist, sited as stone angels often are in high places in churches and indeed in churchyards. This image – of the figure of the angel above Jude, serves to remind us of the partially hidden narrative in the novel. We are aware of a sense of a profound presence around Jude in many instances in the novel. In typical Hardyean fashion, given that his metaphorical angels are living on earth, the sense of a highly spiritualised intuition is connected to an every-day sensation of noticing Sue in church:

She was probably a frequenter of this place, and steeped body and soul in church sentiment as she must be by occupation and habit, had, no doubt, much in common with him. To an impressionable and lonely young man the consciousness of having at last found anchorage for his thoughts which promised to supply both social and spiritual possibilities, was like the dew of Hermon, and he remained throughout the service in a sustaining atmosphere of ecstasy. Though he was loth to suspect it, some people might have said to him that the atmosphere blew as distinctly from Cyprus as from Galilee. (p86)

This scene reveals the juxtaposition of human feeling with an acute spiritual awareness. The scene as created here by the author has its power precisely because it is set in the spiritual environment of a church. The idea of the church does not lessen Jude's awareness of his feelings, instead, it heightens them. (While 'church' can mean 'church building' the word originally meant exclusively 'of the Lord' from the Greek *kyriakos* and the Old English *cirice*.)

Jude senses that Sue being 'steeped in body and soul in church sentiment' is his kin, not only as a distant relative but importantly, as a spiritual point of common experience. By contrast with earlier resentment Jude had felt at having to be at the centre of his life as an adult, he is now described as being ecstatic that he had 'at last found anchorage for his thoughts which promised to supply both social and spiritual possibilities'. The implication in this extract, the word 'anchorage', is that Jude can

happily become fixed in his somewhat isolated universe, if he feels his thoughts are attuned to the mind of someone else. Once again we note some emphasis from Hardy on the idea of ‘thoughts’ rather than ‘feelings’ even though there is no doubt that Jude does not lack feeling. But it is the prospect that his ‘thoughts’ may have somewhere to fix themselves, rather than the idea that his is an isolated consciousness, that is evident in this scene. This visual sense of Jude sensing an intellectual connection with Sue in a spiritualised context is an image for the idea of the spiritualised intellect, the implication being that Jude is able to experience identification with another who is gifted with a similar sensibility. The construction of Jude and Sue as fallible angels is in place.

Notwithstanding the verbal declamations of angels throughout religious history, they are (invariably whether through narrative or pictorial representation), conventionally constructed as pleasing manifestations of beauty. Akin to Jude and Sue, the narrative of angels contains ideals of physical beauty, winsome, mainly good-natured characters, an ephemeral sense of fragility and the sense that they are knowledgeable in the tradition of possessing a mysterious wisdom, rather than a reliance on concrete learning. Lucie-Smith refers to a quotation from John of Damascus, circa 676-749 which is revealing, ‘Angels are intelligent reflections of light, that original light which has no beginning.’ (p142). I note the use of the word *intelligent*. It is taken for granted throughout such discourses therefore, that angels did not formalise their intellect by attendance at school or university, but that they had a particular capacity, to be ‘intelligent’. One never thinks of an intellectually compromised angel in western religious discourse.

This robust acceptance in western culture of intelligent angels is an interesting marker towards notions of intuition too – the idea that structured learning is not for

angels, because they have an innate wisdom is a mythological construct embraced by western culture. When Jude speaks to his cynical aunt who reflects on what she regards as the oddness of Sue's confidence as a child, she turns to Jude and states: 'You too, Jude, had the same trick as a child of seeming to see things in the air.' (p105). The look of detached wisdom some children possess mirrors the narrative and pictorial representation of angels in the arts, especially in Victorian England, a time art criticism has identified as the point when the 'liberalisation' of angels in visual form moved away from stricter manifestations of early Christianity. In the context of both ancient and modern representations, whilst there are bad, avenging, and warrior angels, there are predominantly discourses of gentleness, mercy and martyrdom around angels. The character of Jude possesses these latter traits.

Edward Lucie Smith comments on the phenomenon of angels in the modern world:

Angels are immortal beings, but they reveal different facets of themselves as human society evolves. The complexity of modern life has tended to put greater and greater emphasis on the notion that angels can be the bearers of consolation, as well as being heavenly protectors and guides. One of the most important changes, however, has been the increasing conviction that angels suffer, not only in response to traumatic world events, but also in response to the sins and errors of humanity. This has been reflected in the visual arts. In the paintings of the old Masters, angels are sometimes seen weeping, but when they do so, they weep over the body of Christ before his resurrection. The mourning angels featuring in sculptures on 19th century tombs were an innovation. They suggested that angels could empathize with mortal loss. (p157)

Lucie Smith identifies the core idea - that 'angels suffer'. And it is true to say that Jude does too – he suffers not only from his own hubristic behaviour, but from that of others too. Though his protagonist is flawed, Hardy ensures that Jude nevertheless has profound reasons to reflect on what he has experienced and what he has in turn, caused to happen. It is in these ways that Hardy creates a double narrative – the

material and spiritual quest that Jude experiences is also a journey into pain and suffering.

Jude does suffer after the realisation that his true love Sue has made a practical marriage with the older Phillotson, but he restrains himself from attacking Phillotson and enters into a state of self-mortification:

He passed the evening and following days in mortifying by every possible means his wish to see her, nearly starving himself in attempts to extinguish by fasting his passionate tendency to love her. He read sermons on discipline and hunted up passages in Church history that treated of the Ascetics of the second century (p184)

Hardy demonstrates a structural code of conduct that Jude obsessively attends to in an attempt to deny his natural feelings. There is a particular resonance in the phrase, 'hunted up passages in Church history'. Jude is described like a desperate animal – someone who 'hunts' the rightful phraseology of Christian exegesis as a means to balance himself in his turbulent feelings. This is a parallel with the 'hunt' for education and learning. Jude is a character who in his un-enlightened state believes that the acquisition of creeds, rules and knowledge will open the door to an enlightened state. But the implication in much of the novel is that enlightenment will not arrive this way. Hardy's sub-narrative creates the idea of a journey of martyrdom. Jude represents the hubris of human over-reaching, a connection with Faustian ideas of the gaining of knowledge as a material acquisition. However, unlike Marlowe's character, Hardy turns this narrative around to demonstrate that notwithstanding that tragic aim, Jude is in possession of the right intuition to meet the supreme Mind, the implication being that it is not so much a sin to desire knowledge, but that it is a tragedy to be unaware of where to meet its most luminous representation.

Whilst Thomas Hardy creates Jude in a dark and cold world of poverty and want, it is credible that in the construction of his sensibility, what I have previously

described as the 'luminous material' of Jude, Hardy has painted in words the figure of a wounded angel. Jude becomes to us the 'messenger', the deliverer, reflecting back to us, the direct experience of (or our suspicion of the fact) that underneath all that is good, life presents us with a particular challenge, a 'suffering' that must be overcome. *Jude the Obscure* is not a 'tragic story' alone. It is a philosophical message from the messenger (the angel 'Jude') that to suffer is what it is to be human. This is the achievement - the fictional representation of an experience of life lived as suffering, but only in order to 'tell us' what we may live through, or may fear to live through. Jude wanders the earth, 'hunting' structural codes of living, but the message of Hardy's novel is that base humanity, via the mediating figure of Jude as messenger, needs to achieve the luminosity – and intellect - of angels, before it finds true salvation from the pain of life. Thus the connection with the idea of prophecy is another strand which connects the novel to historical religious narratives. As Rudavsky notes:

Elements of the biblical account, combined with philosophical ingredients drawn from Plato and Aristotle, were reflected in medieval texts of Islamic and Jewish philosophers. Prophecy represented a unique source of knowledge, and relied upon the perfection of both the imaginative and rational faculties. Both Jewish and Islamic thinkers grappled with the question of how the incorporeal, transcendent Deity can communicate with humans. Whether prophecy itself is a miraculous or supernatural event, one that depends upon the direct intervention of God, became the focus of debate among philosophers. (p112)

The tenuous place Jude occupies as a prophet is emphasised by his recurrent vulnerability to the limitations of his life and his reactions to them. Hardy does not make the position of a prophet's role a simple one for Jude. There is rather, the suggestion of a seeking intellect which is occluded by life - an apparent strain of *hamartia* exists in the literary construction of Jude. He may not have acted with

wisdom in his relationship with Arabella but the tragic theme in the novel is complex, because it is not irredeemably without hope.

The novel instead contains a compensatory note – the sense that the achievement of a luminous state of wisdom will bring release for its hero. At its zenith, such a state could be described as death. Therefore, we have one way of reading the novel - that the only state of non-suffering lies beyond the scope of the life of the human body in the ineffable – in which case Jude cannot be held accountable for any perceived failures to overcome suffering. However, another reading may suggest that the novel views suffering as better overcome during the time of that human life, and in that respect, Jude has failed. Of these two interpretations, I argue for the first – that Hardy develops the idea in *Jude the Obscure* that even the apparent failure of Jude's life is superfluous to the real revelation – an intellectual one – that release is found at the end of life, when the human spirit is reconciled with the Supreme Intellect. This does indeed complicate and indeed counteract conventional tragic readings of Jude's death.

Nevertheless, it is this complex balance between the idea of resolution - either pre or post the death of the material body - that resonates in the text, and has given to the novel an enduring sense of evading concrete description in its intent. It has also contributed to the layering of spirituality around the figure of Jude whom we almost feel a sense of frustrated dismay about – as if he eludes some vital sense of regaining control over his existence, most notably brought to dramatic and visual representation in the scene of his destroyed young family after the intervention of Father Time. Indeed Hardy's naming of the child as 'Father Time' resonates with my previous questions on the significance and value of suffering in the novel. Time is in fact the only phenomenon available to Jude in which to reconcile the lack of opportunity in

his life. But the ‘father’ of it (his own son’s name, ‘Father Time’) takes that opportunity away by killing Jude’s progeny. This gives credence to the idea that the novel displays a covert text on the notion that material life is superfluous as resolution, that is, that ‘time’ is not relevant - and that resolution only lies beyond. Indeed time, in the context of Einstein’s universe, is irrelevant in the spiritual sphere which conventionally negates such scientific rules. The compensation, brutal or not, is the attainment of disembodied metaphysical wisdom. Hardy has delicately transformed religious discourse away from some of the doctrinal tenets of Scholasticism, but he has adopted the idea of the value of a disembodied metaphysical education. And this is presented in the figure of the wise, suffering angel – Jude.

Indeed, J. H. Newman’s ideas of Catholicism seem to point to the notion of a training for the spiritual intellect. If we consider again the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* Newman describes Catholicism thus:

..it is a vast assemblage of human beings with wilful intellects and wild passions, brought together into one by the beauty and the Majesty of a Superhuman Power – into what may be called a large reformatory or training school...(p226)

Newman, an exponent of Tractarianism situates ‘human beings with wilful intellects in the community of a Catholic sensibility, one that is brought together by a ‘Superhuman Power’ into ‘a large reformatory or training school’. This extract reveals an undeniable connection between ideas of intellect, a Prime Intellect and the idea of educational establishments, albeit somewhat metaphysical ones. The figure of the angel through its very anonymity (as opposed to, for instance, the figure of Jesus who is identifiable) may represent a universalised suffering, which the human intuition can adhere itself to. But in line with some of the tenets of Scholasticism and one of its legacies, Tractarianism, the added allure of such a figure is that it also represents a

supernatural wisdom, because it is close to God but may also act as a mediator between him and humankind. Moreover, whilst the angel is a product of Aristotelian notions of intellect, in its ability to have the human superimposed on its luminous figure, it is also representative of Platonic notions of Ideal Forms. In these ways, the angel is a product of both Reason and Idealism.

On the notion of a metaphysical intellect, some of the ideas of the 17th century philosopher Baruch Spinoza are relevant. As a modern commentator puts it: 'For Spinoza (and for Leibniz) the reality of the world, as known to reason, is very different from the appearance of the world as it is known to us through experience'.¹⁷ This quotation is relevant to the tension in *Jude the Obscure*, in relation to the idea of an angel messenger who is unable to give a clear account of himself or his existence on earth. The complexity of explanation accessed through the role of the protagonist is relevant to the nineteenth century novel. Modes of narrative consciousness shift between the protagonist and the omniscient author in much nineteenth century fiction – we may think of George Eliot's lively interjections, the strong sub-textual presence of the Brontes in their descriptive narratives of landscape, and the presence of multi-faceted characterisations in Dickens. But I argue that in the main, the role of protagonist requires a level of specificity. There must be, by definition, a clear outline of who that character is and what they think, say and feel, in most cases. However, Hardy seems to subvert this opportunity, and deliver Jude to us as a protagonist whose role does not have that certainty, a feature perhaps of Hardy's anticipation of modernist indeterminacy. Instead, the author has developed Jude more as a displaced entity, a wandering angel, half human, half divine, who is between two spheres of existence, the material and the metaphysical – searching for 'knowledge'. This

¹⁷ Thomson, M., *Philosophy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003) p9

characterisation of the protagonist Jude is most useful in giving Hardy the means to create someone who can adequately describe through his experiences a kind of duality of experience.

Indeed Jude's winsome sensibility seems to have a life of its own outside of the narrative. When he meets Arabella again after the demise of his relationship with her she tells him that she has also left her husband in Australia. He asks, 'What made you part from him?' but in true taciturn form Arabella responds: 'Don't you ask questions and you won't hear lies'. However, at the end of this brief exchange Hardy describes his protagonist's demeanour thus: 'Jude looked on with the eye of a dazed philosopher'. (p173). Jude is indeed constructed as the 'dazed philosopher' who invites us to read about his life, but in an important way he is created as the dazed philosopher of his own life, somewhat detached from the material concerns of it with his perpetual vulnerability and acute sensitivity. He is an embodied metaphor for the notion of what is both natural and metaphysical in one unit of consciousness. Sue summarises the essence of the quality of suffering and detachment that Jude represents:

You are Joseph, the dreamer of dreams, dear Jude. And a tragic Don Quixote. And sometimes you are St. Stephen, who while they were stoning him, could see Heaven opened. O my poor comrade and friend, you'll suffer yet! (p197)

Here, Sue articulates the way Jude's sensibility may be a potential prototype for the image of the suffering spiritual figure, a strong allusion to Christian narrative, and akin to the idea of the angel, the figures mentioned by Sue, Don Quixote and St. Stephen, become embodiments of that narrative too.

In art history, the angel is depicted as not fully human, because of its inherent metaphysical otherness. In that very strangeness of representation lies the power of

the angel as an archetype. Additionally, the inner or outer landscapes surrounding angels in many works of art are invariably represented as different from the functional or 'real'. Angels inhabit the realm of Heaven (ergo clouds) in much classical art, they are suspended in the glory of glowing gold and rich colours in much Byzantine art, and they are also manifested in stained glass in churches as ever-present entities, seeming to be imbued with the dignity of the hierarchy of the Church. But there are representations of angels that err from these traditions, in the same way that Jude errs from traditional forms of the literary Romantic hero which preceded him as a literary characterisation.

A pictorial exception to those traditions in art is the nineteenth century painting by Hugo Simberg titled, '*The Wounded Angel*'.¹⁸ I would argue that this painting in many ways delivers the same aesthetic impact as the literary representation of Jude. Across two genres of the nineteenth century - painting and literary fiction, *The Wounded Angel* and *Jude the Obscure* depict the idea of a heightened metaphysical sensibility, which is on a tragic journey where the destination is not necessarily wanted, or intended by the protagonists. The angel in the painting is being carried, and it may be argued that to some extent, so too is Jude being carried – by the allegorical presence of Fate. Moreover, whilst *The Wounded Angel* alludes to the metaphysical, it also shows in considerable brutality, the impact of the real. The young angel in the painting is hindered not only from flying, but from walking too, as she is being carried on a stretcher. There is considerable poignancy in the idea of what is traditionally seen as a superior metaphysical force being circumscribed in this way. The figure contains a dual message: that angels are inherently powerful, but this one has had that power taken away – she is blindfolded by circumstances. In the same way,

¹⁸ The Museum of Helsinki permits images of Simberg's *The Wounded Angel* for research purposes.

so is Jude – by his poverty and his single-minded ideal of a traditional and prestigious education.

Thus the sadness and vulnerability of the young angel in Simberg's painting, plus the fact that she is being 'carried' (and therefore unable to choose) which direction she is going in, has the same metaphysical impact of Hardy's novel. However, one notable feature of the painting is the gaze from the young boy carrying the stretcher who appears to direct his gaze to the viewer. Coupled with the extreme poignancy of the figure of the angel who represents the enervation of metaphysical power, it may be argued that the boy is glancing at 'the viewer' who in fact is not a single unit, but who represents the collective mass of contemporary humanity. The boy's gaze towards this anonymous mass of humanity suggests a vigorous accusation - that the mass has destroyed what is represented by the young angel - a finer sensibility, perhaps an angelic Intellect. It therefore may be relevant that in both *The Wounded Angel* and in *Jude the Obscure* the very idea of the Medieval angelic sensibility being destroyed by the falling away of the old world as the new mechanised and urbanised world beckons, is the ground from which both these works of art, across two different genres, have grown.

Simberg's wounded angel holds the viewer to moral account for the destruction of a delicate and superior sensibility of Intellect, and in *Jude the Obscure*, the story of Jude's hubristic desire for a formal education amongst the fossilised hierarchies of Christminster also implies a tragic deviation from what should really be cultivated – that finer, 'angelic' Intellect. Both works are polemical statements on the destruction of the fine and the ineffable in human life. It is for that philosophical reasoning in the novel, plus the characterisation of Jude, that I propose the idea of him as a wandering angel. Not only is he so in the fact of his luminous sensitivity and

watchfulness, but in his inhabiting a cultural movement towards an approaching utilitarian and secular world, which threatens not just traditional Christian mores, but in particular perhaps in the mind of a writer such as Hardy, the very idea of a type of imaginative, philosophical and spiritually awakened mind. But the creation of *Jude* has another purpose which comments on the status of nineteenth century literature too. Whilst we have discussed the role of the protagonist and the opportunities and limitations that role brings, *Jude the Obscure* is also a metaphor for the particular difficulties of the aims of late nineteenth century fiction, to show at this crucial point in cultural history, not only 'the metaphysical' but the metaphysical at a time of change. In terms of the development of the novel genre, *Jude the Obscure* is neither the start or indeed the end of any particular genre or phase. Rather, I would argue that Hardy has written this one (and only) novel which stands outside both the genres of the traditional nineteenth century novel and Modernism. It is located in between - as the only representation of his in novel form, of his perspective on the nexus of a particular metaphysical evolution.

The lost opportunity in critical terms has been that regarding *Jude the Obscure* as a novel which is an implacable criticism of Christianity occludes an appreciation for its more subtle discourse which reflects Medieval notions of the spiritualised intellect. I argue that the novel is the revelation of an inevitable breakdown of the integrity and place of the ineffable in the modern intellect. Jude is a lost angel who cannot give an account of himself because what angels represent has been displaced in the culture of the emerging modern mind. The narrow war of theology versus scientific progress in the late nineteenth century diminished the scope for a finer and more subtle discussion on what I believe Hardy is trying to express in *Jude the Obscure*. The irony is that Hardy seems to have looked backwards in order to look

forwards –the novel is a sub-conscious eulogy for the values of an older spiritual discourse. Whilst this novel may be seen to be challenging the mores of Christianity, Hardy is paying homage to the value of the idea of a Divine Intellect, which reached its apotheosis in Scholasticism. All his work is known for his foregrounding of the communion of nature and the idea of a spiritual sensibility, if not a didactic Christian one. These elements of his thought are very similar to the medieval sensibility of Thomas Aquinas, the philosopher and scholar associated with ‘Thomism’. The modern philosopher Leszek Kolakowski explains the basic structure of Aquinas’ position on humanity as both a material and a spiritual vessel:

He was concerned with the problem that preoccupied all Christian thinkers: since man participates in both orders, the temporal and the eternal; since he has a body, but his chief concern is supposed to be his soul; since he lives in a world of sense-experience, but his proper home is heaven; since he makes use of his faculty of natural reason, but his source of illumination in the most important matters is faith; since he belongs to various temporal collectivities and communities, and is a participant in secular history, but also belongs to the Church, the mystical body of Christ, and is also a participant in sacred history – how are these two orders of man’s existence related, and how are they reconciled? ¹⁹

Kolakowski describes the ways in which Aquinas accepts that human life is complex in that it involves the ‘two orders’ of life – both the sensory area of natural life and the life of faith. In this way Aquinas is described as being concerned with ‘the problem that preoccupied all Christian thinkers’. But more specifically, Aquinas pays homage to the natural world. Unlike Augustine, he did not raise the status of the soul as the only and most valuable component of the human – rather, he paid some attention to the relevance of the material life. This reflects the curious presence of a permanent spiritual sensibility in the work of an author centuries later, Thomas Hardy, who also

¹⁹ Kolakowski, L., *Why is there Something rather Than Nothing?* (London: Penguin, 2008) p93

seemed to refer to the natural world which is spiritually intuited, as an important facet of human experience. Although it has to be acknowledged that Aquinas differed from Hardy in his more obedient honouring of the superiority of the Christian spiritual life, the similarity in the sense of honouring the natural life which is also inhabited by a spiritual sensibility is relevant. I should also like to add at this point that Hardy in my view is closer to the ideas which germinated from Aquinas, rather than those of the Romantic poets, who differed from Hardy in their ecstatic identification with nature. I would argue that Hardy's identification was not ecstatic, rather, his consciousness emerged from a more rational and inherently Christian basis.

Kolakowski states that Aquinas believed that whatever was natural was good and not to be condemned. Whilst Aquinas valued the natural realm he reasserted his perspective that the highest good was the spiritual realm. Indeed, Aquinas warns of the need for humans to study laboriously in order to even approach knowledge of God. Here is the bedrock of Jude's sensibility and that which emanated from Medieval universities:

In order to know the things that the reason can investigate concerning God, a knowledge of many things must already be possessed. For almost all of philosophy is directed towards the knowledge of God, and that is why metaphysics, which deals with divine things, is the last part of philosophy to be learned. This means that we are able to arrive at the inquiry concerning the aforementioned truth only on the basis of a great deal of labor spent in study. Now, those who wish to undergo such a labor for the mere love of knowledge are few, even though God has inserted into the minds of men a natural appetite for knowledge.²⁰

The foregrounding of the idea of study to attain knowledge is relevant here - Aquinas appears to imply that knowledge of the divine can be approached by study. Moreover,

²⁰ Aquinas T., 'Faith and Reason in Harmony' in (ed.) Davies B., *Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p26

he states that the main and most powerful force which opens the door to the Divine is the phenomenon of Faith. He therefore cites both areas of human contemplation, rational 'study' plus metaphysical 'faith' as the dual pathways to achieve communication with the Divine. Aquinas' views here are a more moderate rationalisation of Aristotelian notions of the superfluous notion of the human essence when compared to the Active Intellect as we considered at the start of this chapter. Aristotelian notions of the Active Intellect suggest a monolithic and supreme Intellect that cannot be attained at all, either in thought, experience or any aspect of the human experience. By contrast, Thomas Aquinas does regard material education as being of some value to at least enhance the ability to communicate with the Divine. In Thomas Aquinas' terms, Jude was therefore perhaps not on an entirely hubristic journey after all.

It would be true to say that traditional modes of Christian Faith are subverted in *Jude the Obscure* but ironically not entirely by Jude himself. Jude becomes cynical about Sue's motives to marry someone she does not love, and demoralised and disenfranchised by society around him, but does Jude lose 'faith'? In terms of his desire for knowledge, both material and metaphysical, and in terms of an enduring legacy of the idea of the spiritual intellect (currently out of fashion) we may consider that Jude did have faith, and that in fact the novel is not a prime example of criticism against the tenets of that faith. Thomas Hardy has presented through his protagonist the rational idea that to be human is to suffer, but he has also presented through Jude the tragic promise of the ideal - that there is a particular, disembodied sense of 'angelic' wisdom inherent in us all. Jude dies with a smile on his face. Not, as many literary critics would cite, out of bitter irony for a wasted life. Rather, for the return of a wounded angel to the One - The Supreme Intellect. Thomas Hardy has wrenched

from his hero the opportunity of a formal education, but he has given him the role of messenger - so that we may learn profound lessons from the boy who never went to Christminster.

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CHAPTER THREE – ILLUMINATION

In the previous chapter we examined the idea of intellect as being composed of metaphysical notions of energy, embodied in the idea of the angel. In this chapter I would like to consider the idea of illumination – a richly metaphorical word which shares with ‘intellect’ the notion of the involvement of the mind/soul conflation but one which differs in one key area. The main difference is that ‘Illumination’ as understood in this chapter has an agency unlike ‘Intellect’. Illumination implies a movement of energy, a sense of understanding being reached in the present, or to describe it more prosaically, in the ‘here and now’. Thus it is the dynamism of the idea of illumination which helps us to separate it from more concrete and academic notions of intellect. Moreover, this is the territory in which the idea of ‘illumination’ approaches the religious idea of ‘revelation’ and Thomas Hardy’s fiction is well equipped to demonstrate a subtle but nonetheless significant presence of ‘revelation’ for his protagonists.

The OED definition of the word ‘*illuminate*’ describes the word variously as meaning to ‘light up’, to ‘clarify or explain’ or in more aesthetic terms, to ‘decorate a page or initial letter in a manuscript with gold, silver, or coloured designs’. The extension of ‘illuminate’, the word ‘*illumination*’, is described as ‘lighting or light’, ‘lights used in decorating a building or other structure and finally, ‘the action or process of illuminating’. The idea of *an action or process of illuminating*, (my italics), therefore implies a moving sense of process involved, notwithstanding the static pictorial representation of the idea of a ‘light’, as an aesthetic trope of the Judaeo-Christian narrative, principally from specific reference to God in the Bible who is depicted as a metaphorical source of light: ‘I am the light of the world’ etc.

