MAN, NATURE AND SOCIETY IN SELECTED WORKS
OF
FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE
AND
THOMAS HARDY

A STUDY OF WORKS

BY

FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

AND

THOMAS HARDY

By

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The first chapter of this thesis is directed toward Grove's and Hardy's view of man in their novels. After reading the major works of both writers the conclusion put forward here is that neither Grove nor Hardy is willing to write a novel that ignores the possibility of suffering. They do not, however, look upon suffering as the focal point of life. Essentially they direct their attention to man's unique capacity to adapt continually to new, and often difficult, situations. The misfortunes that confront both writers' characters are aimed at showing the reader a variety of consequences for particular patterns of action. There are no guarantees of happiness, but for both writers man is not meant to suffer either irrationally or passively. The freedom to act is an essential part of his character and, as such, he must continually exercise his freedom of choice. For both Grove and Hardy it is this individual freedom to choose, to redefine one's self and one's situation, that enables man to discover and maintain some degree of happiness in life. Similarly, it is this individual freedom to act that allows all men the chance to discover the profound and the tragic proportions that lie within the human spirit.

Both writers locate their characters in settings that are never too removed from the demands of a force that may generally be called Nature. Often the demands of this external force are beyond the intellectual scope and physical strength of men. The suffering that results from the confrontation between Nature and man would seem to indicate that man is destined to suffer irrationally. The conclusion that is made in the second chapter of this thesis, however, is that both

Grove and Hardy appear to believe that man must use Nature's laws as co-ordinates that place him in Nature and, at the same time, above it. Both Grove and Hardy repeatedly illustrate that man is more than just a receptor of Nature's fury. He is also a recorder or focal point of Nature's order. Both Grove and Hardy show that man can use his unique relationship with Nature to discover toleration and understanding.

Both writers also use the simplicity of rural order and the demands of more complex urban social beliefs as guidelines against which the actual needs of individual men may be measured. Grove and Hardy appear to support a belief in the individual's right to test the validity of any social structure. Similarly, both writers illustrate that the demands of society, like the demands of Nature, are external requirements that test individual men. The conflict that arises as a result of the confrontation of man and society is an integral part of both writers' approach to an appraisal of the freedom of individual men. The final chapter of this thesis, then, concludes with the belief that neither writer sides for or against a particular view of society, but both writers do side with man's right to discover from society a more accurate understanding of individual needs and characteristics.

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CHAPTER ONE

MAN'S ROLE IN THE WORKS OF FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE AND THOMAS HARDY

The misinterpretation of Grove's vision of life had led critics to discount his works all too quickly. Aside from the general labeling of pessimist, a greater disservice was done to Grove's integrity as an artist when his works were dismissed as merely "pale imitations" of those of Thomas Hardy. Unfortunately Lorne Pierce's dictum unjustifiably robbed from Grove's works the singular critical attention that they merit. That there are similarities between these two writers is undeniable, but that Grove consciously mimicked Hardy removes from Grove the recognition he rightly deserves as a conscientious and observant artist. If Grove has a model for his works it would be more accurate to assume that it is life that provides his model and not another's interpretation of life. Grove credits his, and all artists', interpretation of life to the desire to create a work that, "mirrors a more or less universal reaction to what is not I".[1] The writer, then, seeks to be outside himself and it is this ecstacy, or creative response, that Grove shares with with Hardy. If comparison is to be made then the stress should be placed on whether or not these two writers both arrive at a universally valid truth. Both Grove and Hardy may be better understood as independent yet similar writers, if they are assessed in the manner employed by Camus, when he considers such writers as Balzac, de Sade, Melville, Dostoevsky and Malraux:

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1 Frederick Philip Grove, "Realism in Literature", It Needs to be Said..., (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), p.63.

> But in fact the preference they have shown for writing in images rather than in reasoned arguments is revelatory of a certain thought that is common to them all, convinced of the uselessness of any principle of explanation and sure of the educative message of perceptible appearance. They consider the work of art as an end and a beginning. It is the outcome of an often unexpressed philosophy, its illustration and its consummation. But it is complete only through the implications of that philosophy. It justifies at last that variant of an old theme that a little thought estranges from life whereas much thought reconciles to life. [2]

Grove's philosophy recognizes the degree of disaster and suffering an individual can bring to bear on himself when that individual sees himself as the sole interpreter of experience. Witness, for instance, Mary Jackson's lament to Len in The Yoke of Life:

> "I think it is cruel," she said, her voice shaking. "I know it is wicked of me to speak as I do. But I can't think any longer that God is just. So many good-for-nothings who've never tried to make a home are allowed to live; and my dad must die! The house, the whole world seems changed since the doctor said he could not get better." [3]

That her father's death is imminent apparently upsets her only in so far as it distorts her own definition of the world about her. Undoubtedly her father's death should have a far reaching impact on her, but from the way Grove presents this statement one gets the distinct impression that Mary feels that she is the only one capable of suffering a loss. What this indicates is that Mary lends coherence to events and in doing so, she dictates a very special significance to her own presence. The result is

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[2] Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Random House, 1955), p.75.

[3] Frederick Philip Grove, The Yoke of Life, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1930), p.273.

a Job-like lament that is not uncommon in either Grove's or Hardy's novels.

The dichotomy that the oppressed human intellect strikes upon as reasonable apparently limits the world to only two essential possibilities: the "I" and everything else. Once inextricably enmeshed in this sort of possibility, then perhaps resignation seems inevitable. Such an attitude puts the individual at odds with the world around him and usually results in a lament that proclaims that life is more than one can bear and that God is unjust for making it so. This conclusion appears extreme, but that such characters as Len Sterner and Jude Fawley reach this state helps to indicate that such resignation, and its possible consequence, can logically stem from a misinterpretation of human experience.

Opposition to the individual's will, then, appears much like a large boulder that blocks the flow of a stream. Nature demands a continual flow or progression to completion, but the individual no longer is capable of seeing the continuity that lies before him. The problem, like the boulder in the stream, appears to dispel coherence and create resistance in life's flow. Whether the individual's particular impediment is the fear of death, economic or social failure, or loss of love, he feels inexorably drawn to one or the other of the possible paths around his particular problem. For example, the individual may use his suffering as a means of withdrawing from the world. In this state contemplation of the lack of guarantees for personal meaning and happiness may lead to inaction, despair and even suicide. What develops as a result of this initial problem is fittingly summed up by Camus in The Myth of Sisyphus:

> So long as the mind keeps silent in the motionless world of its hopes, everything is reflected and arranged in the unity of its nostalgia. But with its first move this world cracks and tumbles: an infinite number of shimmering fragments is offered to the understanding. We must despair of ever reconstructing the familiar, calm surface which would give us peace of heart. 4

The second type of resignation is one in which the individual resolves to immerse himself in the world of experience in order to discover meaning. This path generally includes all the possible alternatives that may result as the consequence of individual action. Resignation in this sense involves participation in life's problems. It implies an acceptance of the unavoidable flow of life's continuum and an acceptance of the buffetting and turbulence one might expect along the way. The difference, then is that within this alternative lies the possibility to the individual of a Promethean courage that aspires to a greater sense of unity and meaning once the impediment has been squarely faced, and even possibly resolved. For those who choose this second path, there appears to exist a hope of reunification of being and a clarification of vision once the problem has been made a part of the individual's experience. What both Hardy and Grove seem to indicate is that both possibilities are always simultaneously present and as such a choice must be made. Since the path chosen is a matter of the individual's emotional response to, and interpretation of, encountered experience, then the function of both writers as teachers is obvious. Their variety of models, projected in the pursuit of universal truth, display to the reader the approaches and possible consequences for two entirely different courses of action.

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[4]Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, p.14.

Unfortunately too much attention has been given to the kind of emotion that is immediately evoked by such phrases as, "happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain".[5] What is ignored in this instance is Hardy's interpretation of the quality of the emotion displayed in the following passage:

> And in being forced to class herself among the fortunate she did not cease to wonder at the persistence of the unforseen, when the one to whom such unbroken tranquility had been accorded in the adult stage was she whose youth had seemed to teach that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain. [6]

Elizabeth-Jane's introspection is not an invitation to submit to vacuous self-pity. Her contemplation, taken in its context, is a consideration of all phases of life. If the reader is out to determine the quality of the emotion here it rests with Elizabeth-Jane's state which dictates to her the need "to wonder". Her consistent introspection, and not her minor function in the novel, is the reason why she maintains her equilibrium throughout the novel.

> She felt none of those ups and downs of spirit which beset so many people without cause; never--to paraphrase a recent poet--never a gloom in Elizabeth-Jane's soul but she well knew how it came there; and her present cheerfulness was fairly proportionate to her solid guarantees for the same. [7]

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[5] Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, p.382.

[6] Ibid, p.186.

[7] Ibid., p.100.

Granted, she never discovers her own tragic potential, but then, because of her measured emotional response, she is never faced with major problems. Her cautious introspection stands in contrast with the extremes to which other individuals may force the issue.