As a form of intervention in human experience, the word illumination is therefore both linguistically and experientially metaphorical. The complexity of attempting to describe the experience of illumination raises one key point for consideration – is the experience describable in universal terms, or does the idea of illumination exist only as a conceptual structure which can be experienced by the lone individual? My suggestion is that the dynamics of the illuminating experience are implicitly understood in western culture to be a singular experience felt by the individual, but the idea of the illuminating experience is recognised in both religious and secular narratives as a universal concept. The noumenal defies concrete description in both its linguistic and spiritual form and the actual experience of it is concerned with these questions of receptivity. Whilst Kant believed that knowledge of all objects requires sense experience, he was sceptical that we may know what lies beyond, because we cannot conceive of what it may be to apprehend something without the benefit of that sensory experience. However, Kant's view does not negate his own admission that the noumenon is nevertheless an object of *awareness* (my italics) if not a concrete object itself. The contention of this study is that Thomas Hardy's fiction also demonstrates a narrative of awareness to the noumenal. It is in Hardyeian terms, an individual experience, and yet it is not, in my view automatically attached to the universal. One could say that there needs to be a mediator – or a messenger – to complete the process. This is where Hardyeian fiction differs from the genre of Romanticism. The achievement of Hardy's fiction lies in the development away from Romantic notions of the particular always pertaining to the universal.

Instead, this study argues that Hardy creates a narrative which develops the individual and illuminating experience of the numinous as an experience which exists alongside, but is not attached to, the concept of the universal. A simpler way of

summarising it may be to suggest that Hardy illuminates the human figure as ultimately alone in a universe of potentiality for unification, but a universe that we somehow intuit will remorselessly carry on, and on a different trajectory. Whilst this has strong allusions to the phenomenon of Existentialism, I also propose that uniquely, this effect is achieved in Hardy's fiction by a subtle narrative concerning intellectual illumination. Perhaps there is something else that may be expressed in a simple way: Hardy's protagonists tend to be intelligent and intuitive (a bold contrast to the rural idea of simplicity) and they are possessed of these attributes in a way which differs from conventional protagonists of the nineteenth century novel. They seem luminously significant in the darkening landscapes of their rural communities.

We may ask what state of receptivity the human mind must be in, to receive 'illumination', given that humans have only their brain and physical senses to mediate between an inner sense of self and the external world. The tripartite mind/body/soul dilemma which perplexes philosophy and religion contains within it many narratives – for instance, the Christian concept specifically of the Holy Spirit may be said to be close to the construct of illumination. Conversely, on a secular level it may be suggested that the experience of illumination may be a general and profound sense of universality (notwithstanding the singularity of the individual consciousness) - an intuition that we are in the presence of a unifying and benign influence that is revealing some truth, but a presence that nonetheless defies physical description. Whether the sense of illumination is therefore contained in a religious or secular narrative, it is nevertheless acknowledged to be part of the human experience within a historical context.

But as well as mind and body there is a third element in western narratives – the idea of the soul. This tripartite division is to some extent a twenty-first century

perspective, that is, that the mind, body and soul are three separate structures across both organic and metaphysical structures – by contrast, the Platonic ‘Nous’ (or Reason) is the idea of the mind/soul as connected. But the historical narrative of Christianity has foregrounded the soul as the area that may be most susceptible to receiving a higher kind of inspiration and knowledge that we may receive as a spontaneous phenomenon, something that we may conceive as ‘illuminating’. I wish to consider how elements of this aesthetic reside in Hardy’s fiction. Whilst belief in the soul in our time is almost exclusively tied to religious belief, we may need to consider as relevant to this discussion not only the idea of the soul as a noumenal receptacle for illumination, but also how the Platonic notion of the immortality of the soul is relevant. The idea that this area of secular intuition or religious ‘soul’ (whichever way one may choose to view it), is also connected to the idea of immortality of existence is important. That which lies beyond physical boundaries is not restricted by chronology. This idea of immortality provides an intensification of the idea of the soul as a vehicle for extra sensibility.

To summarise, it may be argued that (across both religious and secular sensibility) there is an acknowledgment of a noumenal intuitive capacity in human potential. This potential, as this thesis has previously argued, is present in many Hardyean protagonists/characters. What will now be considered is how in Thomas Hardy’s *Far From The Madding Crowd* there is an interesting central vision which lends itself to the notion of a revelation of some spontaneous metaphysical truth to the human sensibility. Part of this investigation will involve looking at the idea of language, and the contrast between both spoken language and non-verbal/ visual communication in the novel, which, I will argue, is also a ‘language’ of illumination. The influence of illumination/revelation will also be discussed with specific reference

to its relationship to ethics. I will also consider ways in which illumination impacts as *process* on key characters in Hardy's work. This may provide an opportunity for us to question if the Hardyean protagonist/character, via the experience of illumination, is able to provide either a vehicle for concrete ethical conclusions, or a nexus of ethical ambivalence.

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Thomas Hardy's novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) is well disposed to the interrogation of the idea of illumination/revelation for the very reason that it (as with *Jude the Obscure*'s opaque and layered meanings) contains meaning on many levels in relation to the numinous. The resonance that is found in much Hardyean fiction (that of a seemingly simply rural lifestyle and stories of basic passions amongst its characters) is frequently made more complex by the undertow of tropes of isolation, intellect, illumination and immanence. It is in this way that Hardy's fiction operates on two levels – the surface stories of human gains and losses, but also the presence of an underlying metaphysical sensibility which operates in all the novels.

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, however, there is, paradoxically, a heightening of the effect of the surface of things – the characterisation of Bathsheba (somewhat limited by her name with its Biblical references to adultery (2 Samuel 11).

The Biblical story is summarised;

David's seduction of Bathsheba while her husband was away at war left her pregnant, news of which prompted the king to recall Uriah in an attempt to conceal the adultery. The valiant Uriah refused to return home to his wife while his comrades in arms were doing battle; David then surreptitiously arranged for his death at the siege of Rabbah at the foremost point of attack. Once her mourning was over, Bathsheba was brought in to David and taken as his wife.¹

¹ Jeffrey, D. L., (ed.) *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Michigan: William B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1992) p77

This extract demonstrates that the Biblical legacy of the name Bathsheba unfortunately hints at unreliability or ruthlessness. What is also notable is that the Biblical Bathsheba appears to be owned by the men in her story. Her lover David arranges for her husband Uriah to be killed, she is brought back to David and taken as his wife. In contrast to the Biblical Bathsheba, however, Hardy's Bathsheba exerts more control over her own fate. Her character is not as reflective or melancholic as that of Jude in *Jude the Obscure*. Thomas Hardy's construction of Bathsheba is more 'modern' in her sense of agency and assertiveness. That Bathsheba as a woman can manage a farm in a male-dominated rural environment adds to the sense of her character as engaging forcefully in the social and material conditions of life, rather than ruminating on the metaphysical. It may therefore be argued that the emphasis on her engagement with the surface matters of life acts as a contrast in two ways; firstly, she is an effective foil to Gabriel's male but seemingly more sensitive and introspective character, and secondly, whilst Bathsheba is presented as impetuous at the start of the novel, as the novel progresses onwards, she develops a deeper sensibility and maturity. This apparent gaining of maturity and insight is not a form of patriarchal 'punishment' for Bathsheba for stepping over socially defined limits of gender, rather, it is the result of the fulfillment of a sense of true connection with another human being (Gabriel), as well as a heightened metaphysical sense via the eventual tragedy surrounding the characters of Troy and Fanny Robin. In a parallelism with *Jude the Obscure* when Jude recognises Sue as his spiritual 'other', in a less sudden way, so does Bathsheba in another of Hardy's novels, recognise Gabriel as the same. Notwithstanding the undeniable positioning of Bathsheba as the focus of the male gaze (there are frequent allusions to her beauty in the text) this trope

of intuitive recognition between characters demonstrates the novel form as an effective genre to describe the development of metaphysical sensibility through its characters in Hardy's fiction. In this way, I argue that attraction between key protagonists in Hardy's novels invariably includes a sense of a metaphysical recognition, rather than a purely physical one.

The novel form gives the author space and scope to provide for the two-tiered narrative I alluded to earlier, that is, the way a novelist may be able to 'tell a story' which in and above itself, creates another narrative of metaphysical presence in the text. Peter Widdowson contextualises something of this phenomenon in relation to Hardy:

Hardy was involved in the late 19th century literary debate on Naturalism and Realism. He himself, as with Maupassant in France, opposed an 'inventory' – recording of detail; and wished to represent 'abstract imaginings' by way of a 'disproportioning' (i.e. defamiliarizing) fictional writing, which would reveal the 'verite vraie' rather than the superficialities of life. Hence, he decided, 'realism' is not Art.²

Whilst Widdowson makes a clear distinction between literary genres of Naturalism and Realism, it is the term 'abstract imaginings' that further supports some sense of the metaphysical narrative in Hardy's work. With regard to 'illumination', the very idea of the characters' intuition developing from metaphysical experience is partly subject to the strangely elliptical sense of opportunity the presence of the numinous offers human sensibility. It is an opportunity to access a different dimension of awareness that can be intuited, but also seized or rejected. In many ways, all of Hardy's fiction displays an entire tableaux of human experience within which different characters absorb, reject, or do not recognise such opportunities at all. The

² Widdowson P., *On Thomas Hardy, Late Essays and Earlier* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998) p24

novel form enables the paradoxes and complexities of this to occur and in the case of Hardy's work, also gives credence to the idea of a somewhat cohesive spirituality which inhabits the text. Thus, in *Far from the Madding Crowd* Troy, after his initial distress at the plight of Fanny Robin (and after surviving what had been speculated as his own death by drowning) returns to the society of Weatherbury not full of remorse, but as acquisitive and amoral as ever, whereas, as we shall come to see, Bathsheba seizes enlightenment. Enlightenment as a narrative is usually associated with the repudiation of illusion and superstition and a foregrounding of the rational. But metaphysical 'opportunities' may be recognised as either embodied in a formal religious discourse, for example, Christianity, or in a secular construction. However, a key difference between a formal religious context and a secular one, is that invariably the presence of Ethics can be relevant in the former, taking into account either formal religious creeds or a general sense of a God who must be 'good' and who wishes us to be so too. I suggest that the latter is relevant to the work of Hardy.

This is not to deny that there can be atheistic intuitions of a universalising sense of what is 'good' - in fact atheistic intuitions enhance the idea further - a metaphysical intuition may build a bridge between religious believers and atheistic perspectives. However, on the key question of an ethical undertow with its implications of human obedience (and whilst allusions to Christian concepts and expectations represent a well known trope of Hardyean fiction) in *Far from the Madding Crowd* Hardy portrays ethical concerns in a unique way. Specifically, the literal ethical presence of religious language (and any moral expectations that emanate from it) is articulated by the rural workers that surround Bathsheba and Gabriel. In these vividly constructed rural characters, ethical and religious codes are presented in

a verbose and theatrical manner, but it is the silent, ethical nature of Gabriel which contrasts with that ‘theatre’ of language.

A less sympathetic reading of the novel may suggest that Hardy is inadvertently patronising the community of the devout and poor rural workers he has created via their frequent religious expositions. *Far from the Madding Crowd* makes explicit the linguistic presence of religion as an earth-bound, humorous, and effective code of communication, which operates in the ‘here and now’ of daily life in a particular community. In a scene at Warren’s Malthouse, a group entertains Gabriel with stories of their trials in the community, including an incident when one individual became lost in the countryside after a night at the fair:

‘And he’s the fearfulest man – baint ye Joseph? Ay, another time, ye were lost by Lambing-Down gate – weren’t you Joseph’.

‘I was,’ replied Poorgrass, as if there were some conditions too serious even for modesty to remember itself under, this being one.

‘Yes – that were the middle of the night too. The gate would not open, try how he would, and knowing there was the devil’s hand in it, he kneeled down.’

‘Ay’ said Joseph, acquiring confidence from the warmth of the fire, the cider, and a perception of the dramatic capabilities of the experience alluded to. ‘My heart died within me that time; but I kneeled down and said the Lord’s Prayer, and then the Belief right through, and then the Ten Commandments, in earnest supplication.’³

Joseph Poorgrass and his contemporaries are ‘god-fearing’ – literally, Poorgrass is described by his friend as ‘the fearfulest man’. Moreover, when he realises that he is lost in the dark he says his prayers ‘in earnest supplication’. Only when he stretches his memory to remember more, including the ten commandments, does he find that the locked gate in the field will open. The power of religious language, and in particular the fact that Poorgrass has cited the ten commandments, (which embody an ethical code to live by), meant that the gate ‘would open’, an allegorical sequence

³ Hardy T., *Far from the Madding Crowd* World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008) p61-62

(notwithstanding the humour involved in the idea of drunkenness) that suggests that supplication and adherence to ethical commands will open a metaphorical gate to salvation. The Bible therefore exists in the world of the poor and simpler characters of *Far from the Madding Crowd* as a symbol of epistemological certainty, it is literally the ‘word’ by which they can turn to in order to receive protection. We may examine the relevance of Hardy’s religiously literate, rural characters.

The whole terrain of popular religion has been transformed by the work of Eamon Duffy and in particular his study, *The Stripping of the Altars* which gives a comprehensive and illuminating view of late Medieval Catholicism. Interrogating this spiritual landscape reveals a factor which I argue is relevant to the spiritual landscape of Hardy’s novels, and in particular the unique correlation between the idea of the peasantry being spiritually literate and cognate. It may be worthwhile to consider briefly the expertise of religious historians such as Duffy in the context of fictional literature with an aim to discovering the roots of influences on some fictional characterisations of the nineteenth century, especially in the context of Hardyean fiction.

I have already discussed in Chapter Two of this study, broad ideas of an angelic intellect – my attempt has been to show how secularised ideas of intuition can lie harmoniously along a religious legacy of awareness, and moreover, one that has successfully infiltrated so-called ‘lower’ ‘classes’ of people, that is, those people who inhabit a poor rural environment as does Jude in *Jude the Obscure*, and the farm workers in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. As Duffy goes on to explicate in his own work, the idea that religious observance was only the preserve of the elite and literate is not accurate:

The teachings of late Medieval Christianity were graphically represented within the liturgy, endlessly reiterated in sermons, rhymed

in verse treatises and saints' lives, enacted in the Corpus Christi and Miracle plays which absorbed so much lay energy and expenditure, and carved and painted on the walls, screens, bench-ends, and windows of the parish churches. It is true that the wealthy and literate had increasing access to and interest in types of spirituality previously confined to the monastery. Yet within the diversity of medieval religious options there was a remarkable degree of religious and imaginative homogeneity across the social spectrum, a shared repertoire of symbols, prayers and beliefs which crossed and bridged even the gulf between the literate and illiterate.⁴

In his exhaustive investigation, Duffy has unearthed via documentary evidence from medieval England, in the forms of Wills and statements, but mostly from the phenomenon of the *Horae*, or 'Book Of Hours' that large sections of the peasant population in Medieval England were not only significantly aware of (Catholic) religion, but in possession of written sources that supported these beliefs. It is this spiritual-social legacy that I suggest infiltrates the characterisation of the workers in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*, notwithstanding the conversion from Catholic to Protestant belief in the history of English religious life. Specifically, what I wish to emphasise is that the potency, visuality, and dynamic sense of religion as a very real and dramatic accompaniment to daily life in the fictional lives of Hardy's work, lies perhaps less in a Protestant theology and more so in the effects of a Catholic Medieval one. It is not difficult to come to the conclusion, when investigating the work of scholars such as Duffy, that the metaphysical presence of such a religion especially amongst the compromised lives of the working class in Medieval England, is present as an all-encompassing force of great magnitude. This provided not only fear and superstition in part, but also, paradoxically, great comfort and cohesion in the community which had significant and material reasons for the need of individuals to co-operate with each other. It is this juxtaposition, as dramatic as any Shakespearean

⁴ Duffy E., *The Stripping Of The Altars* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press 1992, second edition 2005) p3

work, of fear and dread, lying alongside hope and love and the human desire for society (despite a pervasive sense of the isolation of the human condition) which, I argue, lies also in the metaphysical sub-text of Hardyean fiction too and is evident in characters such as Joseph Poorgrass in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

Medieval Catholicism has a distinct correlation with this Hardyean metaphysical landscape, which is not to deny the Protestant backdrop of nineteenth century fiction. Geographically, the prevalence of such belief is interesting to note, as Duffy states:

The religious horizons of villagers in remote areas probably remained fairly constricted even late into the century, but in Yorkshire, the East Midlands, East Anglia, the South-east, and many parts of the West Country, a common and extremely rich religious culture for the laity and secular clergy had emerged by the fifteenth century, which far exceeded the modest expectations of Pecham and the thirteenth century bishops who devised the catechetical strategies of the medieval English Church. (p63)

The observance that ‘many parts of the West country’ were suffused with what Duffy describes as such an ‘extremely rich religious culture’ is relevant perhaps to Hardy’s citing of his novels in the fictional ‘Wessex’ - or what we know as the West Country. Of perhaps greater significance to the idea of rural characters is the phenomenon of *The Kalender Of Shepherdes*, which, in Duffy’s description is ‘both a beautiful and unmistakably lay book’. This book, in centering on the idea of the shepherd and the shepherd’s experience throughout the year, naturally coincides with the figure of Gabriel in *Far From The Madding Crowd*. Norman Vance has noted that the indirect influence of *The Kalender of Shepherdes* is discernible in the work of Hardy, whose rural landscapes and communities may be traced back to these early evocations of life

in the country.⁵ More specifically, I argue that Hardy adapts the legacy away from the strictures of formal Catholicism in order to accommodate the idea of a more secularised and natural intuition. The *Kalender* is described by Duffy as:

...a French original, (which) first appeared in a barbarous Scots version in 1503, was retranslated for Pynson in 1506, and again for Wynkyn de Worde, with smaller and inferior woodcuts, in 1508. It had a fourth edition in 1518, a fifth in 1528, and was reissued in both Mary's and Elizabeth's reigns. (p82)

Essentially what is being described in allusion to *The Shepherdes Kalender* is the movement from religious towards more secular ideas of intuition and even scientific speculation. Duffy notes that 'The shepherd knows the stars and therefore can give guidance on astrology, and he is natural man face to face with the mysteries of life and death.' (p82). But the *Kalender* is obviously religious in its appeal to moral obeisance via God. As Duffy points out:

The *Kalender of Shepherdes* is of particular importance because it establishes the assimilation into popular culture, by commercial publishers for a mass audience, of the official educational programme of the Church. It was once again a commercial speculation, emphatically a lay book. The success of that assimilation is of course a moot point: many clergy would have been disturbed by the placing of theology cheek by jowl with popular astrology and prognostication. (pg 84)

The idea of 'theology cheek by jowl with popular astrology and prognostication' exemplifies the way literary, theological and intuitive strands of influence help to create the unusual metaphysics of Hardy's fiction. In treating the influence of religious language (via, specifically, the Book of Common Prayer) with both force and humour, through the voices of minor characters in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy creates a contrast for the non-verbal, the silent and visionary sense of

⁵ Norman Vance discusses the phenomenon of *The Shepherds Calendar* in his introduction to *Far From the Madding Crowd* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000)

illumination to come for the main characters as the novel progresses. The author activates through the farmworkers' speech and sensibilities, ideas of God, the Bible, notions of expectations, punishments and small prejudices in a community which also reflects a medieval heritage. This richly allusive language (emanating from the workers) circulates around the novel's four main characters, Bathsheba, Boldwood, Gabriel and Troy – who, with the exception of Gabriel, may be seen to be the social elite. Their human drives and frailties reflect the potential ambiguities between religious texts and human behaviour. The religio-linguistic 'mirror', activated by the workers, shows images of the devout in Gabriel, the ambiguous in Bathsheba, the obsessive in Boldwood, and the irreverent in Troy. That all these characters seem to be outside the language of the Bible in contrast to the rural workers is significant. Hardy illuminates the passion of the love interest story centered around Bathsheba, with a supporting cast of religiously aware but minor characters, whose function is to act as a chorus of moral approbation or affirmation. What becomes formed in between these two discourses (the love affairs between the élites and the language of the farm workers) is a spectral idea of ethics, and the ways in which concrete notions of ethical behaviour can be subsumed by human frailty. Nevertheless, that the bucolic voicing of religious language is a strong sub-narrative to the narrative of the protagonists' relationships is a fixed point at which *Far from the Madding Crowd* acknowledges the strength of Christian ethics as a material fact of lives lived in these communities.

Gareth Jones states:

When one speaks of Christian ethics, then questions of justification and authorization become ones of epistemology; that is, they require answers that are derived from explicitly religious sources. Such sources might be the church, understood both as an institution and as a community of fellow believers. They might be the history and traditions of one's denomination. They might be religious experience, however that is defined. Very often, however, the source of people's

justification and authorization of their Christian ethical decisions is the Bible.⁶

Jones identifies the Bible as the prime literary paradigm of the justification of Christian ethics. Hardy has indeed produced a psychological layering of human complexity illuminated against the backdrop of the language of the Common Prayer Book and the Bible, specifically accessed through the voices of the workers. This adds texture to the characterisation in the novel, and in particular gives to it an inexpressible quality – a sense of a fatalistic aura around the protagonists.

What therefore seems to be in evidence in *Far from the Madding Crowd* is the apparent casual insertion of religious/biblical references amongst the speech of the workers, but simultaneously, a process by which Hardy also develops referential points that lead to a deeper and more significant meaning to the novel. This sense of fatalism in the novel adds to a medieval interest in preserving notions of ‘mystery’ in connection to religious obedience. It is interesting to note the material ways in which the notion of mystery survives in both the relics and actions of church worship, as well as in the work of an author of fiction some centuries later. Significantly, such ‘mystery’ is more often created by what is hidden, rather than what is explained. Eamon Duffy describes the phenomenon of the power of what is ‘hidden’ in terms of linguistic significance:

The highest form of prayer was uttered by the priest at the sacring, the moment of consecration at the Mass. It was part of the power of the words of consecration that they were hidden, too sacred to be communicated to the ‘lewed’, and this very element of mystery gave legitimacy to the sacred character of Latin itself as higher and holier than the vernacular. Moreover, since the words of scripture and the liturgy came from God, they were held to convey power even to those who did not fully comprehend them. One author, writing to help lay men and women participate properly in the Mass, compared the

⁶ Jones, G., *The Authority of Scripture and Christian Ethics in The Cambridge Companion To Christian Ethics* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p16

beneficial effect of such uncomprehending hearing at mass to that of a charm upon adders..(p218)

This quotation describes the power of what is ostensibly the unavailable, an experience of ‘uncomprehending hearing’ which in terms of our present twenty-first century society may seem uncongenial to the idea of a democratic society. However, it may also be argued that only what is comprehended can be used to manipulate ‘the masses’ (of people) whereas what is not comprehended but is implicitly accepted by the audience to be a signifier for a metaphysical experience (that is, beyond language) may in itself be a more democratic experience. In this way I would suggest that an inability to understand Latin was not a barrier to religious experience for many rural individuals in medieval times, instead it was a necessary part of the mystery of the religious experience. I argue that this sense of mystery concerning the impact of religious language is evident in works such as Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd* too.

In this way, it is not cognition of the units of language that are relevant, rather, that the incomprehensible language exists to provide an aural experience (that is, what is purely heard if not comprehended) which paves the way for metaphysical experience, which, by definition, for many, is only seen to be profound if it is ‘mysterious’. Therefore the experience of not comprehending Latin liturgy may have achieved the effect of music – what is communicated without the need for words. This sense of a mysterious language adds to the sense of God and accompanying tropes of Christianity, for instance, saints, angels, and demons, to be cloaked in mystery too, so adding potency to the experience of life as lived surrounded by a ‘mysterious’ force. It also adds to a sense of spontaneous ‘illumination’. Ironically, it is not what is revealed that provides the mystical experience, but rather, that which is concealed.

Sophie Thomas explores the philosophical idea of the fragment as a trope of profound experience which reflects the importance of what is concealed:

‘Because fragments are materially indeterminate and evoke more than the part they present, they are a potent source of the sublime – neither whole nor part, they exhibit an inexhaustible potentiality’.⁷

By the time of the nineteenth century world of Hardyean fiction, the opaque potential of Latin is replaced by the prosaic and accessible language of the farm workers who combine the language of everyday life with the mystery of the religion that marks those lives. During the conversation the workers have about drinking, a reference is made to: ‘that we had at Buck’s Head on a White Monday was a pretty tipples.’(p63) This quotation refers to Whit Monday, which the textual notes describe as the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. Thus we have in one sentence the idea of a perhaps bawdy scene of drinking conjoined with the implicit understanding that the holiness of God’s spirit is present too. The idea of the Holy Spirit descending upon ‘the disciples’ emphasises a conjunction between religious imagery and the rural workers of Hardy’s Wessex, as metaphorical disciples too. They are flawed disciples, but in fear of God, whereas the novel implies that the main characters with the exception of Gabriel, lack this sensibility. The suggestion that the ‘Holy Spirit’ descends, that is, comes down to humanity, from some higher and more profound realm of existence sets in motion the idea of a spiritual potential in the narrative of the novel, no matter how humorous the exclamations of the people of the countryside. We may become aware that this is the introduction to some future ‘spirit’ of illumination or revelation is in the sub-text of the novel.