It should be remembered that Elizabeth-Jane's potential for tragic suffering is not intrinsically different from that of such characters as Bathsheba or Troy in Far from the Madding Crowd. The difference is one of degree, and not one of kind. Perhaps the difference is as great as the apparent difference between water and ice, the substance, however, remains the same. Both Bathsheba and Troy are not conformable, that is, they are incapable of a vision of experience in which they see themselves as other than principal agents. Their potential is to act solely with their own limited views in mind and, as a result, this same singleness of intention gives them the scope to discover their innate potential for tragedy. Bathsheba discovers her potential when she almost perversely invites Boldwood's attentions and affection.

> To have brought all this about her ears was terrible; but after a while the situation was not without a fearful joy. The facility with which even the most timid women sometimes acquire a relish for the dreadful when that is amalgamated with a little triumph, is marvellous. [8]

She views the whole affair in terms of her own vanity and it is this flaw that ultimately results in her tangled relationship with Troy whose character is not unlike her own.

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[8] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.179.

> Her culpability lay in her making no attempt to control feeling by subtle and careful inquiry into consequences. She could show others the steep and thorny way, but 'reck'd not her own rede.'
>
> And Troy's deformities lay deep down from a woman's vision, whilst his embellishments were upon the very surface.... [9]

After the death of Fanny Robin, an unfortunate who is slighted by Troy, Troy dwells upon his own oppression in a way that makes his suffering, like Bathsheba's, seem to him to be both irrational and unwarranted.

> Fate had dwelt grimly with him through the last four-and-twenty hours. His day had been spent in a way which varied very materially from his intentions regarding it. There is always an inertia to be overcome in striking out a new line of conduct--not more in ourselves, it seems, than in circumscribing events, which appear as if leagued together to allow no novelties in the way of amelioration. [10]

In much the same way that Hardy's characters are destined to suffer, so too are Grove's creations. The steps that Grove's characters take in pursuit of individual rewards, in the face of general experience, are not unlike the steps taken by Bathsheba and Troy. Bathsheba discovers that Fanny's death has, "thrown over herself a garish light of mockery, and set upon all things about her an ironical smile."[11] Similarly, Niels Lindstedt, finds himself caught up in the glare of a mismatch with Clara that he feels infringes unreasonably on his own role as an unfettered arbitrator of meaning.

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[9] Ibid., p.212.

[10] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.344.

[11] Ibid., p.331.

> He came to see that the real problem was very complicated. Judging her guilty, he demanded repentance and atonement. But he could not demand anything of her because she did not acknowledge his right to demand: he had no authority over her. [12]

Even considering Niels' apparent sexual naivete, Grove does not remove the blame from his shoulders. His real weakness rests beyond his naïveté and lies in his inability to temper his judgment of Clara with sympathy.

> She was planning revenge. Revenge for what? No doubt for a wrong she thought had been done her.
> Had he, Niels, wronged the woman, intentionally or not? That was the great question. [13]

Clara, however, is not without some of the blame. Her expectations impose such a great strain on the development of her relationship with Niels that ultimately any resolution is impossible.

> "But then, during the latter part of the first summer, I became conscious of the fact--I was forever brooding--that it was always I who came to you...never you who came to me. A suspicion took hold of me. I began to doubt you. I began to doubt your love. More and more life became a drudgery. I thought of a test. That was why I went to the city. I needed a recreation, it is true, a change. I sought my old company. It seemed hard to return to this place in the wilderness. Yet, I longed for you. [14]

Niels is incapable of objectively viewing the renewed hope of reconciliation that Clara is implying. Instead, he decides, "he must bribe her to leave him alone...".[15] Finally, once he has witnessed the ultimate

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[12]Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, p.159.

[13]*Ibid.*, p.160.

[14]Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, pp.155-56.

[15]*Ibid.*, p.186.

degradation that Clara can flaunt before him, he feels compelled, beyond all reason, to resolve his own uncertainty. The taunting laughter of Clara's guests "released the tightly wound spring. Irresistibly a clock-work began to move. There was not a spark of consciousness in Niels."[16] In the end, his power of reason escapes him and his action only augments his despair. He ends this segment of his life by withdrawing, willing only to admit his guilt and to suffer for his wounded ego. Perhaps at this stage of Niel's history he appears to be like the much oppressed Michael Henchard. The difference between the two, however, is that Henchard combines an assertion of his will with his lament: "I--Cain--go alone as I deserve--an outcast and a vagabond. But my punishment is not greater than I can bear!"[17] Niels, on the other hand, must endure ten years in prison in order to realize the true nature of his own responsibility:

> "No; I believe I have tried to do what was right, in most things. I've been self-seeking when I was young.... I have too often thought of my own life only.... As for the thing that has sent me here. I don't blame myself.... But for what preceded it... For what led up to it.... For the very beginning of it.... I have long since seen that I had sinned.... [18]

Though the sufferings of such figures as Hardy's Jude and Grove's Len Sterner attain a tragic proportion that commands the reader's awe and sympathy, it seems that both writers are reluctant to lose sight of the importance of the other less extreme possibility. Granted, the second

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[16] Ibid, p.186.

[17] Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, p.382.

[18] Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, p.201.

type of resignation, the one in which man actively participates in all phases of human experience, does not command the emotional response in the reader that a total resignation commands; it is no less valid. In Fruits of the Earth, Abe Spalding discovers the true meaning of his resignation:

> Resignation? The thing he had dreamt of for a week had been no resignation at all: he had nursed his anger and shut himself off. He had meant to do what, in his weariness, seemed fulfilment of his desires. True resignation meant accepting one's destiny; to him, it meant accepting the burden of leadership... His own life had been wrong, or all this would not have happened. He had lived to himself and had had to learn that it could not be done.... [19]

Hardy's world, like Grove's, is peopled with characters whose personalities indicate that this second, self-less, type of resignation is possible. At the beginning of Far from the Madding Crowd, Gabriel Oak appears relatively lack-lustre:

> ...to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums, he was considered rather a bad man; when they were neither, he was a man whose moral colour was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture. [20]

If, in fact, he lacks the changeable emotions of his peers it is because he has realized his own role in terms of human relationships. He, too, is buffetted by fate, but because of his practised and unselfish equilibruim he is incapable of over-reacting, or, for that matter, of seeing himself

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[19] Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p.333.

[20] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.9.

in any way other than in a minor role. As Hardy points out after the death of Oak's entire flock:

> It was as remarkable as it was characteristic that the one sentence he muttered was in thankfulness:-
> 'Thank God I am not married: what would she have done in the poverty now coming upon me! [21]

Gabriel remains dauntless, in spite of circumstance, and as a result, he never succumbs to the particular kind of vanity which would enable him to view himself as a tragic victim. This attitude, though far from spectacular, is no less heroic and, as such, commands the readers' respect. One cannot help but notice the commendable control of a man who justifiably has the right to complain.

> Oak suddenly remembered that eight months before this time he had been fighting against fire in the same spot as desperately as he was fighting against water now--and for a futile love of the same woman. As for her--But Oak was generous and true, and dismissed his reflections. [22]

It is this same stoical individual that cautions and advises a rival suitor, "not to be too sure".[23] Boldwood, however, is the antithesis of Oak:

> His equilibrium disturbed, he was in extremity at once. If an emotion possessed him at all, it ruled him; a feeling not mastering him was entirely latent. Stagnant or rapid, it was never slow. He was always hit mortally, or he was missed. [24]

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[21] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.47.

[22] Ibid., p.285.

[23] Ibid., p.404.

[24] Ibid., p.137.

Hardy makes this point of contrast clear in a meeting between Oak and Boldwood. Prior to the meeting a sudden storm ruins Boldwood's crops, but Bathsheba's crops are saved by Gabriel's quick action.

> 'Overlooked them,' repeated Gabriel slowly to himself. It is difficult to describe the intensely dramatic effect that announcement had upon Oak at such a moment. All the night he had been feeling that the neglect he was labouring to repair was abnormal and isolated-- the only instance of the kind within the circuit of the county. Yet at this time, within the same parish, a greater waste had been going on, uncomplained of and disregarded... Oak was just thinking that whatever he himself might have suffered from Bathsheba's marriage, here was a man who had suffered more.... [25]

Boldwood's failure to win Bathsheba has distracted him from those activities that had previously given meaning to his life. At this juncture he has neither the woman he loves, nor the material successes he once realized. His lament that he is "a joke about the parish" [26] implies his sense of isolation and it is this feeling of isolation that impels him to lament: "'I am weak and foolish, and I don't know what, and I can't fend off my miserable grief!'" [27] Gabriel, on the other hand, does not accept Boldwood's losses as a justification for inaction and resignation.

> 'I thought my mistress would have married you... However, it is so sometimes, and nothing happens that we expect,' he added, with the repose of a man whom misfortune had inured rather than subdued. [28]

Boldwood's tragedy gains the reader's sympathy, but at the same time, Oak's rationality and patience wins the reader's admiration. His eventual marriage

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[25] Ibid., p.287.

[26] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.288

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., pp.287-88.

to Bathsheba may appear to be the result of a great deal of rather colourless plodding through misfortune, but Hardy implies that it is just this sort of eventual triumph that is the most valuable.