As the conversation between the workers focuses on Bathsheba’s family, Gabriel enquires if the gathered workers knew of Bathsheba’s family; ‘And did any of

⁷ Thomas, S., *Romanticism and Visuality* (Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2008) p22

you know Miss Everdene's father and mother?' (p64) to which he learns about the complicated methods of Bathsheba's father, Levi Everdene, to keep his passion alive for his wife - a decision to pretend that his wife is really his mistress. The workers describe the scenario:

'And as soon as he could thoroughly fancy he was doing wrong and committing the seventh, a' got to like her as well as ever, and they lived on a perfect picture of mutual love.'

'Well, 'twas a ungodly remedy,' murmured Joseph Poorgrass, 'but we ought to feel deep cheerfulness, that a happy providence kept it from being any worse. You see he might have gone the bad road and given his eyes to unlawfulness entirely – yes, gross unlawfulness – so to say it.'

'You see,' said Billy Smallbury, 'the man's will was to do right, sure enough, but his heart didn't chime in.'

'He got so much better that he was quite godly in his later years, wasn't he Jan?' said Joseph Poorgrass. 'He got himself confirmed over again in a more serious way, and took to saying 'Amen' almost as loud as the clerk, and he liked to copy comforting verses from the tombstones.' (p64)

This albeit humorous quotation shows the workers voicing again the prosaic facts of human passion, 'as soon as he could thoroughly fancy he was doing wrong and committing the seventh, a' got to like her as well as ever, and they lived on a perfect picture of mutual love.' This quotation demonstrates the contradiction between the passions lit by the visceral sense of 'doing wrong' versus the awareness of the ever-present biblical imperative of the seventh commandment – thou shalt not commit adultery. The sin of guilt enhances the passion, but here, the guilt is based not on reality, but on the power of the imagination. This reveals a deliberate complication - the fear of such a sin being committed keeps the marriage alive, but to keep the marriage alive the spectral idea of sin must be made real.

Whilst this shows the ambiguous presence of ethical imperatives in the very human lives of Hardy's characters, Poorgrass' subsequent statement makes concrete the ethical consequence of the fact of adultery if it had been committed in reality,

‘You see he might have gone the bad road and given his eyes to unlawfulness entirely – yes, gross unlawfulness – so to say it.’ The word ‘unlawfulness’ is significant, emphasising the close connection between spiritual mores and the law concerning human behaviour in the nineteenth century. But it is in the next line about Bathsheba’s father that the poignancy of human endeavour in both material and personal affairs is condensed, ‘You see,’ said Billy Smallbury, ‘the man’s will was to do right, sure enough, but his heart didn’t chime in’. (p64). Smallbury’s words reveal a movement in the novel towards the idea of the importance of integrity in matters of human relationships. If the *heart* does not ‘chime in’ with a particular experience, life will be perceived as unsatisfactory. This is at its center, a Romantic perspective, with the emphasis on the verisimilitude of feeling, and moreover, a trope of integrity which supersedes formal Christian notions of ethical behaviour. There is no guarantee of salvation in such a Romantic concept, as human feeling is all, rather than adherence to religious codes of behaviour. In *Far from the Madding Crowd* however, salvation is not found by everyone in doing what the heart tells them is right. Feeling, which may also be considered a form of Romantic intuition, does not save Boldwood; it is in his character that we find an acute disruption of the idea of the integrity of feeling as the right guide to salvation. Boldwood follows his feelings obsessively in his love of Bathsheba – but not only is he not saved by following this intuition, he is tipped into a catastrophic mode of existence.

It may be correct to say that the axis of the novel lies in the struggle between human will and the heart, but Hardy’s success lies in resisting such predictable Romantic categories of human conflict. Clearly, salvation is not the automatic result of integrity of feeling. In these ways, the heart does *not* become the victor in Hardy’s fiction where in a more Romantic age, it may have been foregrounded as the most

reliable form of human intuition. This is, in my view, how Hardy manages to propel the post-Romantic era away from the heart (feeling) as the font of intuition. Instead Hardy gives to human intuition a unique sensibility, a more intellectual intuition of the metaphysical, (not exclusively religious) which has replaced Romantic notions of 'the heart'. This is a key development in the novel genre - a metaphysical bridge between both Romantic valorising of the heart, and a modern notion of a spiritualised intellect. Notably, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the relationship that is finally resolved between Bathsheba and Gabriel does not rely on the heights of Romantic passion, but on a shared history of trauma after the effect of Troy and Boldwood's influence in their lives. Whilst it may be correct to say that Gabriel was following a Romantic impulse of the 'heart', that is, an intuitive feeling that Bathsheba was the right partner for him, it would not be true to say this of Bathsheba's 'heart' for a good part of the novel. Thus Hardy elevates other human qualities above feeling, the *agape* of human experience actually transcends the *eros*, and in the personality of Gabriel, creates a romantic hero who is not traditionally 'Romantic' in the Byronic sense, but who is instead a character whose ethical sensibility over-rides his passions. This choice of attributes in such a major character in the novel, as well as the religious, referential language of the workers, affirmatively foregrounds ethical discourse in the novel.

It may be asked in what ways Gabriel is 'ethical?'. There may also be an irony in the fact of his name being associated with the Annunciation whereas in *Far from the Madding Crowd* his role at one stage involves the attempt to occlude the fact of Fanny Robin's baby's existence as a means to saving Bathsheba's feelings. Hardy has successfully created the idea of a character who intuitively knows his love interest is in the form of Bathsheba, but it would also be accurate to say that Gabriel's energy is

primarily focused on providing an ethical and moral presence in the novel. Gabriel's maturity, consideration and acts of heroism, for instance, in saving Bathsheba's farm from fire, display a character who matches the religious significance of his name. However, he is hewn from significantly material forces – Hardy does not create Gabriel as luminously tragic, intellectual or analytical, unlike the eponymous protagonist of *Jude the Obscure*. Rather, Gabriel's angelic disposition is one that seems not so much part of the material of his being, but rather, akin to something that has been put upon him - a divine cloak of moral awareness. In this way, he is constructed by Hardy as the physical mirror of the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit descending down to earth, a Biblical allusion to such a spirit the rural workers have already made in their conversation about 'Whit Monday'. It is pertinent to ask what sort of function such a character with metaphysical overtones in both name and disposition may offer to the strength of the novel. Given that Gabriel has been constructed unapologetically as earth-bound and taciturn, rather than raising debates on intellectual apprehension and tragedy, he instead represents an aura of duty and obligation to do good in the novel. It is therefore interesting to examine discourses of the historicity of duty in western culture in relation to metaphysical awareness.

Contemporary discussions posit the idea of duty as representing an external authority which is imposed over the self⁸. Duty may be regarded not only as a romantic ideal, but a dutiful sensibility and acts of duty may also give meaning to a culture. Principally, duty may have a binding effect within one's own culture. I suggest this notion of duty contextualises the type of angelic awareness present in Hardy's fictional character of Gabriel in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Gabriel's core self may be passionate, but his implacable sense of duty to do the right thing

⁸ 'Duty', In Our Time, Radio 4, 13th November 2003

seems external to his 'self', a sense of the Good that he is suffused with, and determined to carry out. It is a necessary force, which acts as a guide, not only to his own actions, but to those of the wider community. This is an example of how duty may act as a force to aid social cohesion - Gabriel, whose surname, 'Oak', implies the solidity of a tree, represents a fixed and strong marker of that external authority. And it is an authority he is not afraid to show, for instance in the scene where he confronts the local community engaging in gossip about Bathsheba, as he physically demonstrates by clenching his fist in the company of the crowd that anyone, 'prophesying bad of our mistress' will have him to answer to. This demonstrates Gabriel's willingness to exceed the boundaries of his own angelic disposition to restore right behaviour in the society he is a part of. The legacy of the cohesion of medieval village life as a paradigm of aspirational morality cannot be over-stated here. Within these communities lay the need to be mindful of charity as well as proper behaviour. The concept of duty was therefore closely aligned to saintly behaviour, and the presence of the saints is not an altogether foreign notion when we consider the benign behaviour of Gabriel in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Duffy explains the presence of saints in the lives of parochial communities who were mainly perceived not as authoritarian figures of admonition, but in fact as friends and helpers:

This neighbourliness and homeliness, singled out by Emily Male as the most distinctive feature of late Medieval representations of the saints, as very much a feature of French representations of the saints, is very much a feature of English devotion too. The saints that gazed out from the screens and tabernacles of late Medieval England were often emphatically 'kynd neighbours, and of our knowing', country people themselves, like St. James the Great at Westhall, with his sensible shoes, hat, and staff, or St. Anthony on the same scree, with his friendly pig. (p163)

It is interesting to consider this religious legacy of rural sainthood in the discourses of English religious life, especially when seen in the context of the role

played by the fictional Gabriel in Hardy's fiction. Gabriel, a nineteenth century fictional hero, is fulfilling the role of being a cohesive force in the community which reflects an imperative for 'saintly' behaviour in English rural medieval life. Moreover, Gabriel embodies other strands familiar to western philosophical notions of duty, including the phenomenon of Stoicism, principally that of self-control, which he shows by not resorting to the type of emotional extravagance Boldwood demonstrates in his infatuation with Bathsheba. I suggest that Gabriel is therefore an anti-Romantic hero, but in such a way that he represents a re-worked conception of the Romantic protagonist as attractive but wholly pragmatic. By contrast, Bathsheba is initially presented in the novel as impetuous, representing as she does, a lack of fixity in her moral and ethical awareness. Her moral progress must proceed from its state of static fixed icon, that is, one who is gazed at, towards a more active agency. It is Troy who threatens the potential decency in her character, and who most strongly represents the opposite end of the spectrum of Gabriel's moral awareness. Whilst Gabriel has a desire for self-fulfillment (to be a successful farmer and to be close to Bathsheba) this desire does not exceed the stronger drive he intuitively feels - a type of social obligation to set a good example to the community he is close to. His aura of duty and respectability is noted by the community:

He's a clever man, and 'tis a true comfort for us to have such a shepherd,' murmured Joseph Poorgrass in a soft cadence. 'We ought to feel full o' thanksgiving that he's not a player of ba'dy songs instead of these merry tunes; for 'twould have been just as easy for God to have made the shepherd a loose low man – a man of iniquity, so to speak it – as what he is. Yes, for our wives' and daughters' sakes we should feel real thanksgiving.' (p67)

Poorgrass notes that Gabriel is 'clever' and 'not a player of ba'dy songs instead of these merry tunes...'. This appraisal of Gabriel fulfils the idea of the trope of the

angel. Alluding to representations of angels in much pictorial art, Hardy's literary figure of Gabriel plays the flute.

David Albert Jones discusses the connection between representations of angels and music and notes that from the twelfth century onwards 'Angels are shown playing every kind of musical instrument – lutes, flutes, viols, mandoras, horns, and drums, as well as harps. In fact, the depiction of angels is a very important resource for the history of music.'⁹ Jones makes the important point that the depiction of angels only playing music with harps is most likely a nineteenth century phenomenon. The visual history of angels in fact denotes them playing a number of musical instruments - Gabriel therefore, as a flute player, fits a more accurate historical legacy of angelic representation. As well as being musical he is also seen, as articulated by Poorgrass, to be 'clever' a connection with ideas discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, a marker of the idea of the angelic intellect in a gentle persona. An interesting line in the quotation from Poorgrass' statement, that 'twould have been just as easy for God to have made the shepherd a loose low man – a man of iniquity, so to speak it...' raises a sense that God is seen to be at liberty to 'make' people who are either good or bad, a slight re-interpretation of the Biblical discourse of the Fall. This quotation gives credence to the idea of God in the local community in *Far from the Madding Crowd* as being an arch-Creator, omniscient and omnipresent, a somewhat pantheistic idea of a monolithic force which can create evil forces at will. This is an example of the close alliance between both Christian and pantheistic forces in Hardyean fiction.

However, it is in the construction of Gabriel's character as an angelic man (rather than the displaced angelic intellect of Jude) where Hardy adheres to Christian notions of charity and goodness above Byronic ideas of the Romantic hero. In his

⁹ Jones, D.A., *Angels: A History* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) p22

actions to put out the fires at the farm, Gabriel is a force which metaphorically quenches the fires of passion, but by doing so, he rescues the well-being of the woman he loves, a sub-textual allusion to his being a ‘guardian’ angel. It is also interesting to note that biblical discourse and indeed pagan influences cite fire as the material from which angels are created. In this blazing genesis, and in his steady support of Bathsheba, Gabriel becomes a certain type of nineteenth century literary hero – the idea of the good, the decent and to some extent, the utilitarian ideal as a love object. There is some connection here with Aristotelian influence on the Platonic form of the Good. Aristotle, on the concept of *Eudaemonia*¹⁰ (the individual flourishing), refines Plato’s ideas, so that whilst we may be aware of being bound by the ‘Good’, it is important nevertheless to address practical ways in which to apply it. But Thomas Hardy in *Far from the Madding Crowd* creates Gabriel Oak as a combination of the Good and the pragmatic – Gabriel applies his ‘goodness’ in a variety of practical and self-effacing ways in the community and most notably, towards Bathsheba. In its most severe translation, however, the idea of duty in Kantian terms is a categorical imperative, one that is totally independent from any self-interest. There are indeed times in the novel when it seems that Gabriel is the embodiment of such a Kantian perspective – for instance, when, in the fullness of his love for Bathsheba, he nevertheless, out of sympathy for Boldwood, attempts to make it easier for Boldwood’s relationship with Bathsheba to endure, to his own loss.

To summarise so far, *Far from the Madding Crowd* upholds, as with *The Woodlanders* and *Jude the Obscure*, the idea of intuition and faith as significantly bound up in the work of Thomas Hardy, principally by the author’s characterisations of key personalities in his works, who retain qualities of insight and sensitivity which

¹⁰ Note: The concept of Eudaemonia is discussed in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*

gives them a unique place to become not only the repositories of, but the *conductors* of, the effect of a metaphysical sensibility. This sensibility is uniquely placed between both the religious and secular spheres. It may be feasible to say that such strangely alluring figures in human form represent the angelic in both their resistance to concrete description, and in their tendency to embody such a metaphysical sensibility, but principally, they are metaphorical angels in the way they offer a mirror for human consciousness and physical form. Hardyean protagonists are, it may be argued, the mediators between the material and the ideal.

Dan Frank cites religious belief as a socially constructed structure which cannot be considered as an autonomous discipline. He quotes from Durkheim:

....Emile Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, located religion as one of the fundamental categories of human existence but claimed: 'If religion has given birth to all that is essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion. Religion is partly constitutive of 'secular' society, but it is society that determines its form. Indeed, religion is society's reified reflection of itself: its unwitting function is to legitimize society and to promote social integration.¹¹

Frank emphasises the sociological/atheistic perspective which cites religion as having a function of legitimising and unifying society. However, this is a perspective that many religious people may have little difficulty in agreeing with. It is not necessarily atheistic to conclude that religious belief does bind society, including small rural communities. Jesus' words to the Pharisees: 'Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself, shall not stand', from the Gospel of Matthew in the King James Bible¹², further supports the idea of fiction such as Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* as giving credence to the idea of religion having cohesive potential for society.

¹¹ Frank D., *The Word & The World*, (London & New York: Continuum, 2007) p6

¹² The Gospels – edited with an introduction and notes by Owens, W. R., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

However, perspectives of religion as a purely socially constructed phenomenon, whether proposed by young scholars such as Dan Frank or theoreticians of an earlier generation such as Emile Durkheim, do not negate the sense that whilst the value-driven codes around religion may to some extent be created by a reflexive society, this still may not account for, in the minds of believers, the sense of a metaphysical ontology which religion emanates from in the first instance. This is something which can only be described at a visceral level as an ‘intuition’ or more prosaically, a ‘feeling’ of an ineffable presence in the world. Nevertheless, it is a point of agreement between atheistic perceptions and religious ones that religion as an effective legitimising of society may be true, and in Gabriel we find such a force of cohesion and ‘right-mindedness’. If we conclude therefore that Gabriel Oak is placed as the principal ethical consciousness of the community in *Far from the Madding Crowd* in what way does this contribute to a discourse of illumination in the novel? I would argue that Gabriel’s contribution to the phenomenon of illumination is bound up with his ethical awareness, but importantly, that it may also be seen as a human allegory for Aristotelian notions of efficient cause¹³ that is, things which existed prior to something happening, and were perceived as agents in bringing it about.

Gabriel, by his actions, does eventually activate a set of circumstances that are important to the idea of spiritual enlightenment and illumination in the novel. In the synthesis between his ethical sensibility and his often unrequited love for Bathsheba, he approximates a figure in a courtly love scenario - the phenomenon of a medieval knight loving an ideal figure from afar. This gives to Gabriel’s figure and emotions a transcendent quality which further illuminates the idea of him as different from the other male characters in the novel, somehow blessed with a higher sensitivity

¹³ The idea of efficient cause is discussed in Robinson, M., *Philosophy of Religion* (London & Chicago: Hodder Headline, 2003)

and a nobler perspective. However, he is redeemed from being ‘too good to be true’ by, as has been previously alluded to, the strong streak of pragmatism in his character in his role as a shepherd, a role which has religious overtones but which is defined as more robustly utilitarian in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The following quotation demonstrates how Hardy, via Gabriel, balances the idea of the metaphysical with the material irrefutability of life:

...The shepherd lifted the sixteen large legs, and four small bodies, he had himself brought, and vanished with them in the direction of the lambing field hard by – their frames now being in a sleek and hopeful state pleasantly contrasting with their death’s door plight of half an hour before. Boldwood followed him a little way up the field, hesitated, and turned back. He followed him again with a last resolve annihilating return. (p113)

This section demonstrates Gabriel’s work and his manner at work - a taciturn practicality. He physically lifts the sheep up having saved them from ‘their death’s door plight of half and hour before’, a metaphorical allusion to the ‘flock’ of humanity following Christ. By contrast, Boldwood in his obsessional and unrequited desire for Bathsheba, seems weakened. Hardy gives to Gabriel a utilitarian cast to his character - his is an active energy, whilst Boldwood’s is passive: ‘Boldwood followed him a little way up the field, hesitated, and turned back.’

The dichotomy between the conduct of Gabriel and Boldwood lies in the fact that both have suffered the misfortune of unrequited love for Bathsheba, but Gabriel has also suffered the material loss of his flock of sheep, an allusion to the Christian narrative of the loss of faith. However, whilst Gabriel appears to experience life as challenging but nevertheless agreeable, Boldwood becomes enervated through misfortune. Gabriel seems angelic in both name and nature, but is paradoxically a man of the earth in both his work and his pragmatic attitude, whilst Boldwood attains an almost ascetic suffering in terms of his longing for Bathsheba. Therefore, the

Schopenhauerian idea, as described by Grayling that ‘the world is an illusion, that the underlying reality of things consists of a metaphysical striving and yearning that can never be realised except from release from existence altogether’¹⁴ is realised most specifically in the attitude of Boldwood, who becomes almost religiously devoted to the notion of Bathsheba as an eternal ideal, and destroyed when that ideal eludes him. This type of devotion reflects a medieval obsession with the Madonna. As we have noted that Gabriel reflects attitudes of Stoicism, so Boldwood more closely depicts the yearning nihilism of the depleted Romantic.

It may be worth considering that there is a highly subtle but nevertheless significant allusion here to some distaste in Hardy for such Romantic yearning and I would suggest that this connects to ambivalence concerning the tension between notions of the individual and universalising experiences of human life. His elevation of rural characters lies in the ‘romance’ of their stoic suffering, their thwarted desires and their even tragic outcomes, for instance, Jude Fawley’s lost quest for a prestigious education at Christminster. But there is always the sense in Hardy’s key protagonists that there is courage at the heart of their essence. I have posited the view in previous work¹⁵ that Gnostic perspectives exist in the work of Thomas Hardy. Timothy Jackson reminds us of the creeds of Gnostic sensibility, especially the idea of self-sufficiency and wisdom from within:

...it is easy to find numerous Gnostic passages in which the self ‘becomes light’, rather than merely receives illumination (see Gospel of the Egyptians 67,4) and in which saving *gnosis* is identified with uncovering some buried aspect of one’s own psyche. Perhaps the most famous of these is saying 70 of the Gospel of Thomas: *Jesus said, ‘That which you have will save you if you bring it forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you (will) kill you if you do not have it within you’.*¹⁶

¹⁴ Grayling A. C., *The Mystery Of Things* (London: Phoenix, 2004)

¹⁵ Turner F., *A Gnostic In Wessex* (Unpublished MA essay, University of Sussex)

¹⁶ Jackson T., ‘The Gospels and Christian Ethics’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p59

Whilst Jackson acknowledges the particular Gnostic affirmation of the power of the inner self, nevertheless he goes on to discuss what he views as the main difference between Gnostic and Christian perspectives on human willingness to be part of the world:

Gnosticism is essentially retrospective, whilst Christianity is essentially future-orientated, which in turn leads each faith to view the present quite differently. Gnostic 'salvation' is usually a repristination, in which the self returns to a timeless and pre-existent perfection, whereas Christian 'salvation' is a process of redemption, in which the self journeys within or evolves across time to reach eternity, however defined. (p60)

The character of Gabriel Oak seems to inhabit both a Gnostic inner wisdom or sense of enlightenment from within, as well as adhering to a sense of Christian redemption across time - whereas Boldwood becomes more clearly representative of a defeated Romanticism. In these ways we may question if there is, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, comparatively, a suggestion of darkness associated with the Romantic genre, as opposed to a sense of cultural illumination which may have been upheld in eighteenth century Enlightenment values. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, scholarship has had a tendency to valorise the individualism of the Romantic hero - the cult of the individual fits well, ironically, with both a capitalist and Marxist conception of the hero - the former as a producer and consumer of capital society, and the latter as part of the image of the heroic individual, (for instance, in the fiction of Zola) fighting for collective parity. Either way, the idea of the individual has gained contemporary currency in both literal and metaphysical terms.

By contrast, Enlightenment values have not received such affirmation in recent times, except in theoretical discussions of modernity as an uncompleted project of the legacy of the Enlightenment. Notwithstanding that, the Enlightenment may be

regarded as redolent of Classical values which may be seen to be dubiously symptomatic of patriarchal systems of authority and order. It is also perhaps part of an academic cliché that any work pertaining to ‘nature’ must be inherently Romantic. But Thomas Hardy, whose fiction ceaselessly evades strict categories of genre, may be said to uphold some Enlightenment values albeit of a natural order (that is, ‘of nature’) but an order nonetheless. I argue that Hardy’s fiction is not only composed of a non-verbal code of ethics - the innate, rather Medieval understanding of the people who inhabit Wessex to be in awe of a greater power than themselves, be that in formal religion or the force of nature around them – but also a sensibility which ultimately corresponds to classical ideals of order rather than chaos as the ideal.

This may be the illuminating factor of Hardy’s fiction – it cannot be said that the chaos and tragedy of *Jude the Obscure* is in any way constructed as a Romantic ideal. The pervasive darkness of *Jude the Obscure* has not been re-negotiated as ‘Romantic’ by the author, even if it contains the notion of ‘suffering’ which is a component of Romanticism. Neither can it be said that in *Far from the Madding Crowd* Boldwood’s tragi-comic suffering at the lost hope of gaining Bathsheba gives to his character any notion of the Romantic nobility of suffering. Rather, I would suggest that Hardy’s notions of suffering closely resemble the potency of Medieval thought, the ever-present confluence of religious sensibility versus the trials of human life, and a sub-textual narrative that valorises stoicism over extremes of emotion. Although the idea may seem hostile to our own times, concrete structures of ideas of what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ pervade the consciousness of Medieval, Enlightenment and to some extent, post Romantic fictions such as Hardy’s.

Stephen Pope elaborates on the historicity of the idea of a natural intuition of what is ‘right’ – what is described as ‘natural law’:

Stoic notions were assimilated and popularized by the Roman philosopher Cicero (106-43BCE) who maintained that 'True law is right reason in agreement with Nature; it is of universal application, unchanging, and everlasting; it summons to duty by its commands, and averts from wrongdoing by its prohibitions'. According to Cicero 'natural law' (*lex naturalis*) grounds ethical universalism, unchanging standards pertaining to all times, people and places – 'there will not be one law at Rome, and another at Athens'. Awareness of the 'brotherhood of man' grounded Stoic objections to slavery.¹⁷

An analysis of this quotation also reveals the ethical texture of much Hardyean fiction, illuminating it as a texture that is distinctly discernible from purely Romantic impulses. Instead of emphasising an individualistic response to nature as a sensuous experience which may lead to a sense of the 'Good', stoic notions speak of an ethical universalism with an emphasis on the idea of law. The emphasis on 'right reason in agreement with Nature' and something that is 'of universal application, unchanging and everlasting' resonates with some ineffable presence in the metaphysical landscape of Hardy's fiction, and specifically in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, in the curious mixture of traits that creates the ultimately desirable figure of Gabriel. Thomas Hardy has embodied 'natural law' in Gabriel. He has created an allegorical angel as a force of law in a material landscape, but managed to do so without creating Gabriel either as an oppressive force, or a depleted Romantic hero. In these ways, the figure of Gabriel is metaphorically illuminated -he is not too dissimilar in his moral certitude and his demeanour of 'neighbourliness', to the construction of the rural Medieval saint.

In the opening pages of this chapter I attempted to describe a somewhat complex idea that key Hardyean protagonists, in their receptivity to the numinous, held a position of isolated intuition which was not automatically attached to the

¹⁷ Pope S., 'Natural Law and Christian Ethics' in ed. Gill R., *The Cambridge Companion To Christian Ethics*, (Cambridge & New York, 2001) p77

concept of the universal, so straying from previous Romantic notions of sensibility in the work of major figures such as Wordsworth. However, I also went on to discuss that the ethical awareness of characters such as Gabriel's led into the idea of 'natural law' which, it may be argued, has universalising implications. My explanation of this potential site for contradiction is thus: I argue that the figure of the angel is both isolated and singular in its relationship to human society as a whole, but it also exists as a site for the universalizing agency of ethical and intellectual concerns. To some extent, key characters in Thomas Hardy's fiction do the same. On angels, David Albert Jones states:

This paradoxical mixing of the personal and the universal is also typical of the scriptural stories of angels speaking. The angelic communication is always personal, to one or two people. It is not a public announcement made before crowds or officials. It sits on the boundary of the private and the public: a message given in private but with public significance. (p56)

Despite this *distinction* (my italics) rather than a Romantic *merging* (my italics) between the two spheres of the personal and the universal, I wish to further consider the phenomenon of the singularity of the Hardyean protagonist in figures such as Gabriel, and demonstrate how in that singularity, (which nevertheless provides an effect which may universalise their ethical awareness), they resemble in the western philosophical and religious sensibility a trace of the idea of the angel.

Indeed the very idea of a 'full representation' of the angel figure negates the very impact of the angel in western discourse because it implies a singular image. David Albert Jones' work amply demonstrates that the representation of angel entities was subject to wide variety, a factor attached to the important discovery by theological historians that angel veneration was not the sole activity of Christianity. Despite similarities in ideas of spirits in Zoroastrianism and Hinduism, it is in Islam,

Judaism and Christianity, that the phenomenon of angels is most implicit. The earliest Christian mention of a meeting with angels is by the oaks of Mamre. As Jones describes in his own words the scene from Genesis: ‘Who are these three figures who emerge from the shimmering heat to visit the old man resting in the shade of an ancient oak? They are angels, and the old man is Abraham’ (p1). He reiterates that: ‘The story of the hospitality of Abraham belongs to the oldest strand of religious tradition to speak about angels. It is a story that is common to Jews, Christians and Muslims’. (p 3). Jones also describes in more detail the phenomenon of angels as present in the Qur’an....’the Qur’an mentions by name the angels Gabriel and Michael (Jibril and Mikhail). Indeed, the revelation of the Qur’an is said to be transmitted by Gabriel (Qur’an 2:97) (Jones p10).

Of interest too is the archaeological discovery of angel veneration by pagan/Hellenic communities, more specifically the Fountain of Lamps at Corinth. As Rangar Cline states, angel veneration was aligned to the idea of illumination:

The lamps recovered at the site display names and ritual elements drawn from Christianity, Judaism and magical texts. The ancient name of the site is unknown, and archaeologists gave the site its present name because of the approximately four thousand lamps discovered in the course of the excavation.¹⁸

Cline also describes the phenomenon of the angel at the Bethesda Pool: ‘As Jordan has noted, the tradition that the angel of the Bethesda Pool could heal the infirm suggests that the angels believed to dwell upon the water at Corinth may have also been associated with healing’. (p126).

It is perhaps worthwhile to note some linguistic allusions in these historical cultural markers when we consider *Far from the Madding Crowd*: the name of

¹⁸ Cline, R., *Conceptualising Angeloi in the Roman Empire* (Leiden & Boston: Brill Publishers, 2011) p118-119

Gabriel as an angel; the oaks at Mamre (in the story of Abraham's hospitality) as a reflection of the surname Hardy gave his protagonist; the idea of angel veneration being associated with illumination (the discovery of four thousand lamps at the site in Corinth) - and the phenomenon of a healing angel at the Bethesda pool, which reflects the name 'Bathsheba' in its linguistic similarity. I do not argue that Hardy was consciously aware of these archaeological phenomena – rather, my thesis suggests that throughout any culture there are markers that subconsciously resonate, and the resonance of the figure of the angel as a source of agency in the western consciousness also resonates in the sub-text of Hardy's fiction. Hardy's perspective is not a wholly anti-religious sensibility, but an appreciation of religion's presence as both metaphysical and historical illuminating components of the western legacy. In the characterisation of many protagonists in Thomas Hardy's fiction he cultivates an aura of isolation, intellect, illumination and immanence in their make-up. This is the material of angels.

What illumination therefore does Gabriel specifically bring to the story of *Far from the Madding Crowd*? We may cite the figure of him as a shepherd reflecting Christian notions of the 'Good Shepherd', his sense of ethical duty to his community, his bodily arrival on Bathsheba's estate, surrounded as it were in flames, so alluding to the idea of angels born in fire – all these factors combine so that we may regard Gabriel as constructed by Hardy as partly metaphysical and partly human, which resonates with the idea of the angel. But it is in his angelic message (the Greek *angelos* meaning messenger) that he fulfils his purpose. The illuminating effect of Gabriel's presence in the narrative is counter-balanced not by the character of Bathsheba, but by the tragic darkness around the character of Fanny Robin. Isolated and cast aside by Troy, the pregnant young woman embarks on a tragic journey, in an

attempt to find Troy to tell him of her pregnancy in the hope that he will marry her.

The narrative voice becomes distant as Hardy's prose describes Fanny's journey:

When the woman awoke it was to find herself in the depths of a moonless and starless night. A heavy unbroken crust of cloud stretched across the sky, shutting out every speck of heaven; and a distant halo which hung over the town of Casterbridge was visible against the black concave, the luminosity appearing the brighter by its great contrast with the circumscribing darkness. Towards this weak soft glow the woman turned her eyes.

‘If I could only get there!’ she said. ‘Meet him the day after tomorrow – God help me! Perhaps I shall be in my grave by then’. (p258)

The language in this quotation demonstrates a lack of light around the tragic figure of Fanny Robin. Descriptions of the sky as ‘moonless’ and ‘starless’ and the notion of a ‘circumscribing darkness’ gives a claustrophobic inevitability to her fate. The description that a ‘heavy unbroken crust of cloud stretched across the sky, shutting out every speck of heaven’ is an evocative suggestion of a metaphysical barrier between heaven and earth, implying that what connects the heavenly spheres to earth is blocked by this lack of light. This, it may be argued, is also an allegorical allusion to the idea of the blocking of the Good, the potentiality of heaven and the idea of heavenly beings. Fanny Robin has therefore become entombed in the darkness of the Wessex landscape which, in this scene, is somehow no longer connected to the idea of heaven. This narrative demonstrates Hardy's skill in creating tragedy using the idea of human isolation and metaphysics. Importantly, there is no sense of a guardian angel for Fanny Robin here, but there is a ‘distant halo’ of light hanging over the town of Casterbridge. It is significant that Hardy uses the term ‘distant halo’ rather than ‘haze’ of light or similar phraseology. Specifically, the word ‘halo’ adds to the idea of heaven, angelic presences, angelic absences – and illumination.

As in much of Hardy's fiction this scene shows the author's allusive relationship to religious symbolism, but his lack of consolatory sentimentality. In

common with tragic scenes in other novels such as *Jude the Obscure* there is no sense that the comfort of strangers (or angels) is always available. Significantly, it is an animal that offers Fanny Robin comfort – a dog finds her and completes the rest of the journey with her. The idea of angelic absences in Hardy's sub-text is therefore juxtaposed with the fact of human isolation. Angels are messengers – but they are not the omniscient God. Moreover, they are not to be worshipped. Jones states:

The idea that human beings should worship angels is strongly rejected in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul criticizes those who insist on 'self-abasement and worship of angels' (Colossians 2:18). Worshipping angels is self-abasing, because angels are sent to serve human beings and not to be worshipped by human beings. Similarly, the Talmud is clear that no angel, however exalted, is to be worshipped as a God. (p67)

Jones cites pictorial representations of angels as companions to humankind by describing an image of the angels Gabriel and Raphael accompanying the young man Tobias who also has a pet dog with him: 'It is an image of pilgrimage, of life as a journey, and an image of providence or protection'. (p73) It is clear that this religious image has tragic overlapping significance with the literary fictional image of Fanny Robin. She too is on a pilgrimage of sorts, and like Tobias, is accompanied by a dog. But the angels Gabriel and Raphael are not walking with her as they walk with Tobias in the picture - Hardy's literary image is therefore not 'an image of providence or protection'. What is also interesting to note is Jones's further comment:

Raphael (Israfil) is also known in Islam. The name does not occur in the Qur'an itself but occurs in a Hadith. In Islam, Israfil is not associated with healing but is the angel who will blow his horn to signal the end of the world and the day of judgement. This is quite close to the role that Christianity gives to the Archangel Michael. (Jones p74)

In as much as there is an apocalyptic sensibility and a sense of judgement, in this description of Raphael (he is not associated with healing but is the angel who will

blow his horn to signal the end of the world and the day of judgement) there is a sense that the idea of judgement will follow in Hardy's novel too, but we may ask, for whom? For Fanny Robin in this scene, there may be no harsh judgement, but there is also no hope. Hardy describes this hopelessness as a leaden sense of darkness with profound simplicity and effectiveness:

‘That stone bridge is the end of my journey’ she said, when the bridge over the Froom was in view. She crawled to the bridge. During the effort each breath of the woman went into the air as if never to return again. (p261)

The sense that each breath she takes ‘went into the air as if never to return again’ provides an atmosphere of utter depletion to her character. That she sees the stone bridge as ‘the end of my journey’ reflects the fact that she is dying and will do so, soon after her arrival. The trope of a journey that ends in death is once again evident in Hardy's fiction.

However, after Fanny Robin dies her body is taken on another journey, back to Westbury, and the significance of this journey is the presence of the figure of Gabriel. Poorgrass has proved himself to be unreliable in returning Fanny's body to its place of burial - Gabriel finds that he has instead stopped to enjoy some refreshment at the Buck's Head public house: ‘As for you Joseph, who do your wicked deeds in such confoundedly holy ways, you are as drunk as you can stand.’ (p280). This admonition from Gabriel towards Poorgrass and his subsequent intervention, that is, his decision to take responsibility for the safe journeying of Fanny Robin's body, is a critical point at which Hardy positions Gabriel as the right ethical intervention for such a journey. This imperative for Gabriel to protect the body reflects the western convention of the idea of angels accompanying the souls of the dead to their final place. Moreover, it may be argued that in this way Gabriel becomes the proper (metaphorical) messenger – by taking the role of guarding Fanny's body

and making sure it returns to its rightful place, he delivers the ethical denouement of the novel.

This ethical denouement or illumination centers on the fact of Fanny Robin's body – its condition, and what Gabriel decides to occlude with respect to that condition, and finally, the scene where Fanny's body lies at rest and is viewed by both Bathsheba and Troy:

Oak imagined a terrible discovery resulting from this afternoon's work that might cast over Bathsheba's life a shade which the interposition of many lapsing years might but indifferently lighten, and which nothing at all might altogether remove. Suddenly, as in a last attempt to save Bathsheba from, at any rate, immediate anguish, he looked again as he had looked before at the chalk writing upon the coffin lid. The scrawl was this simple one '*Fanny Robin and Child*'. Gabriel took his handkerchief and carefully rubbed out the two latter words, leaving visible the inscription '*Fanny Robin*' only. Her then left the room, and went out quietly by the front door'. (p283)

As noted previously, the idea of darkness surrounds Fanny Robin, and in this quotation lies Gabriels' anxiety that the state of the tragic girl will also cast 'a shade' over the life of Bathsheba, which only 'many lapsing years' may 'indifferently lighten'. These are the linguistic markers that Hardy uses to connect the idea of shade and light and finally the idea of a spiritual illumination brought about through the tragedy. The irony of Gabriel, the ethical metaphorical angel of the novel, committing an act of well-intentioned deceit in order that the woman he loves, Bathsheba, will not be hurt by the truth of Fanny Robin's condition is noteworthy. We therefore find in the figure of Gabriel not the purely holy and righteous, but the reflection of the ambiguity of the angel figure which mirrors the idea of a being that is half spirit and half human.

Bathsheba's overly-wrought realisation that there is some un-named secret inherent in the figure of Fanny lying in her coffin is lessened by her attempting to

visualise a memory of seeing Gabriel at prayer: 'The vision of Oak kneeling down that night recurred to her, and with the imitative instinct which animates women, she seized upon the idea, resolved to kneel and if possible, pray. Gabriel had prayed; so would she.' (p291) This quotation serves once more to place Gabriel in the role of an iconic spiritual figure. Bathsheba does not visualise Gabriel talking with her, nor does she see him in her imagination at work as a shepherd - it is noteworthy that the actual image she focuses on at a time of distress is the idea of Gabriel praying. This is a subtle connection to the pictorial history of angels at prayer, not only as motifs of religious iconography, but symbolically as a means to comfort the troubled human mind in the realm of death and bereavement. As a pagan juxtaposition to the Christian trace of the idea of the angel at prayer, Hardy describes Bathsheba as laying flowers around Fanny Robin's head and states:

Bathsheba knew no other way of showing kindness to persons departed than by giving them flowers. She knew not how long she remained engaged thus. She forgot time, life, where she was, what she was doing. (p291)

Here we note the gradual collapse of consciousness to a fine point of singularity via the narrowing range of awareness of Bathsheba, who becomes only aware of the perspective of her immediate senses – the placing of flowers around Fanny Robin's head, the sense that 'time, life, where she was, what she was doing' was also forgotten. This gives to the scene a narrowing breadth of consciousness which concentrates on the idea of illumination - in this case, depicted by a single candle flickering in the room. At this point, Troy enters the room and the narrative states:

The candle was standing on the bureau close by them, and the light slanted down, distinctly enkindling the cold features of both mother and babe. Troy looked in, dropped his wife's hand, knowledge of it all came over him, and he stood still'. (p291)

The slowing down of time continues in the scene as Troy attempts to reconcile the truth of what he is seeing – that his lover, Fanny Robin, and her child, are in the coffin. As Hardy has emphasised in the first sentence of this quotation: ‘the candle was standing on the bureau close by them’ we are introduced to the idea of the holy. The light of the candle serves to represent the idea of the spiritual moment, its light now not for a utilitarian purpose alone, but for the framing of the holy in the midst of tragedy. To emphasise further the importance of illumination, Hardy goes on to describe the effect not only on Troy, but on Bathsheba too:

He had originally stood erect. Now in the first immobility of his frame could be discerned an incipient movement, as in the darkest night may be discerned light after a while. He was gradually sinking forwards. The lines of his features softened, and dismay modulated to illimitable sadness. Bathsheba was regarding him from the other side, still with parted lips and distracted eyes. Capacity for intense feeling is proportionate to the general intensity of the nature, and perhaps in all Fanny’s sufferings, much greater relatively to her strength, there never was a time when she suffered in an absolute sense what Bathsheba suffered now.’ (p292)

We may note here the line describing a slight physical movement in Troy, ‘as in the darkest night may be discerned light after a while’. Here, light is an allegory for an awakening moral clarity in a key character. The idea of the intervention of the holy accessed through the light of the candle therefore creates a slowly developing sense of the universalising power of ethics – the relationship between Bathsheba and Troy has moved in this scene from one of high Romantic passion (when their mutual attraction to each other superceded all other concerns) to a dawning realisation by both of them that something more profound has taken place. Instead, Bathsheba feels a deep sense of despair, the onset of something so affecting that there is ‘an absolute sense’ attached to it. This is the apotheosis of the action of moral and ethical illumination re-balancing the status quo in the novel. The pain Bathsheba feels at the point when she

apprehends Troy's love for the dead woman is indeed so great, that as Hardy describes it, it even exceeds what Fanny Robin may have suffered. This pivotal scene therefore encapsulates the strangely discordant strain of the tension between the individual and the universal in *Far from the Madding Crowd* – the overwhelming power of an ethical universalising presence may be felt, but it is not a unifying compensation of the type we may find in Romantic conventions. Rather, the strange juxtaposition of the individual and the universal in this scene serves to reflect back to both the characters of Troy and Bathsheba a profound feeling of wretchedness. It is as if the Holy Spirit, so often invoked by the plain-speaking workmen such as Poorgrass and his companions throughout the novel, is indeed present. But perhaps not to comfort Bathsheba and Troy.

The pain of the living (and somewhat envious) Bathsheba is not alleviated, but is in fact intensified by the fact of Fanny Robin and her child being dead. Here, Hardy tacitly gives credence to the idea of the departed as having agency – the suggestion that whilst the body may be inanimate, the soul is able to act from beyond the grave. This is arguably an intuition underpinning the ghostly hauntings of his elegiac poems of 1912-13. The torment that Bathsheba feels is indeed centered around 'her rival being now a corpse' as in that state Bathsheba witnesses Troy's moment of moral clarity - his realisation that he did have deep feeling for the dead girl.

'What have you to say as your reason?' she asked, her bitter voice being strangely low – quite that of another woman now.
'I have to say that I have been a bad, black-hearted man,' he answered'.
(p293)

Here, Troy is voicing the metamorphosis of his own illumination. Alluding once more to notions of darkness, Hardy makes Troy confess to being 'black-hearted' whilst framed in the scene of his dead lover illumined by candle light. Moreover, the description of Bathsheba - that her voice becomes 'low' and that it seems to make her

voice ‘quite that of another woman now’, implies the potentiality of (Romantic) darkness in Bathsheba. Indeed, Troy goes on to qualify the idea of an association between darkness (a faint allusion to Gothic notions of tensions between good and evil) and Bathsheba’s attractiveness:

This woman is more to me, dead as she is, than ever you were, or are, or can be. If Satan had not tempted me with that face of yours and those cursed coquetries, I should have married her. I never had another thought till you came in my way. Would to God that I had – but it is all too late! I deserve to live in torment for this!’
He turned to Fanny then. ‘But never mind darling’ he said; ‘in the sight of heaven you are my very very wife’. (p293)

This extract describes Troy’s sense of an anguished illumination which paradoxically adds darkness to the idea of himself and Bathsheba in their mutual attraction. He states that ‘Satan’ had tempted him with Bathsheba’s face - but he aligns the idea of heaven with his dead lover, whom he now feels he should have married: ‘..in the sight of heaven you are my very, very wife.’ The opposing forces of darkness and light, the latter now moving significantly towards the figure of Fanny Robin as she lies in her coffin, are giving to the dead woman an angelic cast. Hardy therefore demonstrates that the darkness which seemed to surround Fanny Robin in life is now being cast away in death. In a final sign that Troy’s ethical illumination in this scene is complete, he declares to Bathsheba: ‘A ceremony before a priest doesn’t make a marriage. I am not morally yours’. (pg293). Here, he shows what he has always been depicted as lacking in the novel – a fine (albeit rather late) sense of verisimilitude, articulated in his sudden insight: ‘a ceremony before a priest doesn’t make a marriage’.

Bathsheba escapes from the scene and into the night and sleeps amongst a thicket of greenery. She wakes as the glow of the unrisen sun attracts her attention. The idea that the sun has not fully risen and yet reveals its potentiality by glowing on the horizon, adds to the sense that Bathsheba is inhabiting a nether world, half-way

between darkness and illumination. The evocative descriptions of the plant life, the fungi surrounding her as she hides in nature give the scene a pictorial effect of fairy tale with all its associated moral imperatives:

The fungi grew in all manner of positions from rotting leaves and tree stumps, some exhibiting to her listless gaze their clammy tops, others their oozing gills. Some were marked with great splotches, red as arterial blood, - others were saffron yellow, and others tall and attenuated with stems like macaroni. Some were leathery and of richest browns. The hollow seemed a nursery of pestilences small and great... (p296)

The infantilisation of Bathsheba, that is, that she is presented here as a quasi ‘babe in the wood’ gives credence to the idea of her embryonic moral consciousness as it slowly gains illumination. (I have also noted in Chapter One that Marty South and Giles Winterborne approximate a ‘babes in the wood’ existence in their innocence.) Hardy places Bathsheba here as a force of nature amongst nature – and just at the time before dawn, a metaphorical allusion to oncoming illumination. Moreover, nature in this scene is not a whimsical Victorian fantasy of fairies in the garden, rather it is seen here as potentially threatening and strange – a ‘nursery of pestilences small and great’. It is Bathsheba’s (metaphorical) nursery, however, as it is from here that she will grow. This scene moves her character away from all things material and towards the idea of a pagan spirituality. In this way Bathsheba begins to inhabit the same ether as Gabriel, but her manifestation as a nature spirit is contrasted with the rational Gabriel. This doubling reflects the phenomenon of pre-Christian pagan worship of nature spirits as well as angels. The suggestion, therefore, as dawn is about to rise on the horizon is that Bathsheba will emerge from the darkness of a purely natural state towards enlightenment. Hardy, in an even-handed treatment of his characters, gives the same journey of enlightenment to Troy.

He too is in darkness as he approaches Fanny's grave – but Hardy brings light into the gloom:

It was a cloudy, muggy, and very dark night, and the rays from Troy's lantern spread into the old trees with a strange illuminating power, flickering, as it seemed, up to the black ceiling of cloud above. (p305)

This example from the text describes the light from the lantern Troy is carrying as having a 'strange illuminating power' which gives some sense of profundity to the idea of light as being spiritually active. The quotation also refers to the idea of the sky as being a 'black ceiling of cloud above' which mirrors the scene, when Fanny was on her fateful journey to find Troy, and the sky was described then as a 'heavy unbroken crust of cloud shutting out every speck of heaven'. The contrast between the sky on her journey, and the sky now as Troy stands by Fanny's grave, is that in some intimation of consolation, the rays from the lantern seem to pierce towards the heaven Troy believes his lover inhabits. In detailed ways such as these, Hardy gives a barely perceptible but nevertheless acutely well designed form to his narrative. Layer upon layer of seemingly innocuous narrative detail establishes patterns and significances in relation to other details; we may say that Hardy has the gift for creating a light which illuminates key moments of his characters' fates, a gift that creates with words a luminosity of articulation.

Later on, as Bathsheba wanders in the churchyard, she is described as 'being unable to overcome an impression that some connection existed between her rival and the light through the trees'. (p311). Bathsheba finds Gabriel at Fanny Robin's grave - the inference being that the 'light' led her to that spot, enhancing the idea of an angelic light existing around Gabriel. Meeting Gabriel at the woman's grave leads Bathsheba to commit one act of sincere consideration for her – she re-plants the small flowers that had been washed away in the rain surrounding the grave, and ensures that

the gargoyle hanging from the church building above, which had been pouring water on to the grave, is turned to face another direction. By these actions, Hardy demonstrates a growing angelic countenance in Bathsheba – she is restoring nature after it has been damaged, by tending to the rain-sodden plants, and she is also metaphorically turning away the idea of the demonic, the gargoyle, which has caused the destruction.

The encroaching closeness between Bathsheba and Gabriel, as two forces which complement each other in their lively energy and moral seriousness, is depicted in terms of the potentiality of enlightenment that exists between them alone. When Bathsheba is deliberating on whether to accept Boldwood's suggestion that she may promise to marry him one day, Gabriel suggests she speaks to Parson Thirdly for advice, but Bathsheba refuses:

‘No. When I want a broad-minded opinion for general enlightenment, distinct from special advice, I never go to a man who deals in the subject professionally. So, I like the parson's opinion on law, the lawyer's on doctoring, the doctor's on business, and my business-man's – that is, yours, - on morals’. (p346)

Bathsheba states boldly that she will look to Gabriel for advice on morals but adds that she will look to herself for advice on love, to which Gabriel adds lightly ‘I'm afraid there's a hitch in that argument.’ (p346) This playfulness reveals a more profound certainty – that Bathsheba will truly look to Gabriel for advice on issues of morality, which supports the idea of *agape*. If however, *agape* will bear the center of their marriage, it may be suggested that in this interaction Hardy suggests that it is rather the idea of a balance of *agape* and *eros* that will eventually underpin the union. This subverts the idea of the adulterous biblical Bathsheba, who may be regarded as a metaphor for *eros* alone. Hardy's Bathsheba and Gabriel find that their union restores both agencies. Her blithe announcement that she will look only to herself for ideas on

love is an affirmative sign of her liberated status, even if Hardy rationalises her independence with Gabriel's somewhat paternal remark. The suggestion is that Gabriel may enlighten her about love, and at the end of the scene she is described as feeling disappointed that he did not make his own feelings clear. Enlightenment therefore, for the relationship between Bathsheba and Gabriel, is a slowly developing process, underpinned by intuition.

But Oak's moral clarity is spontaneously expressed in the scene when he helps Boldwood to prepare for his party – he advises Boldwood who is enthusiastic at the prospect of proposing to Bathsheba: 'Don't build too much upon such promises, sir. Remember, you have once be'n deceived. Her meaning may be good; but there – she's young yet'. (p351). The party sets the scene for the final tragedy of the novel as Troy, whom most had believed had died by drowning, arrives to claim Bathsheba and take her away from Boldwood. Hardy describes her perspective: '...her mind was for the minute totally deprived of light at the same time that no obscuration was apparent from without.' (p366). It is interesting to note that Hardy, immediately before the shooting of Troy, alludes to a deprivation of 'light' from Bathsheba's mind, giving credence to the idea of light as the fount of mental reasoning as well as spiritual illumination. Boldwood shoots Troy and it is Gabriel who thus fulfils the role of messenger (Gk. *angelos* – or messenger) as Bathsheba asks him for help:

'Gabriel,' she said automatically, when he entered, turning up a face of which only the well known lines remained to tell him it was hers, all else in the picture having faded quite. 'Ride to Casterbridge instantly for a surgeon. It is, I believe, useless, but go. Mr Boldwood has shot my husband'. (p369)

Bathsheba asks Gabriel to be the messenger, but the implication in the sub-text of the novel is that he will be a guardian for her too - both roles of the archetypal angel.

Bathsheba tends to Troy's body and she leaves the room where it lies as the surgeon and a worker, Liddy Smallbury, arrive and observe the scene:

Looking into the chamber of death she had vacated they saw by the light of the candles which were on the drawers a tall straight shape lying at the further end of the bedroom, wrapped in white. Everything around was quite orderly. (p371)

In a mirroring of the scene with Fanny Robin's body, Troy's body is now illuminated by the light of candles in the room. Troy and Fanny Robin are therefore united in death, and the inference must be that Bathsheba and Gabriel will be united in life, their fate lit by the illumination of moral and ethical development towards the idea of an enlightened love.