> Theirs was the substantial affection which arises (if any arises at all) when the two who are thrown together begin by knowing the rougher sides of each other's character, and not the best till further on, the romance growing up in the interstices of a mass of hard prosaic reality... Where, however, happy circumstances permit its development, the compounded feeling proves itself to be the only love which is strong as death--that love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam. 29

In The Return of the Native, Diggory Venn appears in much the same light as Gabriel Oak does in Far from the Madding Crowd. Venn seems to appreciate all the self-less tranquility that can be attained from a thoughtful examination of human experience. Like Oak, Venn has seen his desires thwarted, yet he remains impassive but not colourless. When Venn is placed in direct contrast with a character like Clym Yeobright his presence commands the reader's respect. The difference between the two is obvious. Diggory's logic attempts to channel emotion in order to gain truth from human experience while Clym's resignation stresses his suffering ego.

> 'I [Clym] spoke cruel words to her, and she left my house. I did not invite her back till it was too late. It is I who ought to have drowned myself. It would have been a charity to the living had the river overwhelmed me and borne her up. But I cannot die...
>
> 'But you can't charge yourself with crimes in that way,' said Venn. 'You may as well say that parents be the cause of a murder by the child, for without the parents the child would never have been begot.'
>
> 'Yes, Venn, that is very true; but you don't know all the circumstances. If it had pleased God to put an end to me it would have been a good thing for all...

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[29] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.439.

> 'Your aim has always been good,' said Venn.
> 'Why should you say such desperate things?' [30]

To Venn it is only a matter of simple logic, but to Clym, it is a matter that is indeed logical but far from simple. Hardy rather pointedly states that Clym, though he departs from the scene blamelessly, departs with "a wrinkled mind".[31] His occupation, fittingly enough, is as "an itinerant preacher of the eleventh commandment".[32] His "eleventh" probably has nothing to do with avoiding the consequences for breaking the other ten. It would seem that his decision to suffer has led him to create his own law, that suffering is the only consequence for human error. Venn, on the other hand, gains his reward with the promise of lasting happiness with Thomasin, a happiness which seems assured because of the stability he has displayed.

Happiness, for both writers remains a rather elusive possibility, but at no time does either of them propose that is has no place in human experience. For Hardy and Grove, happiness is a state which is only realizable through a full participation in human experience. In order to attain this end the individual must develop and maintain a capacity to hope while continuing to act. It is this capacity that makes such figures as Abe Spalding, Gabriel Oak and Diggory Venn worthy of admiration. They provide the example that shows Grove's and Hardy's concern for man's place in the world. Their success indicates the value that both writers place on patience and, above all, the value they both place on deliberate action. As Abe's wife, Ruth, discovers in Fruits of the Earth:

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[30]Hardy, Return of the Native, pp.383-384.

[31]Ibid., p.386.

[32]Ibid., p.389.

> But no matter what is to be done, it is for him to do it. To deprive him of the possibility to act for himself is to deprive him of his birthright. 33

She realizes that she must inform Abe that their daughter is pregnant or else deprive him of his freedom to choose to act. Man is, however, in a dilemma. There is no guarantee that the freedom to act will inevitably result in happiness. There is, nevertheless, the possibility for eventual happiness, especially since the freedom to choose allows man to moderate his suffering with hope. This possible promise of success and happiness does not mean, however, that the present should only be interpreted in terms of future possibilities. Grove cautions against living in the future in the following manner:

> "We have lost the childlike power of living without conscious aims. Sometimes, when the aims have faded already in the gathering dusk, we still go on by the momentum acquired. Inertia carries us over the dead points--till a cog breaks somewhere, and our whole machinery of life comes to with a jar. If no such awakening supervenes, since we never live in the present, we are always looking forward to what never comes; and so life slips by, unlived." 34

Frances' pregnancy provides the necessary shock to bring Ruth to an understanding of her husband's initial freedom. Prior to this she has maintained a static view of life:

> What can _I_ do about it? This isn't a country fit to live in.
>
> 'Exactly,' Abe said with rising anger. 'I am making it into a country fit to live in. That is my task. The task of the pioneer. Can't you see that I need time, time, time?'

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[33] Frederick Philip Grove, Fruits of the Earth, (Toronto, 1953), p.324.

[34] Frederick Philip Grove, Over Prairie Trails, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970), p.118.