The chaos of *eros* in the novel has been supplanted by the benign and somewhat steadier light of *agape*, guided by the idea of the angel. Moreover, as this chapter has discussed, it is the language of the rural workers which has given shape to the discourse of ethics in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Boldwood is gaoled for the murder of Troy, but after fears of an execution circulate, the judgement is that he will be exonerated from the gallows as his mental state has declined. Thus, the novel reveals that a crime of passion is seen to be punishment enough for the perpetrator. A local countryman, Laban Tall, tells the villagers, including Gabriel:

‘Yes – ‘tis come. He’s not to die. Tis confinement during her Majesty’s pleasure.’
‘Hurrah! said Coggan, with a swelling heart. ‘God’s above the devil yet’. (p375)

One worker brings the message that Boldwood will be reprieved from death, and in response another replies: ‘God’s above the devil yet’. In the first line we hear news of Boldwood’s trial, in the second we hear the entire philosophy of *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The flaws in the entire cast of characters reveal a world that is manifestly not without ‘the devil’, if we take that phrase to mean a metaphor for what

is not good. However, Coggan's phrase 'God's above the devil yet' gives a central energy to the ethical structure of the novel – the fact that there are frailties everywhere in human relationships, but the Good will win, a philosophy actioned by Gabriel and articulated by the rural workers.

Some months later, Bathsheba views the gravestone above Fanny and Troy's place of rest, and hears children singing in the church choir:

Lead Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead Thou Me On. (p377)

It is noteworthy that these words are by J. H. Newman, the High Anglican theologian who converted to Catholicism, and who is represented in *Jude the Obscure* as one of the ghostly minds of Christminster. The message to Bathsheba from Thomas Hardy through the construction of *Far from the Madding Crowd* is that the 'light' will lead, even in the 'encircling gloom'. In this scene, Hardy adds to a sense of the supernatural 'Good' in Gabriel, specifically by the idea of a guardian angel, as Bathsheba is distracted in the churchyard. The text states that: '...she did not notice a form which came quietly into the porch, and on seeing her first moved as if to retreat, then paused and regarded her...' (p377) The confluence of the spectral and material presence of Gabriel, not only in this scene, but throughout the whole novel is delivered with a light touch by the author, somewhat like the wing of an angel. This acute attention to the finer details of form is the strength of the novel, and also what rescues it from suffocating didacticism. Hardy has found a mode of delivering the idea of the Good which is congenial to both Platonic and Christian concepts. As noted previously in this discussion, angel veneration has been discovered to be a fact of both pagan and Christian narratives and both Bathsheba and Gabriel embody those narratives.

Perhaps it is this very confluence that describes the enduring trope of the angel. Such an enduring metaphysical and aesthetic phenomenon is not only the province of

the visual arts, but may be successfully integrated into literary form. We have alluded in this chapter to religious textual and pictorial representations (in both Christianity and Islam) of the angel Raphael blowing a trumpet on the day of judgement. As *Far from the Madding Crowd* ends, Hardy describes Gabriel as hearing ‘what seemed like a tremendous blowing of trumpets in the front of the house’. In this final scene he walks out of his house and approaches his countrymen as Hardy states:

Oak took up the light and went into the porch, followed by Bathsheba with a shawl over her head. The rays fell upon a group of male figures gathered upon the gravel in front, who, when they saw the newly married couple in the porch, set up a loud Hurrah...’ (p388)

This is a modification of the narrative of the apocalypse. Hardy states that Gabriel Oak ‘took up the light’ and that ‘the rays fell upon a group of male figures gathered upon the gravel in front...’ This is the pictorial allegory of ethics in the novel – Gabriel taking up the light, and the light falling on others. We may ponder if this evocation of an angelic intuition meeting ordinary humankind, was in fact Hardy’s judgement that such a meeting one day, is a representation of the highest Good.

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CHAPTER FOUR – IMMANENCE

This thesis has so far considered tropes of Isolation, Intellect and Illumination in the novels of Thomas Hardy. The fourth and final category I wish to discuss is the idea of Immanence in relation to Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The definition of 'Immanence' in this chapter means the idea of an agency that emanates from *within*, although 'within' 'what' is an interesting and subtly delineated notion that needs clarification. Traditional notions of immanence have tended to imply that the (religious) spirit is 'within'. However, the term 'Immanence' has also received the attention of modern scholars such as Deleuze and Guattari, not necessarily as a representation of a divine entity within, but instead as a discussion of the fluid nature of philosophical concepts and where they are placed. The discussion of Immanence in their case is concerned with a type of imagined structure – or non-structure as the case may be:

It is a table, a plateau, or a slice; it is a plane of consistency, or, more accurately, the plane of immanence of concepts, the planophenomenon. Concepts and plane are strictly correlative, but nevertheless the two should not be confused. The plane of immanence is neither a concept nor the concept of all concepts.¹

This is an interesting and modern development on forms of philosophical enquiry, the idea that 'The plane of immanence is neither a concept nor the concept of all concepts' is I would argue, nevertheless, a concept itself, but it does have some correlation with the idea of the numinous (a plane of immanence that is beyond concepts) that we discern in more traditional and more spiritually-inclined narratives of immanence. For the purposes of retaining the definition cited in this chapter, I focus primarily on the idea of 'Immanence' from the perspective of a divine entity which exists within human

sensibility. Despite the differences in approach - this project presupposes a hermeneutical approach - Deleuze and Guattari nevertheless provide interesting correlatives. Ironically, where the religiously sceptical philosopher may create the idea of a secularised fluid and continuous 'plane of immanence', by contrast, to the somewhat more religiously inclined perspective, this modern structure could conceivably be another way of speaking about God – in the sense that what is un-originated, or just 'is' – is 'God'. The 'religiously inclined' may include authors such as Thomas Hardy, known to be wary of religious didacticism, but willing to attach a template of (Christian) spiritual awareness throughout the corpus of his novels. This chapter therefore adheres to the idea of a divine entity 'within', but shall refer briefly to modern conceptions of the fluidity of philosophical forms. If we understand immanence therefore to mean 'within' we may consider its opposite action – transcendence – which we may understand to mean a progress 'without' the body, a lifting of the spirit towards the realm of the numinous. I argue that a narrative of tension between notions of immanence and transcendence is present in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and this chapter aims to consider this as a narrative of the value of a human life lived on earth as a spiritual process of enlightenment. This chapter will consider this with some reference to the notion of the Trinity, and how in the sub-text of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the Trinity is subject to a new interpretation. Indeed, underpinning Hardy's novels, and in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in particular we discern a mode of progressive aesthetics in his treatment of religious sensibility.

That Hardy pronounced himself an agnostic and provided via his novels his own immanent challenge to formal metaphysical structures is central to a modernising fluidity of structure in his authorial intuition. Hardy may be seen to inhabit a proto

¹ Deleuze G., & Guattari F., *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994)

deconstructivist stance – he created an intuitive sense of changing structures in thought and form, by the way his protagonists seemed to raise questions about the religious status quo, but he did not abandon notions of the Christ narrative, that is, the idea of bearing witness, which I argue is effected through Tess in a radical way. This chapter will therefore consider that the author subverts gendered assumptions of the Christ narrative - this is accessed through the character of Tess as someone who suffers, bears witness and is eventually punished. The idea of enlightenment being achieved through the experience of a life lived on earth – an experience of spiritual immanence – is therefore activated through Tess in a re-ordered Christ narrative. Moreover, the male figure of Angel Clare achieves enlightenment through his experiences in the context of a material life, and not in the realm of angels. This also adds to a sense that Hardy's novels act to replay Christian narratives in new ways. These new spiritual structures are not implacably allegorical, instead they provide an echo and a modern re-working of traditional religious narratives. To summarise the themes of previous chapters in this thesis so far, intuitive Hardyean protagonists may experience isolation, they may be imbued with a spiritual intellect, and they may experience illumination at various junctures in their lives. But this final chapter of the thesis will now consider that the binding energy which holds all these factors together is the energy of immanence in those Hardyean characters - the sense of a divine entity within.

Specifically, I argue that Hardy creates the notion that the human soul is honed by the experience of life. This firmly delineates Hardy's view from pure Gnosticism (the idea that all material things are evil) and instead implies an affirmative perspective of Christian notions of the value of life. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider if the allegorical figure of the angel in the novel (Angel Clare) may *not* represent the transcendent experience alone. Instead, the angel may be seen in a narrative of

immanence, in the sense that a divine and inner intuition must operate as a mediating force of enlightenment through the experience of material life. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy has created the angel figure as fulfilling its potential in a purely material landscape – this leads us to ask if in fact it is the *grounding* (my italics) of spiritual agency, including that of the angel figure, which helps to create a discourse of immanence rather than transcendence in the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. We may indeed conclude that part of the complexity of Hardy's spiritual perspectives is that throughout all his novels two energies operate – transcendence and immanence. In *Jude the Obscure* I argued from the perspective of a transcendent model – Jude dies smiling, because death is valorised as the meeting with the Active Intellect. It is the contention of this chapter that by contrast, we find in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* a sense of the profundity of spiritual Immanence, the soul's enlightenment through the experience of life. Angel represents such an enlightenment – Tess bears witness to it, and as an allegorical Christ, dies for it.

An important distinction has to be made between the discussion here of Immanence and the previous chapter's ideas of Illumination. The discussion of Illumination in Chapter Three, in relation to *Far from the Madding Crowd*, proposed the idea of an external, metaphysical force which creates the effect of illumination, with its associated notions of ethical awareness. But in discussing Immanence now, we are considering the idea of a divine power that is already 'within' – in the individual, and spiritually connected to the implied One.

.....

When we consider *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in the context of a discussion of Immanence it may be useful to recall that in Chapter Two the thesis considered the medieval philosopher Maimonides' view that the part of the soul that is immortal is the

intellect. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, in the context of the perspective that the value of a life lived on earth is an educative experience, we may consider if a life, even a life full of suffering, is an education for the soul - a legacy of the narratives of the Abrahamic religions, whether they be Christianity, Islam or Judaism. When the experience of that material life is lived in conjunction with a certain sensibility and ethical framework (what may be identified as a spiritual and ethical intuition) we become closer to notions of the 'divine' which is 'within' and therefore the idea of spiritual Immanence. These are the highly subtle distinctions which also exist in the sub-text of Thomas Hardy's work. I argue that it is these barely discernible narratives which present his work as complex narratives on Faith as he wrestled with his own questions of ultimate belief. The prism through which we may regard Hardy's novels is the idea of a spiritualised intellect, a phenomenon that exists just at the nexus of both secular and religious narratives. But, as this thesis has consistently argued, an ethical awareness is an implacable component of that intuitive intellect in the Hardyean universe. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Hardy demonstrates how that capability is attained through the education of the soul on earth.

The goal is communion with the One, or Active Intellect, also known as the Good. The goodness of a character such as Gabriel Oak's in *Far From The Madding Crowd* is more clearly delineated than the mainly good but unfortunately flawed character of the angelically named Angel Clare in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. This irony surrounding Angel Clare in a character who eventually displays all too human failings, is a sign of Hardy's technical subtlety in enabling complex motivations to reveal themselves via character development on the journey towards enlightenment. It is also consistent with the idea of the angel in western discourse – angels are not perfect, they cannot be as God is meant to be. We therefore may consider angels to occupy

metaphorical planes *between* immanence and transcendence. Indeed, Tess is not perfect either – her moral strength spills over into violence in her killing of Alec d’Urberville. This act may not seem particularly ‘God-like’ but in an extreme way, it re-balances the moral equivalence of the story. If we consider notions of the ‘divine’ which is ‘within’, the creation of both Tess and Angel demonstrate Hardy’s ability to reveal human complexity and ambiguity embodied in notions of a divine spark which is ‘within’. Moreover, Tess is developed in a similar vein to Marty South in *The Woodlanders*, a marginalised female who possesses an instinctive moral awareness and the will to act on it. Tess through some immanent energy, becomes during her material life, a type of metaphysical incandescence - the witness to all too human failing, including her own, for which she is eventually punished by being put to death.

There is therefore activated in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* a modernising treatment of the tension between notions of immanence and transcendence. In the novel the transcendental model is largely replaced by the idea of forces in the here and now of material life. Tess’s journey, which embodies suffering and punishment alludes to the idea of the Christ narrative on earth, her one deviation from that narrative being her dispatching of Alec d’Urberville. Angel Clare represents an angel who has come down to earth - he is able to face his imperfections and effect a developing ‘angelic’ awareness on earth purely by the experience of living a life on it. As a continuation of the historical narrative of the messenger (Gk. *angelos*) the narrative of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* implies that the transcendent intellect is better honed through experience on earth first – through a sense of immanence, a (divine) intuition *within*. In this way we may conclude that notwithstanding tensions between notions of immanence and transcendence in Hardy’s works, they are nevertheless spiritual tropes which are connected to each other and moreover, important if we consider the notion of the

development of the 'pure' self.

If we consider the early Christian phenomenon of Gnosticism, a departure from the traditional Christian narrative, we may rightly conclude that it is best not to have been born because disembodied *gnosis* (knowledge) is all. However, despite that Sophoclean insight which appears in novels by Hardy such as *Jude the Obscure*, novels such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* lean more towards the Christian narrative, in that this novel reveals how there is some value in the physical life on earth even, and especially if, suffering is involved. This may complicate perspectives of the novels as being stories of implacably tragic, rural lives which have no hope, lives which are instead subject to the Hardyean conception of the indifferent Immanent Will. But I argue that Hardy's novels consistently demonstrate a more affirmative sense of the value of life and spiritual 'knowledge' if not 'belief' - mainly in the way that any suffering depicted in the novels is ameliorated by a sense that at the point of the greatest suffering, a luminous sense of the divine intervenes. This, by any account, is a close parallel with Christian notions of the grace of God. In these ways, Hardy's logical questioning of religious belief is complicated by his intuitive exposition of the compensations of the spiritual realm in his creative works.

In the previous chapter concerning *Far from the Madding Crowd* and the idea of Illumination, we sensed a predominantly transcendental model – the implication in that novel is that the Holy Spirit lit the sensibilities of the protagonists to achieve the fulfillment of their moral and ethical concerns. 'Illumination' in *Far from the Madding Crowd* suffuses the predicament of the character of Fanny Robin, giving to her dead body a sense of spiritual release. There is also a sense that the taciturn but mature goodness of Gabriel has helped to facilitate these events. The difference of perspective in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and the character of Angel Clare is that he is in name and in

his religious expositions, a devout man, but one who falls from notions of the divine by his acute adherence to didacticism in his criticism of Tess's past troubles, a criticism which shades into cruelty. There is therefore in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* via the character of Angel Clare, at one important stage, (when he hears of her previous experience of seduction and pregnancy) a sense of a morally concretising experience which negates the very idea of transcendence. The idea of transcendence I suggest, is one that implies a lightness, and a 'letting go' – conventional western notions of the spirit as taking an upward flight to reach the ideal reflect Plato's notions of the winged soul. Angel Clare, in his righteousness, stultifies the idea of the transcendent experience. The sub-text of Hardy's novel is clear at this point – Angel will have to learn his lesson.

Angel Clare in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* does not lose his spiritual awareness, but finds that he needs to learn through the trials of life, not an idealised perfection, but a rational compassion as a means to attaining mercy and enlightenment. The idea of that achievement is interesting to note in the development of his character. His fixity to the 'law' of religious sensibility – aroused by expectations on the idea of female virtue- is ultimately demonstrated as a failing in the novel, not of the female character of Tess, but of the male 'Angel'. In this way it is the metaphorical (metaphysical) angel's life as lived on earth and the way he demonstrates a lack of compassion that points towards the imperative for ethical lessons that need to be learnt in the context of a (human) life. This judgmental fault-line in Angel's character differs from the character of Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Gabriel's goodness of character is consistent in both thought *and* deed, whereas Angel's thoughts and deeds (he who is named after a divine presence) are made subject to a disconnection via human prejudice. Moreover, Gabriel in *Far from the Madding Crowd* is confident in his relationship to the divine, in albeit

indirect ways, and has no difficulty reconciling his values with his interactions with other humans. Angel must find out as an angel - walking the earth - how to attain this.

We may therefore regard the male figure of Angel, in this curious triad, as representing the immanent Holy Spirit on earth – with, through Hardy, a contextual imperative that implies the need for this Holy Spirit to become enlightened - released from fixedness to both gender and creed. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* the Holy Spirit must ideally learn via the earth-bound experience of human life to represent a merciful and immanent force. Angel (by his name) allegorically embodies the idea of the Word, i.e. the emanation from God - thus in that allegorical fashion, Angel Clare is also by his name a 'messenger', from 'God'. Hardy initially develops his character as one of appealing charm; he is golden-haired, kind and desired by other women as well as Tess, as much for his goodness as his appearance. However, the golden halo of goodness surrounding Angel becomes metaphorically dulled when he loses his mercy through reverting to strict religious proscription. In this way his character is portrayed not as one who becomes evil, but one who becomes dismayingly misguided by a sense of Christian mortification that his new bride has had an intimate past. This mortification deviates from the established discourse on the historical figure of Christ who is seen in his treatment of Mary Magdalene to make explicit the idea of non-prejudicial acceptance of all, including the idea of the fallen woman. Angel eventually finds his compassion not by the force of external illumination, but by inner – or immanent – awareness through life experience, a process which develops our discussion towards notions of immanence and the Trinity.

There is a sense of divine immanence in the novel – Tess represents enlightenment walking the earth whilst Angel represents the flawed potential for enlightenment. But there also exists in the novel, through the character of Tess, a

re-figuring of gender on the implicit idea of the Trinity. Whilst much feminist criticism has rightly centered on the depleted socio-historical position of the character of Tess, and the patriarchal dominance represented most acutely by Alec d'Urberville, I argue that the spiritual representation of Tess nevertheless does in fact contain significant agency. Conventional notions of Christianity refer to a predominantly male notion of the Trinity in the idea of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. However, there have been robust feminist critiques of such a structure, as Phan describes in his essay, 'Systematic Issues in Trinitarian Theology':

...there is the issue of naming the Spirit. Feminist theologians have pointed out how the Christian naming of the Trinity is lopsidedly in favour of masculinity, with two members of the Trinity given male 'names', that is, Father and Son. While feminist critique of the Christian discourse about God goes much further and deeper than mere naming, some theologians have noted that the gender of the Hebrew word for spirit (*ruach*) is feminine, and to counter the Christian overwhelmingly masculine speech about God, suggest the Spirit is the feminine principle within the Trinity and that, at least in European languages, the feminine personal pronoun ('she' and 'her') be used when referring to Spirit.²

Phan cites the convention of the 'Spirit' being regarded as female, but also notes that key feminist theoreticians reject this convenient displacement of the female into the somewhat ambivalent sphere of the Spirit. Rather, feminist criticism such as Elizabeth Johnson's cites this as a continuation of cultural stereotypes. Indeed, the non-linguistic aspect of God invites us to revisit the gendered assumptions around the figure of Christ.

The challenge to gendered assumptions of the Trinity is appropriate to a consideration of Tess's presence in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. I would like to consider a curious 'triad' - one that is composed of the idea of an immanent intuition/immanent God, Tess, and Angel Clare. Moreover, reflecting some feminist theologians' discomfort at the convention of the female always being allied to the idea of the Holy

² Phan P., 'Systematic Issues in Trinitarian Theology' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p22-23

Spirit, I argue that in Hardy's novel the character of Tess is not the embodiment of the Holy Spirit, but instead occupies the place usually associated with 'God the Son'. The experiences and in particular the sacrificial element of the female protagonist in the novel is more allegorically significant not in terms of ideas of the Holy Spirit (which is often feminised) but in terms of the idea of Jesus. It may be argued that if Christ was a witness to the fallibility of humankind, then Tess has been albeit subconsciously produced by a nineteenth century author as witness to the experiences of women. It is Tess, through her tragic but revelatory experiences on earth who ironically more closely represents the discourse surrounding the figure of Christ. Not, it must be acknowledged in a literal sense – but in the pattern of her metaphorical journey through her short life. Unlike Angel, it is she who makes sacrifices, it is she who travels and toils, it is she who is attacked, it is she who is persecuted and it is she who is eventually killed by her persecutors.

Angel Clare (the metaphorical angel) by contrast, seems somewhat protected as a parson's son who chooses to work amongst farmworkers in order to gain an education in agriculture. The sub-text of the novel, however, is the implication that it is his *soul* which needs to be educated. Angel's protected status is reflected in ways such as the farmer's wife's insistence that he sits apart from the common workers of the land, at his own table, separate from them at meal times. This is a disruption of the idea of the truly holy sitting together with all mankind (as Tess does) – a distortion of the Trinity and also the idea of the Last Supper. Tess is invariably to be found amongst her allegorical 'disciples' – the farmworkers. My contention is not that Hardy attempted to exactly replicate the figure of Christ in Tess or any other character in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* - rather, it is to suggest that if the idea of the Trinity haunts the narrative, it is one that has been re-structured, and in a disruption of accepted narratives concerning the

Trinity, it is the female protagonist's trials that more closely resemble the narrative around Christ. Not, it may be argued in the sense that the character of Tess is gifted with overt spirituality, but instead, in the way she has a natural and ethical intuition in the realm of her natural surroundings, a covert implication from Hardy that this intuition represents a truer type of purity. Here, she resembles in that ethical intuition the character of Marty South in *The Woodlanders*. Unlike Marty South, Tess's life is overtly tragic in the context of her own death being allied to the idea of her bearing witness, as Christ did, to injustice.

However, in common with Angel Clare, Tess is not a one-dimensional figure of perfection – she may be said to be flawed too. Implicit in Hardy's narrative is the idea that the narrative of the historical Jesus is not a narrative of a one-dimensional character either. Instead, it may be argued that Hardy, throughout all his novels, is not expressing complete scepticism over Christianity, but is rather re-writing its most important, valuable and validating impulses in human form – the idea of the all too human, intuitive, and persecuted figure in our midst whom humankind may learn from. In these ways the story of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* has in my view a significantly more radical treatment of Christianity in its sub-text. It is interesting to compare the allegorical suggestion of both the angelic Spirit via the male figure of Angel Clare, and the allegorical body of 'God the son' via the female body of the eponymous hero, Tess in the context of modern theory.

Phan further explicates a feminist viewpoint:

Johnson assigns certain activities that the Bible describes as belonging to the Spirit, the Son, and the father and that seem to be more appropriate to women than to men. Johnson then moves on to present a theology of the immanent Trinity in which the divine relations are characterized as friendship that bespeaks relationality, mutuality, equality, and inclusiveness rather than autonomy, origination, hierarchy, and subordination.

Johnson does not intend to replace the biblical naming of God as Father,

Son, and Spirit with her own feminist proposal of Spirit-Sophia, Jesus-Sophia, and Mother-Sophia but simply to subvert its patriarchal history and to bring to bear on it women's experience and perspective. (p23)

Scholars such as Johnson in the twenty-first century give credence to the notion of difference, and ways in which stories of the male-gendered Trinity may be viewed in new ways which are relevant to 'women's experience and perspective'. Whilst the aim is not to prove or deny a 'historical Jesus' in this thesis, it is perhaps worthwhile to look, through the fictional characters in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* how, either by conscious or unconscious motives, the author may have created a radical allegory of accepted structures of Christian narrative. In the novel, the moralising of Angel Clare is not the redeeming agency of the novel – rather, it is the metaphorical journey that Tess must take that becomes, as the novel develops, the paradigmatic virtue of the narrative, even if Tess's own virtue, albeit by seduction, is what seems on a superficial level, to be depleted. Thus, in intricate ways, Hardy gradually develops a female figure that represents some key markers of the male figure of Christian consciousness, an outsider who inspires others to attain insight and compassion from their previous moral blindness (the effect she has on Angel) and an outsider who is eventually murdered by society. In these ways, Tess replicates shades of discourses around the idea of the historical Jesus.

The juxtaposition of Tess's vulnerability with the external forces of characters and events that inter-act with her, is exemplified by the fact that she has no control over some of these forces, the main one being her violation by Alec d'Urberville, an incident which sets in motion a tragic inevitability to her fate. Nevertheless, she is developed during the novel's progress as a predominantly principled character, demonstrating a serious-minded countenance, which runs parallel to frequent allusions to her beauty,

another factor she does not have control over, that is, an aesthetic gift to her physicality. The significance given to a type of beauty that Tess embodies appears to be allied closely to the idea of her fate, that is, the idea that beauty in a general aesthetic sense may be allied to notions of sacrifice and tragedy. After her initial arrival at the home of Alec d'Urberville where she is meant to work, Alec describes the effect of her presence:

‘Upon my honour’ cried he, ‘there was never before such a beautiful thing in nature or art as you look, ‘cousin’ Tess. (‘Cousin’ had a faint tone of mockery). I have been watching you from over the wall – sitting like Im-patience on a monument.’³

As the editorial notes to this edition of the novel explain, the reference to Tess is taken from Viola’s description of her own love in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* with its allusion to Patience on a monument, smiling at grief. This allegorical insight from Alec d'Urberville as he regards Tess, is prescient, as we find the onset of the tragedy of Tess is set in motion by the force of his gaze. The idea of a monument is also relevant, as it gives to her a suggestion of a tragic countenance, which the progression of the novel eventually demonstrates. It is also important to note the line spoken by Alec ‘there was never before such a beautiful thing in nature or art as you look’. Here, quite revealingly, Alec regards Tess’s beauty as exceeding both nature and art. We may question if beauty like this has a quality of immanence. I suggest that if Tess somehow represents that which is above nature or art, then she has already joined the classification of a metaphysical entity in this appraisal by her future tormentor.

Roger Scruton discusses several narratives of the idea of beauty:

In *The Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel devotes a section to ‘the beautiful soul’, taking up themes familiar from the literary romanticism of his day, and in particular from the writings of Goethe, Schiller and Friedrich Schlegel. The beautiful soul is aware of evil, but stands aloof from it in a posture of forgiveness – forgiveness of others, which is also forgiveness of self. It lives in dread of besmirching its inner purity

³ Hardy, T., *Tess of The d'Urbervilles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) p67

through too direct an engagement with the real world, and prefers to meditate on its sufferings rather than to cure itself through its deeds. The theme of the beautiful soul was taken up by later writers, and many are the attempts in nineteenth century literature either to portray or to criticize this increasingly commonplace human type. Even today it is not unusual for someone to describe another as a 'beautiful soul', meaning that his virtue is more an object of contemplation than a real force in the world.⁴

In this quotation Scruton locates the nineteenth century concern with the idea of the beautiful soul. If we examine the last line of Scruton's quotation citing the beautiful soul's virtue as 'more an object of contemplation than a real force in the world' we find at least a connection with Alec d'Urberville's perspective that Tess has a beauty which is 'above nature or art'. If Tess's beauty is indeed above nature or art, (which implies that it does not fall into the category of the real world or even fall into the category of aesthetics) then we may be tempted to agree that Hardy has created something that a twenty-first philosopher such as Scruton would describe as only being an object of contemplation.

However, Hardy, through Tess, challenges the assumption that such beauty is somehow not connected to the real world. Through the character of Tess, he brings complexity to assumptions that beauty always signifies the transcendent, because the impact of Tess's character and the progression of enlightenment the effect of her existence has on others is actually bound up in the real world. The immanent quality of Tess's beauty is self-contained. This is another subtle allusion to figures such as Christ – the idea that there exists in certain charismatic individuals some notion of transcendent beauty, and yet the agency of such a figure actually operates through their presence *on earth* (my italics). In the aesthetic structure of *Tess Of the d'Urbervilles* the 'beautiful soul' does in fact operate in the real world. Hardy displaces the hegemony of transcendence and instead gives credence to the immanent nature of the beautiful soul.

⁴ Scruton, R., *On Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p49-50

Scruton describes characteristics of the beautiful soul as containing a ‘posture of forgiveness’ and states that the Hegelian idea of the beautiful soul ‘lives in dread of besmirching its inner purity through too direct an engagement with the real world’. It is noteworthy that Tess shows the greatest forgiveness in her demeanour towards Angel, but in a poignant reaffirmation of the Hegelian idea of the beautiful soul ‘in dread of besmirching its inner purity’ she is forced, tragically, to destroy her own purity of ‘forgiveness’ by violently punishing Alec d’Urberville. His appearance in her life was the moment when she was indeed forced to make, in Hegelian terms, ‘too direct an engagement with the real world’.

This confluence of the Hegelian idea of the aestheticism of virtue fits well with the character of Tess, and paradoxically makes her tragedy even greater. That she had to make such a violent engagement with the real world, both in the seduction that was imposed on her, and in the attack she later makes on her assailant, relegates the idea of ‘the beautiful soul’ into the natural world with all its attendant modes of animal survival. It is in these (albeit less violent) ways too that we perceive the character of Angel as less ‘angelic’ and more fallible too. Nevertheless, the discourse of a type of spiritual and physical beauty in Tess is a strong trope of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*. By comparison to other female Hardy protagonists, Tess does not replicate the stoic attractiveness of Marty South in *The Woodlanders*, nor the companionable prettiness of Sue Brideshead in *Jude the Obscure*, or the capricious glamour of Bathsheba Everdene in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The various descriptions of her physical beauty in the novel indicate a type of beauty that eludes material description, the suggestion of an immanent power. When Angel and Tess go outside to tend to the animals in the early hours of the summer mornings, the half-tones of night and day before dawn add a spiritual significance to Tess’s beauty:

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. (p145)

In these lines we apprehend the effect of Tess as exuding some monolithic power in the half-light of the field before the full light of dawn. Angel Clare's perspective, that she had a 'dignified largeness both of disposition and physique' gives to her not the frailty of physique described in the violent seduction scene with Alec, but a sense of her being regarded as an entity of immanence and strength. Angel feels an almost religious awe that she is walking with him 'in the open air within the boundaries of his horizon'. It is important to evaluate the significance of the phrase 'within the boundaries of his horizon'. Such a description points not only to the ordinary idea of physical proximity between Angel and Tess, but to the suggestion that Tess is a creature of some metaphysical space that is walking, not only in the material boundaries of Angel's horizon outdoors, but in the metaphorical structure of his soul's education on earth. This is an indicator of some un-named essence in Tess that suggests other realms of existence and yet she is implacably in Angel's eyes 'close at hand'. Here we sense again the tension between modes of immanence and transcendence in the novel.

In an attempt to give to the character of Tess an un-named but very clearly implied sense of profundity, Hardy has therefore painted a picture of a particular type of beauty, one that contains some signifier of the inner purity of Tess's natural self (the expression) with the formal components of her features (the representation). But as Scruton describes in *On Beauty*:

There have been many attempts in recent years to revisit and reanimate

the distinction between representation and expression, and also to give accounts of expression that will show why it is important, and how it captures that element of the aesthetic experience that we are inclined to describe in terms of meaning. We have witnessed semantic, semiotic, cognitive and similar theories, and attempts – in the philosophy of music especially – to show how emotion is expressed in art, and why this is important. None of these theories, in my view, has advanced the subject very far. (p117)

Scruton describes the difficulties in quantifying the way art, whether it is music, painting or literature, is able to convey meaning via its own particular mode of intuition. I suggest that despite such difficulties in quantifying the methods by which this is achieved, that is, either by representation (form) or expression (intuition), Thomas Hardy nonetheless achieves this with particular efficacy in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* through the character of the protagonist. This literary fashioning of the virtuous, the beautiful and tragic in one figure (in its best representations achieved without sentimentality) is redolent of pictorial representations of the figure not only of Mary in Roman Catholic art, but also of traditional modes of artistic depictions of Christ – the idea of the noble and spiritually pure entity which suffers.

The trope, therefore, of the 'beautifully tragic' surrounding Tess is a strong signifier in this novel, in ways that seem to over-arch the somewhat more prosaic interests of Tess' admirers. Alec d'Urberville's appreciation of Tess's beauty seems inferior to the idea of beauty that Hardy attempts to describe – an aesthetic which is touched by a type of other-worldly significance, and which philosophers such as Scruton may quite rightly say is difficult to categorise and quantify in criticism. Neither Alec, or Angel initially notices the uncanny and unspoken trope of the type of aesthetic that is also 'tragic' in Tess, except the author who created her. In his first descriptions of Tess' appearance in the early pages of the novel, Hardy describes her thus:

She was a fine and handsome girl – not handsomer than some others, possibly – but her mobile peony mouth and large eloquent eyes added

eloquence to colour and shape. (p20).

This description is not an ecstatic evocation of some great superficial beauty of perfect symmetry – in fact Hardy notes that Tess is actually ‘not handsomer than some others’. But as the novel progresses, the idea that she is possessed of some great ‘beauty’ intensifies. This enhancement of her powers is made stronger by Hardy’s creation of Tess as being sensitive to the natural world that surrounds her, whilst also being aware of the temporality of her life, something she vaguely intuitively is set on a sacrificial trajectory, something we may also recognise in the narrative of Christ.

When Tess meets Angel in a garden after hearing him playing music, she appears to be ill at ease. When he asks her if she is afraid, she replies that she is not afraid of things in the outdoors. However, there is a much deeper intimation that she is afraid of the future:

‘Come Tess: tell me in confidence’.

She thought that he meant what were the aspects of things to her, and replied shyly: The trees have inquisitive eyes, haven’t they? – that is, seem as if they had. And the river says ‘Why do ye trouble me with your looks?’ And you seem to see numbers of to-morrows just all in a line, the first of them the biggest and clearest, the others getting smaller and smaller as they stand further away; but they all seem very fierce and cruel and as if they said, ‘I’m coming! Beware of me! Beware of me!’ ... But *you*, sir, can raise up your dreams with your music, and drive all such horrid fancies away!’ (p139-140)

There is an incongruity to Tess’s automatic belief that she is not afraid of things in the outdoors when she then proceeds to describe how it seems that ‘the trees have inquisitive eyes’ and the river says ‘why do ye trouble me with your looks?’. Tess may not be afraid of the physical forms of nature, but she is nervous of the power nature has to inform her intuition. In this scene, she intuitively feels something in nature that appears to warn her about the ‘numbers of to-morrows’ which, when lined up, seem ‘very fierce and cruel’, threatening her as something that she needs to be mindful of – ‘Beware of

me! Beware of me!’ the future intones. When we therefore consider surface allusions to the aesthetic beauty of a country girl in this nineteenth century work of fiction, we are also simultaneously being made aware of notions of virtue, tragedy and sacrifice which sound a small tone of recognition around the narrative of Christ too. Therefore the *representation* of beauty through the character of Tess (via the surface appreciation of Alec and Angel) in the novel is explicit, but the darker elements which tell of the trajectory of the protagonist’s life are its *expression*.

The idea of sacrifice and indeed martyrdom haunts the figure of Tess from the beginning of her appearance in the novel. She is encouraged by her mother to contact the wealthy d’Urbervilles, distant and wealthier relations with the knowledge that the matriarch is alive, and the heir Alec d’Urberville is unmarried:

‘Well, as I killed the horse, mother,’ she said mournfully, ‘I suppose I ought to do something. I don’t mind going and seeing her. But you must leave it to me about asking for help. And don’t go thinking about her making a match for me – it is silly’.

‘Very well said, Tess’ observed her father sententiously.

‘Who said I had such a thought?’ asked Joan.

‘I fancy it is in your mind, mother. But I’ll go’ (p42)

Tess’s life path is set in place based on a sacrificial trajectory, ‘I suppose I ought to do something’ she states, the implication being that she feels at a visceral level a sense of responsibility and sacrifice towards her family after the loss of the family’s horse which she was responsible for. The idea of the death of an animal and the death of Tess are conjoined so adding to the notion of an immanent, pagan energy in the novel. The sacrifices Tess felt compelled to make after the death of the animal eventually lead to her own death by the end of the novel. This is a subtle but powerful connection on the conjoining of the natural world (the animal) and the spiritual (Tess as a nineteenth century manifestation of the beautiful soul) - both however are also manifestations of nature. In one significant way, Tess stays close to nature in her adherence to integrity of

feeling. However, as I have argued at several points in this thesis, once again, Hardy shows that excess of feeling (what may be described as a Romantic perspective) leads to chaos. There is a consistent strand in the sub-text of Hardy's novels of a valorisation of more rational modes of human interaction, a judgment this thesis makes which may appear to conflict with established Hardy criticism. Nevertheless, if we look behind the surface stories of love and pain in Hardy's fiction we discover (notwithstanding some Platonic notions of the value of nature and the Ideal) a greater adherence to Aristotelian notions of rationality. 'Feeling' in Tess's sensibility becomes a force that threatens her own survival.

Despite showing a spirited refusal to compromise the verisimilitude of her feelings in order to make a convenient marriage with Alec d'Urberville: 'I'd rather try to get work' she murmured.' (p41) Tess, out of a sacrificial sensibility in her demeanour, eventually agrees to do as her mother asks. A feminist perspective may regard this as an interesting subversion of the obedience of the God the Father, God the Son dialectic. Tess too obeys to do what is 'right', but her most important task on earth is to find the means to provide income for herself and her family, rather than become an overt symbol of the beauty of the pure soul. In these ways a Marxist perspective may rightly assert that whilst we contemplate Tess as a 'beautiful soul' we may also understand that the luxury of aesthetic contemplation is enabled by economic factors, whilst the material truth of the lives of characters such as Tess in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and Jude in *Jude the Obscure* reflect the practical truth of real lives in impoverished nineteenth century rural Britain. However, I would argue that the idea of beauty was as profoundly important to Hardy as the idea of virtue, as a means to express notions of the immanent, beautiful soul.

Scruton, in his belief that beauty is allied to the sacred, defends aesthetic

contemplation:

If you want to dismiss the concept of aesthetic interest as a piece of bourgeois ideology, then the onus is on you to describe the non-bourgeois alternative, in which the aesthetic attitude would be somehow redundant, and in which people would no longer need to find solace in the contemplation of beauty. (p64)

Scruton highlights an important point – being without an aesthetic attitude suggests that people ‘would no longer need to find solace in the contemplation of beauty’. However, Tess, as a fictional representative of impoverished nineteenth century rural workers is characterised by Hardy as someone who as well as possessing beauty herself, also finds solace in the contemplation of the beauty of the Wessex landscape. Indeed, her almost supernatural appreciation of it is a signifier of the indomitability of her spirit throughout the deprivations of life as a farm worker. When she first approaches the home of the d’Urbervilles the narrative implies that she is surveying the natural scene outside the boundaries of the house:

Far behind the corner of the house – which rose like a geranium bloom against the subdued colours around – stretched the soft azure landscape of The Chase – a truly venerable tract of forest land; one of the few remaining forest woodlands in England of undoubted primaeval date, wherein Druidical mistletoe was still found on aged oaks, and where enormous yew-trees, not planted by the hand of man, grew as they had grown when they were pollarded for bows. All this sylvan antiquity however, though visible from The Slopes, was outside the immediate boundaries of the estate.

Everything on this snug property was bright, thriving, and well-kept: acres of glass houses stretched down the inclines to the copses at their feet. Everything looked like money – like the last coin issued from the Mint. (p43-44)

This description reveals two worlds. Tess surveys outside the boundary of the d’Urberville’s estate ‘one of the few remaining forest woodlands in England of undoubted primaeval date’, a vision of an unspoilt natural world still viable in the nineteenth century. But the contrast between this ‘sylvan antiquity’ and the ‘well-kept’ grounds of the d’Urberville estate are stark. The first scene, ‘the soft azure landscape of

The Chase' seems to speak to her of an ancient world which is open to her intuitive awareness – the second scene, 'this snug property' which was 'bright, thriving and well-kept' merely 'looked like money'. The idea that the house and grounds of the d'Urbervilles property looked like 'money' emphasises that it was not nature in its unspoilt form that existed there, but an approximation of it that could be bought. To Tess, the artificial tending of these grounds creates a sense of a deviation from nature.

This is a powerful prophetic allusion to the scene at the end of her days when she is found by Angel Clare to be an expensively dressed appendage to Alec d'Urberville who has succeeded in allegorically 'buying' her love. Moreover, even if Tess's own beauty is a component in the factor that causes the tragedy that befalls her, Tess's contemplation of beauty in nature is a consolation which seems to be a compensatory factor in her experience of life. The treatment of beauty in the novel is therefore depicted in two ways: the first is a complex narrative concerning Tess's personal beauty, which alludes to ideas of the beautiful soul, the sacred and the sacrificial. The second strand of narrative on beauty is the fact of the external beauty of the landscape as an important force which restores Tess's equilibrium. Outside of the tamed nature that money can buy, Tess may always perceive the 'azure haze' of real nature (an allusion to the idea already discussed in connection to Hardy's *The Woodlanders* in Chapter One of this thesis) that lies beyond the 'limits' of material perception. These intuitions may be accessed by Hardy's characters through nature and they are also, by implication, components in the education of the soul in that they suggest a way of seeing that is allied to a way of knowing. This way of seeing and knowing is a Romantic perception, but as this project has discussed, it is also the trope of the isolated individual in Hardy's fiction, and has strong connections to the religious

trope of the figure of Christ – the idea of an entity with supernatural powers who is also earth-bound, and whose transcendence is allied to a narrative of sacrifice. In this way we perceive a narrative of immanence in the novel.

The notion of sacrifice allied to the figure of Tess is brought into dramatic reality by the physical violation she suffers from Alec d'Urberville; however, the description of the incident allows some space for ambivalence. Hardy's poetic language fits uneasily with the violence of the act - whether it is made explicitly clear at the time or not that Tess showed any consent is also curiously apt. In order to emphasise Tess's physical and emotional delicacy, the language describes her as almost other-worldly – her skin is 'feminine tissue' – the idea that she is a transparent and diaphanous entity is suggested here. Scruton discusses in *On Beauty* the confluence of historical religious impulses on notions of beauty, desire and prohibition as being embodied in the idea of the mother of Christ – Mary:

Mary has never been subdued by her body as others are, and stands as a symbol of an idealized love between embodied people, a love which is both human and divine. The Virgin's beauty is a symbol of purity, and for this very reason is held apart from the realm of sexual appetite, in a world of its own. This thought reaches back to Plato's original idea: that beauty is not just an invitation to desire, but also a call to renounce it. In the Virgin Mary, therefore, we encounter, in Christian form, the Platonic conception of human beauty as the signpost to a realm beyond desire. (p54)

It would not be accurate to say that Tess does not feel desire – in the early stages of the novel when she first observes Angel Clare at a dance, she feels desire when she wants him to dance with her. Angel unthinkingly chooses the first girl he sees to dance with, but afterwards Tess's eyes are described as having 'the faintest aspect of reproach that he had not chosen her' (p23). Scruton's examination of the conflict between the opposing forces of inviting and inhibiting desire are relevant to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and not alone in the character of Tess. Angel Clare inspires desire in

Tess but also inhibits her access to him when he feels the didactic moral intervention of his religious sensibilities causing him to condemn her past. Only Alec d'Urberville is consistent in his desire – but he is also consistently threatening in his love for her, which approximates a desire for control.

Scruton's sentence in the quotation above, 'beauty is not just an invitation to desire, but also a call to renounce it' is an interesting focal point when we consider the philosophical importance of Tess's characterisation in the novel. The simultaneously active but contradictory forces of invitation and prohibition of desire in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* are also coterminous with religious ideals of beauty and self-denial. In Augustine's *Confessions*, an epistolary work that underpins a Christian notion of caution towards notions of unfettered desire, the idea of beauty is set in opposition to mere desire:

For as I grew to manhood I was inflamed with desire for a surfeit of hell's pleasures. Foolhardy as I was, I ran wild with lust that was manifold and rank. In your eyes my beauty vanished and I was foul to the core, yet I was pleased with my own condition and anxious to be pleasing in the eyes of men.⁵

Augustine achieves a sense of clarity that becoming enmeshed in desire alone causes him to feel in his appeal to God that 'In your eyes my beauty vanished..' a narrative that implies the idea of true beauty as a pure and metaphysical power beyond the realm of earthly desire. In this quotation we sense the contradictory forces of opposite energies - something that the narrative of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* suggests by the ugliness of the scene with Alec d'Urberville when juxtaposed with the trope of the 'beautiful soul' that Tess represents. Thus the opposing forces of inviting and prohibiting desire are present in both an Augustinian narrative and a nineteenth century novel by Thomas Hardy.

This tension in Hardy's novels – the idea that they are progressive works with

their sophisticated agnosticism whilst invariably referring to Christian narratives in their sub-strata, leads us to consider if Hardy had any fixed views at all. This appearance of ambivalence may add to some established critical opinion that much of Hardy's work lacks concrete philosophical structure. Harvey Curtis Webster's critique of Hardy, *On A Darkling Plain* discusses interesting contradictions in Thomas Hardy's view of the Immanent Will and its effects on society and the human experience in general – he believes that Hardy failed to resolve a contradiction in his belief that society has been determined and yet may also be subject to change.⁶ Webster's perspective deserves to be examined in the light of the discussion in this thesis, that is, the notion of a metaphysical intuition. A brief summary of Hardy's idea of the Immanent Will reveals a structure where human experience and the world is inhabited by the phenomenon of the Immanent Will. The Hardyean Immanent Will is clearly a metaphysical structure that pre-determines the experience of human existence, part of which involves the follies of Chance, and what also appears to be a notion of Nature as indifferent in its regard to human life. This certainly fits with circumstances concerning the figures of Tess and Angel, who are prone to fateful events, for instance, the death of the horse owned by Tess's family, their meeting at Talbothay's farm and the synchronicity of Angel's father preaching to Alec d'Urbervilles family. In these ways fate and chance do operate and we may agree that the force of the Hardyean Immanent Will operates in an indifferent, if not heartless, fashion.

However, the judgment raised by Webster that Thomas Hardy was inconsistent in his philosophy, citing apparent contradictions in the author's belief that society is something that has been determined and yet is also something that may be changed, and Webster's further judgment that this compromises the effectiveness of later novels is

⁵ Augustine, *Confessions* transl. & intro. by Pine-Coffin, R.S., (London: Penguin Classics, 1961) p43

⁶ Webster, H., *On A Darkling Plain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947)

refuted in this thesis. This apparent contradiction in Hardy's thinking (on the idea that society may simultaneously be fixed and changed) is rather, I would argue, a demonstration of Hardy's intuition that inherent in narratives of ontology and teleology is a dynamic force of complexity that eludes description. Instead, what centers the meaning of existence in Hardy's novels is the idea of the intuitive protagonist, who is receptive (even tragically so) to the nature of flux. This authorial appreciation of the way human life evades broad and generalised categorisations has a parallel with an Augustinian narrative of the possibility of redemption. In the Hardyean universe, the world may seem fixed, and Hardy may indeed have placed some gloomy credence in the idea of an ambivalent Immanent Will, but the novels, as this thesis argues, are powered by the immanence of a spiritual intuition in its key characters, so that we may also sense there is a dynamic of change too. Hardy's characters, in their dynamic experience of and response to, what life brings them, are the prime exponents of meaning. Specifically, they explain what it is to be human at the nexus of religious and secular narratives whilst living in the world.

The idea that the unconscious Immanent Will is the source of a Consciousness that eventually informs the Whole so that a state of moral and ethical balance is attained suggests in my view a circularity of movement. As a philosophical perspective it may be argued that it has some parallel with Deleuze and Guattari's secular notion of a 'plane of immanence' rather than a purely transcendental model. It may therefore be argued that in Hardy's inconsistency (when, as Webster goes on to reveal, periods of depression would render Hardy sceptical of his own theory that Consciousness could inform) there does nevertheless exist a significantly modern philosophical consciousness in the author, a consciousness that paid attention to both the legacy of a Christian narrative and yet was also alive to the notion of changing religious and

philosophical structures.

In this way, and despite the lurking presence of the Immanent Will in the Hardyean universe, the novels do reveal a sense of hope for a type of active potential in life, one that if acted upon by humankind, can indeed change society. This is the somewhat radical Christian message of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, as ethical enlightenment is ironically engendered by her death. Thus we have an impression of the author oscillating between a kind of resigned dread of his suspicion of the Immanent Will - and his vague hope for notions of a benign transcendence for humankind. In these ways Hardy may avoid accusations from critics such as Webster who claim inconsistency in Hardy's ideas of a society that can be fixed (that is, static) and also changed. Hardy demonstrates that the human 'dread' of a sense of the indifference of fate nevertheless does not negate a human desire for 'change'. Moreover, we may also consider how this perspective is allied to the narrative concerning the figure of Christ. Christ accepts his fate (that he will be sacrificed for humanity), but he is also through his actions on earth, alive to the potential for change and progress in human nature. Therefore, two opposing notions – the fixed and the changed – are consistent with a modern and Christian spiritual narrative. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* we find a similar trajectory – Tess's life seems circumscribed, but we sense through some immanent notion of her inner strength and intuition, that she will effect change.

Notwithstanding critical notions of a lack of concrete philosophical structure in Hardy's novels, we may observe that Hardy achieves the effect of metaphysical change in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by developing a narrative of immanence, whilst leaving a space for the potential of a narrative of transcendence. We may ask how art forms achieve this effect especially in relation to discourses of intuition. Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) was an Italian aesthetician whose ideas on the power of artistic intuition

seemed to closely parallel those of Henri Bergson (1859-1941). However, in the *Guide to Aesthetics*⁷ Croce's translator, Patrick Romanell states that it is important to clarify where their ideas differed. Romanell states that Bergson regarded intuition as the key to metaphysical truths, whereas Croce regarded intuition as the key to artistic truth. This thesis would argue that the two cannot be entirely separated, and that literary artists such as Hardy demonstrated that intuition could in fact intuit both the metaphysical realm and artistic truth. If we analyse these two actions of the intuition, that is, one as a pathway to the metaphysical, and one as a pathway to artistic truth, we may also see a third way. I suggest that practitioners of the intuitive such as Hardy, bypassed such divisions between the metaphysical and the artistic, and possessed an immanent understanding, a faith in metaphysics and art that could accommodate both secular and religious spheres. Thus Hardy's novels (the art) opens the door to the truth of what it intuit (the metaphysical) and the underlying agency of both is intuition.

Croce believes however, that art lacks thought:

What art lacks in order to be myth or religion is precisely thought, and the faith that springs from it. The artist neither believes nor disbelieves in his image; he produces it.

In this quotation Croce rightly points out that the artist may not believe or disbelieve in his image, but his idea that 'what art lacks in order to be myth or religion is precisely thought' is, I argue, not the case with an artist such as Hardy. There is an acute sense of thought and faith in Hardyean texts, including *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. As Hardy reveals the power of intuitive and metaphysically inclined minds in his protagonists, (plus his own allusions to Christian exegesis) I therefore conclude that his work adheres to notions of faith and thought, even if some of those articles of faith are presented as occupying sites of ambivalence. Furthermore, Croce attempts to distinguish between

⁷ Croce B., (*Guide to Aesthetics*), transl. & ed. Romanell P., (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1995) p16

the Romantic and Classical modes of art by stating that, 'Classicism has a decided tendency towards *representation* whilst its counterpoint has it toward *emotion*'. (p24).