> Ruth looked up. 'Where do I come in?'
> 'Aren't you going to profit by my labours?'
> 'Profit! You probably pride yourself on being a good provider. You are, I've all I want except what I need: a purpose in life.' [35]

Ruth eventually discovers her true relationship with Abe. Ironically enough, recognition of that relationship comes to light when she longs for his help in settling the problem of whether or not to press charges against McCrae. At this point she can contrast her love and dependence against her contempt for the man who has seduced their daughter. This incident ultimately brings Abe's family closer together. Unfortunately it appears that only incidents of significant magnitude are capable of dramatically altering the lives of those who are involved. What Grove does stress, however, is that there is meaning and ultimately happiness to be gained from all human experience. He effectively shows the separation of Abe and Ruth by showing the breakdown of their everyday shared experiences:

> She had become used to exhausting her emotional powers on the children. These children had been born as the natural fruit of marriage, not anticipated with any great fervour of expectancy; yet they had come to absorb her life; for Abe, engrossed in other things, had left them to her. When, occasionally, she had told him of their progress in growth or development, he had listened absently, had treated her enthusiasm with an ironic coolness which made her close up in her shell. In his presence she had ceased to let herself go in her intercourse with them. When she was playing with them, and he entered, a mask fell over her face. Gradually, she ceased to play with them. [36]

The joy in Ruth's life appears so evanescent to her that it hardly seems worthy of either her recognition or scrutiny. Time and her own dissatis-

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[35] Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p.46.

[36] Ibid., p.41.

faction have left their mark on her to the extent that she proclaims, "This life has taken the desire away."[37] Ruth's resignation to the apparently meaningless ravages of time have left her in a void. Her ennui, however, causes Abe to retort: "'This life! Do you realize that it's the freest, most independent life on earth? Your part in it is your own making.'"[38] The truth, then, seems to rest in the "making". One may be resigned to life and its logical consequence, death; but in the interim there is the chance of discovering some meaning through the exercise of action and choice that is possible in human experience.

Both Grove and Hardy believe that man will almost inevitably contemplate a divine force, but both writers indicate that the conclusions a man may draw concerning this force may vary dramatically in terms of his own sensibility. The last phase of discovery, therefore, appears to be an extension of the process that is founded on the individual's interpretation of human experience. In The Master of the Mill, Samuel Clark asks some of the central questions concerning existence:

> Who are we? What is the reality in us? That which we feel ourselves to be? Or that which others conceive us to be? The things that surround us are known to us by the way they affect us. Their inner reality is as mysterious to us as the universe itself or as life and death. What was the reality? Was there a reality? [39]

Sam's questions are essential because they imply a perspective which could enable him to see himself in a more meaningful relationship with the rest

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[37] Ibid., p.130.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Frederick Philip Grove, The Master of the Mill, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1953), p.60.

of the universe. Sam's pursuit of the nature of existence includes a consideration of the inanimate as well as the animate forms around him, but unfortunately he never turns his vision beyond a narrow consideration of his natural and social limitations. He remains the "slave of the mill"[40] whose habitual lament on seeing his creation is, "there stands your little soul!"[41] The emptiness of Sam's life becomes one of the best examples of the result of an existence that does not come to terms with limited, yet available human experience, and as a result, any possible meaning for man 'in the grand scale of things' eludes him. Sam's son, Edmund, displays the opposite alternative:

> We are sitting at a table and playing a game of chance the laws of which we don't understand; and somewhere around the board sits an invisible player whom nobody knows and who takes all the tricks; that player is destiny, or God if you like, or the future. [42]

Edmund uses his vision purposely to dwarf his own existence. He admits that he is, "humbly content to be the tool of evolution."[43] False resignation and false humility allow Edmund to reduce the importance of man as an intelligent creature. Ironically he does become a pawn in the events at the mill. It may be destiny when he is shot by the strikers, but he is, nevertheless, cut down by a force that he believed he could ignore.

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[40] Ibid., p.94.

[41] Ibid., p.59.

[42] Ibid., p.226.

[43] Ibid., p.227.

Hardy's Bathsheba, like Grove's Edmund, is quick to throw the blame on God rather than own up to her own responsibility. She encourages Boldwood's attentions only to find herself infatuated with Troy. The result is a dilemma of her own creation, yet she is unwilling to assume any blame: "O, how I wish I had never seen him [Troy]. Loving is misery for women always. I shall never forgive God for making me a woman, and dearly am I beginning to pay for the honour of owning a pretty face."[44] Bathsheba's dilemma indicates that if meaning, and therefore hope, are to be discovered, then man must regard the possibility of a divine or supernatural order as more than a principle of chaotic potential. In order to attain this end, however, she must first meet her responsibility. There can be little room for choice: the individual must assume responsibility even though such a possibility appears difficult in the light of human experience.

The truth remains, that regardless of where man places his ideals he is still confronted with suffering, decay and death. To create meaning for one's self only in terms of experience appears to be a limited occupation; especially when one is continuously confronted with inevitable death. Abe Spalding in Fruits of the Earth, for example, does not share his neighbour's curiosity. Unlike Nicoll, Abe feels that he does not need to question the life-death problem. Instead, Abe chooses to see his materialistic aims as a way of justifying his life. His philosophy is best summed up with the cautious attitude, "best not inquire".[45] Grove, however, is aware that the kind of comfort offered by a materialistic approach to life is not without its limitations. Grove points this out explicitly in In Search of Myself:

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[44]Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.222.

[45]Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p.35.

"But the trouble with all material ambitions is that they are realizable; realized, they leave you in the void."[46] Abe does discover that he must expand his vision and expectations if he is to attain meaning and possible happiness in his lifetime. In a later conversation with the old school teacher, Mr. Blaine, Abe shows that his vision has altered considerably. When the topic turns to a consideration of an after-life Abe points out that, "a man must make up his mind one way or the other."[47] The problem remains the same; the difference for Abe, and all others, is that a choice must be made. There is little room in this sort of philosophy for Jude's attitude: "Nothing can be done...things are as they are and will be brought to their destined issue."[48] Jude's despair indicates that there is really only one choice possible; by adhering to his limited philosophy Jude finds himself suffering and alone. Similarly, in Far from the Madding Crowd, Boldwood appears destined to suffer, yet it is a suffering he chooses to face alone.

> I had some faint belief in the mercy of God till I lost that woman [Bathsheba]. Yes, He prepared a gourd to shade me, and like the prophet I thanked Him and was glad. But the next day He prepared a worm to smite the gourd and wither it; and I feel it is better to die than to live! [49]

For both Hardy and Grove a judgment concerning man's role is not only necessary but inevitable. Neither writer has to impose a particular kind of doctrine upon his creations; instead, a premise about man's freedom in the flux of everchanging human experience is all that is needed. The

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[46] Frederick Philip Grove, In Search of Myself, (Toronto: Macmillan 1946), p.443.

[47] Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p.179.

[48] Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (London: Macmillan, 1971), p.350.

[49] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.288.

doctrines of both fatalism and determinism infringe upon the belief in man's ultimate freedom by pretending to a formula that can predict or qualify all human experience. The innate weakness of either of these philosophies is that ~~initially with man's~~ inability to co-relate cause and effect relationships. There are just too many variables that defy scientific prediction or philosophical description. It would seem more reasonable to assume that Grove's and Hardy's vision of existence is founded on human experience as it evolves in the lives of their creations. Life, for both writers, therefore, appears as both an adventure and a discipline that ultimately rewards the wisest with a chance for happiness.

The acquisition and application of wisdom, therefore, is a theme that both writers examine in some detail. In The Yoke of Life, Len's teacher, Mr. Crawford, states:

> You are the stuff of which wise men are made, Len, not learned men. What, in all branches of knowledge we really investigate is ourselves. Perfect knowledge would be no more than an accurate tracing out of the limitations of the human mind. You may not get all the facts. But one day, I hope, you will understand that that does not matter. A man may be learned without being fit for anything but the gathering of fact to fact unless he has the spark divine. If he has, facts are nothing. It is the road that matters, not the goal. [50]

Mr. Crawford's statement comes close to what both Grove and Hardy see as the essential characteristic of wisdom. For both writers wisdom exists as a subliminal potential that can only be realized as a result of human action. Unfortunately, once realized, this potential must be nurtured by an independence of mind that essentially appears contrary to the less

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[50] Grove, The Yoke of Life, p.80.

initiated. Those who aspire to the role of 'the wise man', therefore, place themselves in the unenviable position of having continually to test the validity of their special awareness against a cosmos that appears indifferent. Happiness, then, becomes an illusive possibility when seen in this light. Against the insubstantial discovery of the "spark divine" are all those events in life which appear to make chaos the dictator of human existence. Perhaps the best example of this apparently pessimistic outlook occurs in Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles. He concludes this novel with the following passage:

> 'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess. And the d'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing. 51

One is led to believe, then, that the gods are present and acting in Tess. Perhaps Alex d'Urberville's logic best expresses a need for the presence of the gods:

> "Hang it, I am not going to feel responsible for my deeds and passions if there's nobody to be responsible to; and if I were you Tess my dear, I wouldn't either." 52

In spite of her valiant efforts to remain "A Pure Woman" there does appear to be a force acting upon Tess' life that demands that she die tragically. The effect of the gods, however, should not be over-emphasized. Their presence in the novel provides dramatic effect, but any force the gods might directly impose upon Tess can only lessen the degree or impact of

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[51] Thomas Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, (London: Macmillan, 1970), p.446.