He gives great credence to Romanticism in his belief that the primary substance of intuition is intense feeling:

Intuition is truly such because it expresses an intense feeling, and can arise only when the latter is its source and basis. Not idea but intense feeling is what confers upon art the ethereal lightness of the symbol. Art is precisely a yearning kept within the bounds of a representation. In art the yearning (for expression) is there solely for the sake of the representation, and representation solely for the sake of the yearning. Epic and lyric, or drama and lyric, are scholastic divisions of the indivisible. Art is always lyrical, or, if you like, the epic and drama of feeling. (p25)

It is interesting to note Croce's sentence 'Not idea but intense feeling is what confers upon art the ethereal lightness of the symbol'. This seems to relegate the phenomenon of 'the idea' and an intellectually intuitive approach to the second division. Croce's insistence that it is 'feeling' and 'yearning' that are the basis of art is again open to question in the context of this thesis. His Romantic view nevertheless does not fit entirely with the literary work of Thomas Hardy, whose work, when regarded through the prism of 'feeling' and 'yearning' may indeed have some elements of emanating from a romantic sensibility. However, I have argued that a critical emphasis on tropes of Romantic feeling in Hardyean fiction does not take account of what this thesis has attempted to identify too: the sense of an intellectual intuition, not borne from an overflow of intense emotion, but borne out of a perceptive metaphysical intellect. When Hardyean characters experience intense feeling, the type which aesthetic philosophers such as Croce would identify as the manifestation of true 'art', there is always a sense in Hardy's novels that these intense feelings are ameliorated by an immanent sensibility, one which differs from feeling, and one which lies in some specialised intellectual realm – the spiritual. This state of being, which is separate from intense feeling, gives to

his key protagonists a distinct aura of detachment around them.

We have alluded to the idea of Tess as an allegorical Christ-like figure by the way she is positioned as a sacrificial character on a journey which leads to her destruction through the authoritarian law makers of her society. Tess is indeed overcome by intense emotion in that she resorts to committing murder, but there is also a sense that the essence of her (immanent) being lies in a persona who experiences the trials of a life lived on earth, but who also appears somewhat detached from it. In the novel there are significant allusions to Tess being slightly set apart, indeed viewed as different from both her family and her peers. Hardy describes Angel Clare as seeing her as ‘a sort of celestial person, who owed her being to poetry; one of those classical divinities Clare was accustomed to talk to her about when they took their walks together’. (p231) This quotation places Tess as existing at the nexus of the spiritual – ‘a sort of celestial person’ and the aesthetic - she ‘owed her being to poetry’. She is also described as being different from her mother in terms of her Victorian education:

Between the mother, with her fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter, with her trained National teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code, there was a gap of two hundred years as ordinarily understood. When they were together the Jacobean and the Victorian ages were juxtaposed. (p29)

This educational set of circumstances places Tess as detached from the heart of her family, and is also a historical and social marker of changing opportunities in Victorian England. The idea of an older culture of ‘superstitions, folk-lore, dialect and orally transmitted ballads’ and the unknown phenomenon of the oncoming future, places Tess at the nexus of ‘the Jacobean and Victorian ages’ too. She becomes in her cultural make-up a site for part myth and part intellectual enlightenment. Moreover, notions of a celestial persona that is somewhat detached from others, leads us to consider if here too

we may see a parallel with the figure of Christ in Hardy's heroine. Significantly, this trope in the context of a nineteenth century novel - the detached and journeying loner who will be sacrificed - gives a sense that a tumultuous narrative encircles thinkers such as Hardy; a mythic foreboding juxtaposed with enlightenment. Such thinkers may be dimly aware of a sense of oncoming apocalypse.

Thomas Hardy's ideas of an Immanent Will which in turn 'informs' the Whole (or Ideal) is, in my view, less a proof of his so-called philosophical incoherence and more an explication of his own immanent intuition - an immanent intuition that he may have activated through his fictional characters. Moreover, in terms of his creation of those spiritually intuitive characters in his fiction, he was *subconsciously* creating something that centuries before, philosophical theologians such as Thomas Aquinas had posited – the idea of an angelic intellect – the difference being in Hardy's case, that such a sensibility was embodied and disguised in characters in a rural landscape, rather than in a formal discourse such as Scholasticism. The naming of Angel Clare in a novel about a parson's son living amongst farm workers is a sign for a grounded spiritual sensibility, the soul of which receives its enlightenment through the experience of a life lived on earth. The idea of enlightened intellect as Immanence is open to discussions of spirituality, but also to discussions of inspiration or genius. These categories are beyond the scope of this project, which aims to narrow down specifically the phenomenon of an authorial and unconscious creation of an allegory of a metaphysical intellectual sensibility, and one that has in prosaic terms, floated around our visual and literary media for some time throughout Western culture. The opportunity to revitalise the medieval representation of the angel as embodying the material body with the potentiality of the spiritual mind is implicit in Hardy's fiction. In his subconscious creation of 'angels' (the naming of Angel Clare) Hardy is actually creating at the end of

the nineteenth century a new and implacably coherent philosophical system – the idea that the rational and the ideal are not only discourses of philosophical narrative throughout Western culture, but may also be parallel to the notion of different functions of the brain – here, human biology shades into discourses of intuition and philosophical systems.

We may consider a parallel with Hardy's ideas of the monolithic Immanent Will. If there was an anxiety in Hardy that the Immanent Will lacked a human concern for ethics, in the same way we may become concerned too that pure intellect today operates without ethics. Hardy perhaps intuited a very modern question, especially with notions of artificial intelligence as a present-day concern – how may we live with a universalising and potentially globalising energy (either potentially in ourselves or through technology), and not lose the center, as Yeats' poem *The Second Coming* intuitively, of our ethical selves?

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.⁸ (W.B. Yeats)

The answer, though perhaps not congenial to sceptics of religiously-inflated warfare, may lie in having if not a religion of one's own, then at the very least, an intellectual consciousness of a metaphysical life – and I would argue that this is not at odds with the underlying sentiment in the work of Thomas Hardy. The lines above from Yeats' poem signal the 'anarchy' which is 'loosed upon the world' when 'the center cannot hold' and it may be recognised too in Hardyean fiction, that despite the ambivalence in Hardy's texts on the operation of didactic Christianity, his greatest dread and the one he intuitively

via the idea of a remorseless Immanent Will, is the day when some ethical center 'cannot hold'. In *Thomas Hardy: Interviews and Recollections*, an anonymous correspondent who conversed with Hardy is quoted:

Asked what he thought of literature today, Mr. Hardy said 'The fatal defect of most of it is the absence of a philosophic standpoint, and what lacks that cannot be of the highest quality or enduring. Descriptions of life, however brilliant or varied, are not sufficient; some reasoned comment is essential on life as a whole, some sustained criticism – the outcome of modern knowledge – on the relations of man to the universe, both now and in the past.'⁹

Hardy's comments reveal a belief that fiction has a duty to reveal a philosophical undertow in its narrative. Without that literature 'cannot be of the highest quality or enduring.' Of particular significance are his insights on a quasi-cosmological perspective, the idea of a 'sustained criticism' which is 'the outcome of modern knowledge – on the relations of man to universe, both now and in the past.'

In these comments by the author we find a parallel with the aims of this thesis – an attempt to articulate some sub-textual impulse in Hardy's novels that reveal a dynamic philosophical and ethical awareness. But the words that become illuminated in this context are 'modern knowledge', especially when we consider what Hardy stated next in his view of the past:

'Don't suppose for a moment that I am hostile to the Christian religion. I often wish that I had lived in the Middle Ages, when the Church was supreme and unquestioned.' (p75)

Here we find Hardy's specific appreciation of the purity of medieval religious practice, and implicit in that is the idea of a spiritualised and immanent intellect.

⁸ The poem 'The Second Coming' by W. B. Yeats appears in *Selected Poems*, ed. Webb T., (London: Penguin 2000)

⁹ Gibson J., (ed.), *Thomas Hardy : Interviews and Recollections* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1999) p75

In terms of the discussion of Immanence in this chapter, Hardy creates a character like Tess to show that human striving, and the idea of a journey of enlightenment, one which may mirror the 'God The Son' dialectic, is nevertheless via his female protagonist, a worthwhile life even if society decides to punish those whom are perceived to be its transgressors. It is the immanent Christian narrative embodied in Tess (and powered by the author's creative intuition) which is revealed through a fictional female character in rural Wessex. And it is this contradiction in Hardy that always lies like a beating heart in the sub-text of his work – an apparent personal agnosticism allied to an acutely aware spiritual sensibility. Whilst Hardy may have felt ambivalent of some of Christianity's methods, he perhaps dreaded more the total absence of it as an ultimately ethical structure, a nightmare scenario which would have produced a Godless universe, one which in the poet Yeats' terms, would have produced 'a blood-dimmed tide' where 'the ceremony of innocence is drowned'. The characters of Tess and Angel Clare therefore contribute to the idea of a 'ceremony of innocence'. They are not perfect manifestations of the divine, but they approximate the human form of it in both their goodness and in their errors. Immanence therefore is the 'divine spark' within them, but they are not wholly divine – they have been created by the author as representations of humanity in a quasi-Paradisaal state, the landscape of Wessex.

When Tess learns from her fellow workers that a parson is preaching in the area she is working in, she retorts: 'Pooh – I don't believe God said such things!' (p92). This is a manifestation of Hardy's position – his characters do not lack goodness despite their disbelief at what God has meant to have 'said'. However, Thomas Aquinas' theology does give credence to the idea of the Word as an animating force, and one in which all living things may participate in. Gilles Emery describes the view of Aquinas

on this idea of participation in the Word:

The enfiliation of creatures is thus conceived as an 'assimilation to the Word; it consists of being rendered 'like' the Son who is the Word of God. From one angle this 'assimilation' is universal since, as we have seen, creatures are made through the Word, it is through him that they are sustained in being, and again it is through him that they are led to their end. This does not just happen 'from the outside', but 'from within', by dint of a participation in the Word. In themselves, creatures have and express something of the Word himself. This 'something' does not consist in the spiritual character ('intellectuality') of such a participation, but rather in the expression of the Word through each creature, or, the fact that each creature is what it is by its 'form'. The Word is that from which all these things issue, because the Word is their creative source and uncreated model. So, as the expression of the Son, the world participates in his sonship: such is the 'filial' status of the whole universe.¹⁰

This substantial quotation which explains Aquinas' view on the Son (Christ) as representing the idea of the Word has valid relevance to the construction of philosophy, theology and the notion of the intuitive protagonist in the works of Hardy. Firstly, Hardy himself and indeed many of his protagonists may be categorised, like Tess, as sceptical or at the very least ambivalent about the idea of a rigid adherence to the 'word', if we take the meaning of the 'word', to mean didactic moralising constraints and an undesirable enervation of nature and natural impulses. Secondly, it is interesting to consider the line which reads 'This does not just happen 'from the outside' but 'from within' in relation to the idea of the sustenance of 'creatures' by which we mean all human life. Thirdly, the rather radical idea that the experience of the Word does not consist in the 'intellectuality' of the spiritual character but is experienced as something from which 'all these things issue' and 'is their creative source and uncreated model' needs examination.

The implication from Aquinas is that the Word is in fact more of an animating

¹⁰ Gilles, E., *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p205-206

spirit than a linguistic phenomenon. Moreover, it comes ‘from within’ - this perception points to the idea of the Word as Immanence, therefore we may deduce that the Word is not only from God but within us. Finally, on the notion of emanation, according to Aquinas we understand that the Word is manifestly a spiritual phenomenon, one that is neither without beginning or end, and one that is in all living things. The Word therefore, in this analysis of Aquinas’ meaning, does not operate as a linguistic and separate locus of energy in the spiritual sphere at all – it is, in fact, the actual component of all consciousness. It is Immanent.

In this case, occasional doubters such as Hardy and his fictional characters like Tess who say they do not believe everything that God ‘says’ are perhaps alluding (in parallel to Thomas Aquinas) to some intuition that the true Word is not a didactic linguistic force. Hardy’s fiction implies that the Word is paradoxically an unspoken force (a Word without words, which has allusions to monastic and anchoritic communities) and one that may be accessed through the silent intuition. If we are to understand Aquinas here, we may also speculate that even our sceptical consciousness itself is a manifestation of the Word - as all things exist from it, even our scepticism. This type of religious and philosophical enquiry implies a structure of immanence – that is, everything, including our own cognition, emanates from God.

Tess, therefore, is adamant that she does not believe that God is meant to have *said* certain things and she may be right to do so – she is hinting perhaps unconsciously that such a route to spiritual linguistics is not the path to pure allegiance to her idea of integrity, a desire for non-linguistic verisimilitude, what we may speculate as the true meaning of the Word. Angel Clare, however, is paradoxically occupying the other end of that spectrum in his obsessive attention to the word as he views it. This manifests

itself in his loss of compassion at the moment he finds out that Tess has had an intimate past with Alec d'Urberville, even if that experience would normally elicit sympathy, that is, it was after all the result of a violent 'seduction', and the result of that experience was a child who died:

'Now let us understand each other,' he said gently. 'There is no anger between us, though there is that which I cannot endure at present. I will try to bring myself to endure it. I will let you know where I go, as soon as I know myself. And if I can bring myself to bear it – if it is desirable, possible – I will come to you. But until I come to you it will be better that you should not try to come to me.' (p272)

Angel Clare 'cannot endure' the truth of Tess's past, even if she was victimised. That she has stepped down from the pedestal of ultimate physical purity (an ideal that approximates the idea of Mary, the mother of Christ) is enough for Angel Clare to decide to abandon her eventually, as according to his Christian principles, he cannot condone an allegiance to her. Thus Tess may seem anti-Christian in her scepticism that God would have articulated the religious expositions she saw painted on stones in the countryside, but Angel who professes to follow the 'word' of God rejects Tess who has been sacrificed by the worst elements of humanity in the form of Alec d'Urberville.

This contradictory oscillation between notions of mercy in human behaviour and notions of the ideal in metaphysical aims reflects our earlier discussion of Hardy's idea of the Immanent Will. The Immanent Will may be seen to be an intractable force, but consciousness (which emanates from it) goes back to that original source (the Will) and informs the entirety, the Whole. Thus Angel Clare's attitudes are fixed, but Tess represents an opportunity for change in his consciousness, not by what happens to him, but importantly - by what happens to her. This reflects the discourse of Christ too. If we speculate therefore that some nineteenth century novels may be viewed as secular

representations of the Bible¹¹, I suggest that Hardy subverts the idea of the agency of the Word in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. What may appear to be a brief and flippant remark spoken by Tess in one short sentence in the novel '...I don't believe God said such things!' is an important sign of its radical theological undertow. In line with Hardy's own views that literature should contain a philosophy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* builds a philosophy based on the idea of the sacrifice of Tess. But I suggest that in presenting a perspective of ambivalence concerning ideas of 'the word' (the social rules and prejudices that may arise from religion) the novel nevertheless paradoxically enhances a powerful sense of the indefinable 'Word' (the purity of the essence of the Christian narrative) operating through the inherent goodness of Tess. This innate (or immanent) goodness in Tess, when juxtaposed against Angel Clare who cannot see further than the conventional and reduced sense of the meaning of 'the word' becomes apparent. The difference in this thesis in the upper case and lower case depictions of the idea of the 'Word' or 'the word' signify the two different manifestations of it – it either represents the spirit and nobility of Tess's desire for verisimilitude of integrity (the Word) or it represents Angel Clare's imprisonment by language (the word). Hardy therefore represents the spiritual potential of Tess as a phenomenon that is not embedded in language. Angel Clare, by contrast, whose spirit is embedded in language, 'the word', awaits release from it. As he has stated: 'And if I can bring myself to bear it – if it is desirable, possible – I will come to you.' This statement reveals Angel's entrapment in merciless morality. Hardy's fiction therefore becomes the means through which the author achieves a narrative of the spiritual complexity of 'following the word'. Instead, I argue that the novel valorises the idea of a non-verbal and immanent engagement with the spirit of the Word. Moreover, away from religion

¹¹ Professor Norman Vance, University of Sussex, has posited this view.

and towards aesthetics (alluding to the previous discussion on art in this chapter) we may conclude that the novel genre in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is the *representation* of a discussion on the opportunity for freedom of the Word versus the idea of entrapment in 'the word'. But the philosophical dilemma, via the drama of Tess and Angel, is its *expression*.

The idea of the significance of words, and the idea of words that are heard is carried throughout the novel in scenes such as the time Tess encounters Angel for a second time after their first meeting at the dance. On this occasion she hears a voice responding in conversation with the dairyman who is relating the story of a deceased character who is lying in Mellstock churchyard. Angel's response, even though Tess cannot see who is speaking is as follows: 'It's a curious story; it carries us back to mediaeval times, when faith was a living thing'. (p127) This is another example of an apparently innocuous remark, a short sentence in the novel, which carries with it strong meaning in the context of the entire novel. The apparently honourable perception by Angel on faith as a living thing becomes distorted through the judgment he eventually imposes on Tess. This fatal error of adherence to the idea of faith as implacable judgment is ironic, as Angel originally eschewed the life of a parson in order to study agriculture instead. When Angel's father is shocked at his son's decision not to become a minister, Angel replies:

'I should like to say, once for all, that I should prefer not to take orders. I fear I could not conscientiously do so. I love the Church as one loves a parent. I shall always have the warmest affection for her. There is no institution for whose history I have a deeper admiration; but I cannot honestly be ordained her minister, as my brothers are, while she refuses to liberate her mind from an untenable redemptive theolatriy.' (p131)

In this quotation Angel Clare describes his position on the matter of 'the Church'. It is noteworthy that he uses the term – 'the Church'. The implication is that religion is seen to be an edifice, a metaphorical building of a structure, and one that Angel views rather

like 'a parent'. But in his remarks that the Church cannot 'liberate her mind from an untenable redemptive theolatriy' he suggests a cynicism of the idea of the suffering Christ on the cross and the attendant ideas that Christ died for humankind. It may be said that little does Angel know that the effect of such a narrative will make itself known to him by the end of the novel. Through Tess's suffering and death, his soul achieves an education on earth. For now, the idea of 'redemptive theolatriy' as he names it, is apparently 'untenable' to Angel and in this way he demonstrates the departure from the linguistic signifier his name suggests. Angels do not desert the idea of the suffering Christ, a key trope of Christianity. But here, it seems that Hardy's Angel does desert that idea in his attitudes to redemption. In the same way, he literally deserts the symbolic Christological figure of Tess. Angel tells his father he cannot adhere to the idea of redemption through the suffering Christ, but there is also an implication in the novel that he also believes in faith as a living thing, as it was in medieval times. These two conflicting strands of Angel's beliefs reveal that on the one hand, he eschews the spectral idea of death – the idea of the dying Christ threatens his sensibility. But on the other hand, the idea of faith as a 'living thing' reinforces his apparent preference for faith as part of the conscious material of daily life. In these ways he demonstrates a somewhat unformed divine entity. He is a metaphorical (unenlightened) angel and also in terms of a re-ordered Trinity, a manifestation of a Holy Spirit that has not developed its fullest message. Tess (the metaphorical female Christ) will die to facilitate these changes.

In terms of our analysis of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and in particular the suggestion that there are intimations of the life of Christ in the character of Tess and a journey of hardship which ends in death, this early introduction to Angel's perspective on the notion of redemption is a less than encouraging sign that Tess is in the company

of a truly angelic character. Saint Augustine's work *City of God* includes several discussions of angels and regards their good will as having being imbued in them by the Creator. Bad will in angels is seen to be caused by a lack, rather than a positive determination towards the bad:

Those other angels were created good but have become evil by their own bad will; and this bad will did not originate from their nature, which was good. It came through a voluntary falling away from the good, so that evil is caused not by good but by falling away from the good. Either they received less grace of the divine love than did the others, who continued in that grace, or, if both were created equally good, the one sort fell through their evil will, while the others had greater help to enable them to attain to the fullness of bliss with the complete assurance that they will never fall away ...¹²

Here, Augustine provides a framework for the idea of 'lack' - that 'evil' or at the very least a fall from 'grace' is a void in what was originally a pure emanation from God. Augustine allows for the idea of a 'falling away' from 'the good' and considers that even angels who may have had an evil intention may have lacked assistance to know better or to 'attain to the fullness of bliss'. Angels in the context of an Augustinian narrative are seen as fallible and most definitely not the implacably pure and divine entities that more stereotypical Victorian depictions may represent. It is the immanent experience of knowing Tess in the world which enlightens the soul of Angel, and teaches him more than he may ever have known from strict adherence to 'the word'. As Augustine would describe it, angels have a certain role:

Certainly the angels (the Platonists prefer to call them gods) have their part to play, at God's command, or by God's permission, in relation to the creatures which are born in the world. But we do not call them creators of living beings any more than we call farmers the creators of crops and trees. (p504)

Augustine clarifies that angels do not create the world and are therefore by implication

¹² Saint Augustine, transl. Bettenson H., *City of God* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003) p482

not the embodiment of the Supreme Intellect. They are the mediators - they 'have their part to play' but only by 'God's command' and 'God's permission'. If we consider a re-worked Trinity in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* we may consider that God is the Ultimate One, Tess is the female Christ and Angel is the mediator who has lost through didactic adherence to 'the word' some communication skills.

Angel Clare's grounded position as a metaphorical 'angel' who needs to learn mercy is therefore activated by the tragedy of Tess, but also significantly by the moral impact of being amongst a rural community. Hardy's implication is that the instinctive faith of rural individuals has an enlightening effect on the sensibility of over-educated and anxious middle class individuals of late Victorian society. Angel Clare receives his ethical education not in the confines of his father's church, but by his interaction with Tess and workers such as those at Talbothays Farm. There is therefore a sense of an ethical and immanent re-ordering of the status quo, a diversion away from the notion of being 'taught' Christian awareness. Hardy creates an impressionistic sense of the humanity of people affecting and changing Angel's immanent sensibility:

Unexpectedly he began to like the outdoor life for its own sake, and for what it brought, apart from its bearing on his own proposed career. Considering his position he became wonderfully free from the chronic melancholy which is taking hold of the civilized races with the decline of belief in a beneficent power. For the first time of late years he could read as his musings inclined him, without any eye to cramming for a profession; since the few farming handbooks which he deemed it desirable to master occupied him but little time. He grew away from old associations, and saw something new in life and humanity. Secondarily he 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. (p134)

Here we find a multitude of senses brought to the intuition of Angel Clare – a gradual

burnishing of an already spiritual sensibility so that it glows with a sense of being in the right place and amongst the right impressions. This is effectively described in the line 'he became wonderfully free from the chronic melancholy which is taking hold of civilised races with the decline of belief in a beneficent power'. The irony of this thought as having such a powerfully affirmative effect on Angel is that there was no concrete reason why he should feel such melancholy before he came to Talbothays. It may be argued that his childhood spiritual needs were at least met in the sense that his family certainly believed in 'a beneficent power'. However, there is a suggestion of arrested spiritual development in the character of Angel before he came to Talbothays and lived amongst the workers, a restlessness which he expressed by eschewing the idea of redemptive 'theolatriy'.

We have noted that Tess has been constructed as revealing some intimation of spirituality and this is evident in situations such as the scene where Angel hears her speaking to her co-workers at the farm:

'I don't know – about ghosts' she was saying 'But I do know that our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive'. (p135)

This statement from Tess is an example of the ever-present intuitive spirituality at the heart of her energy – these allusions to her having a spectral sense of the noumenal are complicated but not compromised by her outbursts of scepticism on what God has said, or indeed on the question of Biblical exegesis as a fact or not. Thus Hardy, through Tess, and in a very subtle conflation of Tess's intuition and Angel's immature and developing enlightenment, creates a narrative which is an outlet for late nineteenth century reasoning and enquiry on the notion of a religious life. I argue that Hardy did not have a 'crisis of faith', rather, he had a crisis of interpretation, and this he ameliorated through his novels. Tess states that she 'knows' that 'our souls can be made

to go outside our bodies when we are alive' which is a direct sign of her as representing some immanent power. If the soul can be 'made' to 'go outside' the body, then there is an implication here that some notion of a more personal and immanent Will is activated. It implies (but typically in Hardyean fashion, there is no detailed explanation) that Tess has an agency which she is aware of, that she is indeed already willfully operating as a creature both of this world and 'the other'. Her explanation, when Angel asks her to clarify what she means, is based on a natural and intuitive scenario, not a philosophical reasoning. She describes how souls 'go' out of the body thus:

'A very easy way to feel 'em go,' continued Tess, 'is to lie on the grass at night, and look up at some bright star; and by fixing your mind upon it you will soon find that you are hundreds and hundreds o' miles away from your body, which you don't seem to want at all.' (p136)

Here, Tess describes what we may rationally describe as a disassociated cognitive state, but it is interesting to note that it fits well into narratives of both religious and pagan discourse. It is the fixation on a 'bright star' in this quotation which has allusions to the birth of Christ, plus notions of heaven by an upward searching. The idea of the human body described by Tess as something 'which you don't seem to want at all' is allied to the foregrounding of the soul as the prime entity. The entire scene is full of a type of pagan beauty – the vision of Tess lying on the grass at night and fixing her gaze on 'some bright star' paints a picture of her as a nature goddess. But the words in the phrase 'fixing your mind on it' point once again, I would argue, to the foregrounding of the idea of a spiritualised intellect rather than an erotic Romantic association with nature. This is another example of the subtlety of difference in Hardy's work between notions of conventional Romanticism and the legacy of a spiritualised mind.

Tess is attempting to describe how 'by fixing your mind on it', you may achieve a state of bodiless transcendence. It is the force of Tess's intuitive mind which

facilitates this action - not an external force. She is not receiving some form of illumination, she is instead projecting out towards the stars the 'divine spark' within – her immanent energy. Such a scene reinforces the unusual way Thomas Hardy creates unique characters throughout his novels who seem to embody at various stages of their narratives, delineated features of isolation, intellect, illumination and immanence. It is the introduction of the Christological figure of Tess which educates Angel, not exclusively by the conventional tropes of erotic love, but by her particular type of sensibility which lies in an unusual immanence of mind. In a scene in the garden before she makes herself known to Angel where he is playing the harp, Hardy describes the framing of this intuition:

Tess was conscious of neither time nor space. The exaltation which she had described as being producible at will by gazing at a star, came now without any determination of hers; she undulated upon the thin notes of the second-hand harp, and their harmonies passed like breezes through her, bringing tears into her eyes. The floating pollen seemed to be his notes made visible, and the dampness of the garden the weeping of the garden's sensibility. Though near nightfall, the rank-smelling weed flowers glowed as if they would not close, for intentness, and the waves of colours mixed with the waves of sound. (p139)

In the first sentence which states that 'Tess was conscious of neither time nor space', once again we view her as someone whose disembodied intuition occupies a space that is described as outside conventional mathematical notions of the universe. The conflation of her disembodied consciousness and the music she hears from the harp is described as having the type of power that renders even the idea of an immanent Will redundant.

The effect of the harp has created the perfect pitch of a kind of intellectual enlightenment. The experience of a spiritualised, intellectual enlightenment is akin to music – significantly, a non-linguistic art form. It involves the profundity of the Word in the material world, without the need for representational language. The historical

aesthetics of the angel figure playing a harp in pictorial representation (akin to the aesthetics of Gabriel in *Far From The Madding Crowd* playing the flute) is in place. But what is also noteworthy is the line that ‘the harmonies passed like breezes through her’ adding to the idea of Tess as more of a spiritual phenomenon than a bodily mass.

Moreover, and important to the idea of the diffusion of material and metaphysical boundaries is the production of synaesthesia in Tess’s mind as she experiences the effect of the music – ‘the waves of colours mixed with the waves of sound’.

Synaesthesia – the effect of impressions being mingled and received by the receptor as a limitless effect of sensory experiences, enhances the scene with Tess and Angel here as one of an unusual intellectual meeting of limitless potential. By experiencing the sensation of ‘neither time nor space’ Hardy seems to imply that the mind can, even without language, explore new worlds. I suggest that this is the site of Hardy’s quasi-religious sensibility. It lies in the limitless experience of a particular mind, but not something that we dismiss with the simple word ‘creativity.’ Here we discern an intuitive and spiritualised mind in the field of science.

Thomas Hardy, in my view, demonstrated a parallel sensibility in his work. Outside of time and space, the mind achieves its potential, including an apprehension of God. This cannot be fully expressed in terms of a concrete philosophical or religious structure by Hardy, but it may be expressed in his fiction. Indeed, Hardy alludes to elements of this narrative by making a statement through Angel on the intellectual history of western culture. Angel reflects on Tess’s fears of some intuitive sense that the future is warning her and concludes:

She was expressing in her own native phrases – assisted a little by her sixth standard training – feelings which might almost have been called those of the age – the ache of modernism. The perception arrested him less when he reflected that what are called advanced ideas are really in great part but the latest fashion in definition – a more accurate expression, by words *-logy* and *-ism*, of sensations which men and

women have vaguely grasped for centuries. (p140)

Here, Hardy reveals through the mouthpiece of his fictional angelic character, a definite scepticism of intellectualisation, something he perceives as different from the intuitive intellect, the latter which more closely approximates ‘sensations which men and women have vaguely grasped for centuries’. Hardy conveys through Angel, irritation at the notion of ‘advanced ideas’ which are in his view ancient perceptions dressed up in words ending in *-logy* and *-ism*. In this way he quite firmly demonstrates a clear distaste for superficial posturing of the basic intellect. Instead, old, indeed perhaps ancient beliefs that are sensed (or intuited) seem to be given credence here in respect of Hardy’s/Angel’s views. Moreover, I would argue that Hardy hints throughout much of his fiction that he has an intuitive regard for the ideal of ‘faith as a living thing.’ Faith as a ‘living thing’ in Hardyean fiction is described through fictional characters who are living in a state of intellectual spiritual awareness that is neither always conventionally religious nor purely secular – but it is an experience of an immanent and inescapable presence, as Tess’s insights demonstrate when she attempts to articulate an existence outside of time and space.

Whether Hardy was familiar with medieval scholars such as St Thomas Aquinas or not, there is some evidence in the sub-text of his fiction, as this thesis has aimed to show, that there exists a consistency of one key concept – the idea, allied to Aquinas’ views, that access to the Word is not through rational intellect alone, but through an intuitive, that is, mindful, sense of its immanence. According to this medieval theology, it is the expression of the Word through each living thing that is the animating principle. And nineteenth century writers such as Hardy appear to be approaching the same concept in terms of an idea of attunement to what is ‘within’ – or immanent – and the educative value of a life lived on earth. This is the modern

re-fashioning of Faith in Hardy's works, but it is indeed ironic that it also refers to medieval notions from scholars such as Aquinas, the paradox being that in some way Hardy's sensibility has gone backwards in time, to subconsciously and intuitively access medieval notions of religious sensibility, in order to modernise the prevailing nineteenth century culture of religion that existed at the later part of that century. This I argue is a suggestion of the folly of assumptions that intellectual progress is inherently linear – Hardy's works demonstrate in their sub-text that the new world (that is, the onset of the twentieth century) does not necessarily predict a better intuition. Indeed, Hardy depicts Tess as dejected by what she perceives to be her dullness when compared to what appear to be Angel's attributes:

At first Tess seemed to regard Angel as an intelligence rather than as a man. As such she compared him with herself; and at every discovery of the abundance of his illuminations, of the distance between her own modest mental standpoint and the unmeasureable, Andean altitude of his, she became quite dejected, disheartened from all further effort on her part whatsoever. (p141)

This quotation demonstrates Hardy's sophisticated treatment of the multi-layered narrative of the intuitive intellect. He has portrayed Tess as having a highly developed intellectual capacity, but a rather un-educated one when compared to Angel Clare, who has enjoyed a formal education as a by-product of his family's better financial status. However, Hardy describes Tess's thoughts here as having an innocent humility and an unawareness of her own capacity: 'the distance between her own modest mental standpoint and the unmeasureable.' Hardy's anti-intellectualism (in the conventional sense of academia) is once again apparent here, reinforcing his unease at notions of formal education as the apex of proof of the heightened intellect. It would be interesting to consider if this is a defence mechanism Hardy employs from a sense of empathy and frustration on behalf of poor and disenfranchised peoples. In this way, it may be argued

that his apparent anti-intellectualism demonstrates in the sub-text of his work an almost Dickensian concern for the lack of opportunity for the disadvantaged classes of Victorian society. However, it may also be argued that Hardy's unease at the notion of formal education (evident also in *Jude the Obscure*) may be a genuinely-felt perspective based on his own intuitive belief that true 'knowledge' lies in a more metaphysical realm. In this way he approximates, ironically, the narrative of one of the most religious cultures of our cultural history, that of the medieval Scholastics. As with Tess, the metaphorical light that Hardy places at the centre of his protagonists' intuitions is an immanent understanding that over-reaches conventional notions of learning.

This is not the same phenomenon as pure Romanticism, or simply the idea of the lone genius in society. It is a system of living and thinking that Hardy may have been unconsciously alluding to – an intelligent intuition – and one that is democratically available to all, as he so ably showed in the 'angelic' characters of his often poverty stricken landscapes. At this juncture, it may be appropriate to consider again the views of Thomas Aquinas:

More perfect then is the intellectual life of angels, in which intellects know themselves not from outside but by knowing themselves in themselves. And yet their life isn't yet the acme of perfection, for although the idea in their mind is altogether within them it isn't what they are, since in them to exist is different from to understand....The acme of perfection in life, then, belongs to God, in whom to exist is to understand...so that in God the idea in his mind is what God himself is.

13

Thomas Aquinas describes intellect as the 'most perfect level of life', giving to it a sense of metaphysical attainment. He also states that humans must learn things 'by knowing outside things' and that these things 'can't be understood without sense images', so giving credence to the fact that as humans we need the exterior material

world in order to know some things. However, according to Aquinas it is angels who are regarded as beings that know things ‘not from outside’ but from ‘knowing themselves in themselves’. Angels do not have to look outside to know, they can know from within. Their knowledge is immanent. However, even angels have not attained what God has, as according to Aquinas, God *is* the very idea in his own mind. In this way, God is seen not as a hectoring figure but as pure intellect, a state of ultimate intellectual being that exists as immanent mind. Thomas Aquinas’ view of pure intellect as God implies an ethical structure – God is not an indifferent entity in the medieval mind. But Thomas Hardy, who lived six centuries after Aquinas, appears to be struggling between two notions of Mind. One is his Immanent Will which seems borne out of resignation, doubt, and even fear. The other is a sense, pervasive, but not made explicit in his work of a more benign Mind – a sense that he intuitively feels something akin to Aquinas’ notion of God as Mind, one that is mediated through the ‘angels’ of his fictional characters. In the medieval hierarchy, God is the ultimate Mind, the Angels are above humans, and human life is a little below the angels. It may be argued that Thomas Hardy the author has described (unwittingly) his human characters in the same way.

However, in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* the female protagonist subverts that hierarchy. She is human but representative of the ultimate narrative of enlightenment. In order to find cohesion with that ultimate Mind (or God) Tess as an allegorical figure of the Christ narrative must suffer. She tells Alec d’Urberville: ‘I believe in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount’ . . .’ (p341) even though she states that she may not believe in the ‘supernatural.’ In common with Angel Clare, Tess as an ordinary farm worker in rural Wessex is sceptical of the miraculous nature of the supernatural, but the irony is that Hardy creates through the experiences she suffers an effect of the supernatural

¹³ Aquinas T., ed. McDermott T., *Selected Philosophical Writings* World’s Classics (London: Oxford University Press, 2008) p116

about her. Her 'difference', the sense that she is touched by an other-worldly aura is compounded in the example of the conversation Angel has with Tess's mother as he seeks her:

'Do you think Tess would wish me to try to find her?' If not, of course.....
 'I don't think she would.'
 'Are you sure?'
 'I am sure she wouldn't.'
 He was turning away, and then he thought of Tess's tender letter.
 'I am sure she would!' he retorted passionately. 'I know her better than you do.'
 'That's very likely sir, for I have never really known her.' (p397)

This conversation between Angel and Tess's mother adds to the sense that a supernatural quality does indeed encircle Tess. Hardy gives no real explanation throughout the novel as to why she should be perceived as different, 'never really known her' by members of her own family except for, as discussed, a brief allusion to the different education she received compared to her parents. There is an assumption in the novel that Tess is unique, and indeed, the uniqueness is bound up in the idea of her as a site for the dual action of suffering and sacrifice in the novel. By the time Angel Clare finds his capacity for mercy and articulates this to Tess, the fatal trajectory of her life is already set:

'I will not desert you; I will protect you by every means in my power, dearest love, whatever you may have done or not have done!' (p408)

The possibility of escape proves futile for Tess as the dawn lights the sky at Stonehenge and a punitive crowd encroaches to take her to her death. Angel's sudden illumination has arrived too late. Not for him - but for her. It is his soul that has been saved, but it is her body that must die. The narrative of the enlightenment of the soul has been achieved through the immanent suffering of a significant female 'other' in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

Earlier in the novel, Angel Clare had scornfully rejected the notion of the redemptive crucifixion in his religious views, but the person whom Hardy chose to educate Angel within a (male) Christological narrative was a woman.

At the end of the novel, the author gives to his protagonist three final words:

‘I am ready.’ (p418)

end

CONCLUSION

Thomas Hardy's novels encapsulate a wide landscape of human and spiritual experience. This thesis has aimed to focus on one element that it proposes exists in the sub-narrative of Hardy's novels – a dynamic, spiritual intuition. It is argued that through this intuition, which is activated through the thoughts, actions and subconscious awareness of his protagonists, Thomas Hardy reveals impulses that defy literal interpretations of his often expressed agnosticism. That Hardy may have doubted the existence of God is one factor in his conscious articulations, but his creative work speaks of a more subconscious and complex intuition of profundity, particularly in the light of Greek philosophical narratives of the Ideal, and the Active Intellect.

In attempting to show a structure to this somewhat subtle and wide-ranging sense of the numinous, the thesis was organised into four different sections and the titles of these chapter headings separated out the components of the complex idea of spiritual intuition – Isolation, Intellect, Illumination and Immanence. It is notable that the first letter of each word has a metaphorical significance – the 'I' of its alliteration is redolent of the sense of the 'I' of the self, and the 'I' of the immanent being, if we take the ultimate spiritual entity to be that which, in the terms expressed by the Medieval philosopher Anselm, is that than which no greater can be conceived.¹ In this way, the cultural phenomenon of religion appears to offer isolated humanity the opportunity to experience the expansiveness of being coterminous with a sense of the most supreme entity imaginable, that 'noumenon' which cannot be exceeded. It has been part of the contention of this thesis, that such an experience is not exclusively a

¹ An extract from Anselm's 'Monologion 3' may be found in *Philosophy of Religion* (ed.) Davies, B., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p186-187

construct of creed, didacticism, historical tenets, obedience, sexuality, or feeling, and that in terms of literary criticism it may be useful to approach a writer such as Hardy by paying attention to the idea of a disembodied, spiritualised intellect rather than through the prisms of established interpretative paradigms such as Marxism, Freudian analysis and Feminism. Such an intellect may be discerned in characters we find in Hardy's fiction but in many other works of literature too – we may ask if this is an area that has been hitherto occluded by the grand narratives of academic literary criticism. At its most basic level, the idea that writers have produced such characters (those who do not fit neatly into a particular narrative but who seem to be unusually connected to the idea of the metaphysical) may lead us to question if the general idea that fictional characters as being the vehicles through which writers could express their (even somewhat secularised) spiritual intuition has been rather overlooked. We may not believe in the idea of a spiritual intuition anyway, and relegate it into the category of psychology. But this thesis has by the tenor of its approach asked us to put aside the considerable weight of psychological and psychoanalytical approaches in literary criticism and consider an alternative approach.

We may say spiritually aware and intuitive individuals are everywhere in literature, and dominant, for instance, in Wordsworth, but we are reluctant to cite many novels where this may be the case too unless we are energetically positing a narrative (critical or affirmative) on 'religion'. The whole question of 'religion' is not entirely separate from this debate, but it must be understood to be a different entity from the notion of the spiritualised and democratic intellect I have proposed here. Thomas Hardy, in all his complex attitudes discloses nevertheless one consistent phenomenon throughout all his novels – the idea of an active and spiritual intuitive intellect operating in his key protagonists. I argue that this particular strand of

awareness was not adopted in enough quantity or quality in the literary aftermath of his death – D. H. Lawrence became the voice of a type of erotic sensibility mixed with a metaphysical ether. Virginia Woolf expressed the notion of neurotic sensitivity and became a literary embodiment herself for the monolithic cult of psychology – a movement that has held the majority of the twenty-first century in its grip, an acutely secularist and atheistic critical culture becoming increasingly the norm if we ground all human narratives in a psychological ontology. However, the twenty-first century is now witnessing the emergence of a metaphysical sensibility, even in the polarised ways in which Richard Dawkins feels the need to vociferously deny God whilst Keith Ward responds that there probably is a God after all. No doubt the tensions of warfare and competing theologies contribute in extreme ways to adherents to both sides of the debate. Spirituality or secularism – it is, or should be, anybody's democratic choice. But we no longer live in a time that feels unequivocally Godless, whoever, if anyone, your God or Gods are.

What is emerging, I argue, is a sense of the intellect as becoming spiritualised and this is different from our previously-held notions of 'religious people'. In common with a desire for more rational and compassionate relations between communities and countries, rather than turning away from religion and spirituality, there is renewed interest in the idea of what I posit is a somewhat secularised and intellectual intuition, one that can accommodate the ideas of both God and ambivalence in a more dynamic way than the word 'agnosticism' implies. By that, I suggest that writers such as Hardy were promoting, albeit subconsciously, in their work the idea of a dynamic, intellectual engagement with the notion of metaphysical possibilities – the sense that the universe in both material and metaphorical terms is not wholly explained by science and rationalism or indeed art and emotion. The

contention of this thesis is that Thomas Hardy was one of the first fictional authors of this perspective. His rural characters speak to us from the late nineteenth century to the twenty-first. Many of their qualities are silent. The aim of this thesis, as stated in the Introduction, was to allow the silent quality of the spiritual intuition in Thomas Hardy's novels to speak.

In Chapter One, titled 'Isolation', I discussed the notion that Isolation is invariably the right context for apprehension of the Ideal, and demonstrated ways in which this was derived from legacies of the Anchorite and Monastic tradition. In Hardy's novel *The Woodlanders* the figure of Marty South was identified as a somewhat hidden but powerful representative of the isolated figure in society who nevertheless is gifted with ethical insight and courage. This discussion led us to consider how Hardy gave to the novel genre a complex achievement of the de-centring of the protagonist. In this way, Giles Winterborne may appear to be the conventional protagonist in the novel, but Marty's intuition is the main protagonist, accessed through her character which appears to be subordinate. A character like Marty does not have the dramatic force of a Jane Eyre, but by Hardy's progressive treatment of the intuitive individual he gave us a sense of the power of a silent observer. Moreover, the totalising idea of genre – that the nineteenth century novel is invariably a linear progression or *Bildungsroman* – the story of the development of a key individual – is challenged by Hardy's modernising techniques. It is not triumph, but loss, at the end of *The Woodlanders*, resulting in a profoundly philosophical expression articulated by Marty, 'for you was a good man, and did good things' – a simple statement which also encapsulates the narrative of Christ – who stands for the isolation of the human endeavour.

Another factor relevant to genre discussed in Chapter One is the way Hardy achieves a unique exposition of nature worship by describing Marty and Giles's close affiliation with the natural world around them. The chapter argued that this wistful affirmation of nature differs in subtle and complex ways from the resolution and identification with nature we traditionally find in pure Romanticism. Nature does not offer answers to the main characters of *The Woodlanders*, instead it provides an elegiac but ultimately powerless background to their special intuition. There is no final achievement for Marty other than adherence to her qualities - which reminds us of the stoicism and selflessness of the isolated religious recluse.

In Chapter Two, entitled 'Intellect' the thesis examined *Jude the Obscure* and the idea of Intellect, a word open to several interpretations. For this discussion we abandoned twenty-first century notions of the intellect as mere material knowledge, and assumed the Medieval idea of a spiritualised intellect (notwithstanding the value Medieval scholastics also placed on material education). In this discussion I considered how Hardyean criticism has debated the value or not of what appears to be the dark tragedy of *Jude the Obscure*, a narrative that seems to contain no message of hope. I argued that in contention with much of the criticism which places the novel in the category of irredeemably tragic, *Jude the Obscure* in fact demonstrates a more affirmative message - allegiance to Aristotelian notions of the value of the Active Intellect. Chapter Two also examined briefly the views of other philosophers such as Maimonides and Aquinas and concluded that a strong trope in western spiritual narrative is the superiority of the immaterial over the material, and in this way, Jude's death may be understood in the context of this radical reading, as rather more affirmative. The profound legacy of western spiritual discourse which privileges the metaphysical over the material is displayed in the final scene as Jude dies, smiling.

Whilst much critical attention has cited this as a prime example of Hardy's dark cynicism, this thesis argued that it was instead a valorisation of the idea of the Medieval and spiritual intellect – metaphorised by the angel as a symbol for the disembodied intellect, which ultimately joins the universalising One in death. Chapter Two therefore examined Hardy's perspectives of the Sophoclean idea that it is better not to have been born, once again offering the perspective that this is less a sign of nihilistic darkness in Hardy, but a sign of the philosophical opportunities life offers, in Hardy's terms, to examine the value of life, no matter how much suffering is involved, as representing the progression of the intellect until it achieves integration with the One.

In Chapter Three, entitled 'Illumination', the thesis examined the novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*. The naming of Gabriel was examined as another sign of Hardy's albeit subconscious awareness of the legacy of the angel as metaphorising a type of intuitive intellect. The juxtaposition of an ethical sensibility in this protagonist was noted as the continuing presence of a theme that is notable in the observation of Hardy's own sensibility throughout all his novels. This is seen to be evidence of Hardy's declared agnosticism nevertheless being acutely allied to Christian notions of ethical ways of living. The trajectory of Bathsheba's progress as someone who becomes illuminated with ethical awareness was presented in this chapter as a sign of Gabriel's affirmative presence in her life, the implication being that she is released from the male gaze and Biblical allusions of infidelity. Hardy's view that the figure of the angel is not an exclusively sentimental (or female) Victorian category was discussed in the context of the representation of angels in cultural history. In a reversal of Victorian conventions and Coventry Patmore's notion of the 'angel in the house' (Victorian notions of women as only operating in the domestic sphere)

Bathsheba is presented as a strong force whilst the somewhat more passive male ‘angel’ is Gabriel, the medium through which notions of the human spirit makes itself known. The archaeological discovery of angel veneration as a cultural activity not exclusive to Christianity was discussed, and I presented the view that this gave credence to Hardy’s sub-textual and quasi-secular narrative of metaphorical angels in his choice of protagonists. The idea of light, which has been familiar in religious worship, was noted specifically as a profound metaphor of spiritual illumination, most strongly revealed by Hardy in the scene by Fanny Robin’s coffin. The dead are given grace and power by illumination, a metaphorising of the idea of an enlightened intuition and I suggested that the presence of Gabriel activated this.

In Chapter Four, titled ‘Immanence’, and the discussion of the novel *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* I proposed that Hardy showed in a radical way a new narrative that involved the idea of a female figure, both as a means to bear witness to the concerns of Christian awareness and to the experience of women. The chapter briefly considered feminist theological scholarship, and the notion of language which invariably occludes women from the idea of religious authority. This chapter considered that in a re-working of the Trinity, Tess may be seen as an allegorical Christ, whilst Angel Clare (whose name is the most specific allusion to an appreciation of a metaphysical intellect) represented the power of the immanent experience – the sense of a divine force within all humanity that achieves enlightenment. I suggested that the discourse underpinning this novel was the idea of the enlightenment of the soul through the experience of an earthly life, and cited Angel’s lapse in mercy as a sign that he had been placed as a grounded angel who would achieve enlightenment through the death of Tess. This chapter also presented the view that *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* represents a narrative of difference between the

linguistic imperatives of religion (the word) with the silent, merciful and ultimate purity of ‘The Word’ – the latter being a linguistic metaphor for a merciful God who is immanent. I likened this apprehension of the silent, ethical and immanent ‘Word’ to the historical appreciation in western spiritual life of a wordless intuition. This final chapter linked with the beginning of the thesis when we met Marty South in *The Woodlanders* and discussed the trope of Isolation and the legacy of the religious recluse, the monk and the anchoress. We return to the idea of allowing silence to speak.

The close boundaries between the subjects of these four chapters do not negate the very separate components they represent in the context of the idea of a mind that is free from time and space to intuit the inexpressible. I briefly noted in the final chapter that such an apprehension is not exclusively the realm of the ‘creative’, and whilst Thomas Hardy may be judged to have a ‘creative’ mind in that he was an author, it is my hope that this thesis will have shown in some way that the type of spiritually intuitive mind he revealed through his characters may be discerned across all disciplines. Keith Ward was noted in the introduction to this thesis. His views that ‘our perceptions are caused by some reality that is different from them’ is not disputed here. He goes on to say ‘Our mathematics, like our perceptual consciousness, is a tool that enables us to understand the observed world, the world that is the result of an interaction between the unknown cause and the perceiving subject’.² Here, Ward makes us aware of the limits of the methods we have at our disposal when we attempt to engage with the Unknown. This thesis contains those limits too. Nevertheless, it is ironic that Thomas Hardy, a nineteenth century writer of simple country life had, in my view, the same sensibility as Srinivasa Ramanujan, a twentieth century genius of

² Ward, K., *The God Conclusion – God and the Western Philosophical Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2009) p44

mathematics who once stated, ‘An equation for me has no meaning unless it expresses a thought of God.’³ It is not the ‘proof’ but the ‘thought’ of ‘God’, the idea that the unknowable exists, (and could not be proven not to exist in Hardy’s opinion) that is alive in the novels. Moreover, it is this ‘thought’ that gives an opportunity to develop the horizons of literature – or mathematics.

The resurrection of an intuition which is spiritualised is an interesting possibility to consider in the twenty-first century as political and social tensions in some areas of the world arise from questions of the value of religious or spiritual belief. That Hardy appeared to write of country life and simple country people belied the more profound narrative which this thesis argues has lain in the deeper recesses of the author’s own intuition – the idea that the activity of a perhaps more modernised and democratic spiritualised intellect is all we can know, and in the end, is the most valuable of our possessions. I argue that Hardy could not articulate this directly - instead, he expressed this intuition through his fictional characters. Moreover, the sensitive moral awareness of Hardy’s novels – his acute sympathy towards the marginalised and unlucky in life – demonstrates that, in terms expressed by the Medieval thinker Maimonides, what remains of the ethical human after life on earth, is the part of the soul known as the intellect. Whilst definitions of intellect are subject to change in different eras and throughout different cultural narratives, one strand remains of this legacy which this thesis has attended to – the idea that the cultivation of the human intellect (even if in Aristotelian terms what remains of us is nothing compared to the superiority of the God-like Active Intellect) is nevertheless a worthwhile exercise. It has been the contention of this thesis that writers such as Thomas Hardy subconsciously develop this idea to include notions of a particular

³ Kanigel R., *The Man Who Knew Infinity – A Life of the Genius Ramanujan* (London: Abacus 1991)

intuition – a secularised account, but nonetheless an apt one, of how one might approach the Unknowable.

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