[52] Ibid., p.371.

her personal tragedy. Their effect on Tess, then, seems more akin to the effect or sensation that Hardy describes in Far from the Madding Crowd:

> To find themselves utterly alone at night where company is desirable and expected makes some people fearful; but a case more trying by far to the nerves is to discover some mysterious companionship when intuition, sensation, memory, analogy, testimony, probability, induction--every kind of evidence in the logician's list--have united to persuade consciousness that it is quite in isolation. 53

Tess should be seen as an unfettered and active agent in her own tragedy. Her choices cannot be left either to blind chance, or to the imposition of uncaring gods. The two questions that should remain in the reader's mind are: If her tragedy is the result of random chance, then what is the point? What is the point if her fate is inevitable? The gods do have a place in the novel. As Grove points out in It Needs to be Said...

> Every great work of art is fundamentally an outcry against the immortals: As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport. 54

Thus, both Grove and Hardy appear to believe that the wise man necessarily faces the gods and chance, and as a result of the confrontation, he faces a particular suffering that appears to be beyond the earth-bound expectations of the common man. Here, then, is an attitude that does not allow sleeping gods to lie, but an attitude that seeks to know inner truth as a result of a direct confrontation with an implacable force. The suffering that results, however, is never presented as an invitation to lament man's fate at the hands of an unrelenting and indifferent force. The notion of

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[53] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.20.

[54] Grove, It Needs to be Said..., p.85.

tragedy that results from independent action is fittingly summed up by Grove in It Needs to be Said...when he writes:

> To have greatly tried and to have failed; to have greatly wished and to be denied; to have greatly longed for purity and to be sullied; to have greatly craved for life and to receive death: all that is the common lot of greatness upon earth. It would be miserly indeed, instead of tragedy if there were not another factor in the equation. It would be crushing, not exalting. The tragic quality of Moses' fate- combining the terror that crushes with Aristotle's catharsis which exalts--lies in the fact that he accepted the fate of his; that he was reconciled to it; that he rested content with having borne the banner thus far: others would carry it beyond. In this acceptance or acquiescence lies true tragic greatness: it mirrors the indomitable spirit of mankind. All great endeavour, great ambition, great love, great pride, great thought disturb the placid order of the flow of events. That order is restored when failure is accepted and when it is seen and acknowledged that life proceeds by compromise only. 55

The suffering of figures like Tess has a particular objective. Hardy, like Grove, is interested in portraying how a compromise in one's life can be discovered as a result of action. Although Tess does not appear to realize a compromise in her life, Hardy takes care to weave the possibility into the fabric of her tragedy. As Tess prepared for her visit to the d'Urberville estate Hardy points out the uncertainty of all human action:

> In the ill-judged execution of the well-judged plan of things the call seldom produces the comer, the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving. Nature does not often say 'See!' to her poor creature at a time when seeing can lead to happy doing... We may wonder

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[55] Ibid., pp.87-88.

> whether at the acme and summit of the human progress these anachronisms will be corrected by a finer intuition, a closer interaction of the social machinery than that which now jolts us round and along; but such completeness is not to be prophesized, or even conceived as possible. Enough that in the present case, as in millions, it was not the two halves of a perfect whole that confronted each other at the perfect moment; a missing counterpart wandered independently about the earth in mass obtuseness till the late time came. Out of which maladroit delay sprang anxieties, disappointments, shocks, catastrophes, and passing-strange destinies. [56]

Against the promise of uncertainty, Hardy presents a figure who is "not fearful of measurable dangers, but fears the unknown."[57] There is nothing unique, then, about Tess' sensibility. What is worthy of note, however, is that her trepidation is not the most noticeable quality in her repertoire of emotions. Granted, her family's hardships have conditioned her to see the world as a "blighted" planet, but she does not allow herself the self-indulgence to dwell only on the bleaker aspects of existence. Hardy draws attention to this trait after the death of Tess' child:

> The irrestible, universal, automatic tendency to find sweet pleasure somewhere, which pervades all life, from the meanest to the highest, had at length mastered Tess. Being even now only a young woman of twenty, one who mentally and sentimentally had not finished growing, it was impossible that any event should have left upon her an impression that was not in time capable of transmutation. [58]

For Hardy, therefore, time has both leveling and healing qualities. If it did not then there could be no room for hope in human experience. Even the apparent inhumanity of man, the harshness of the world and the inevitability of death do not deter Tess from realizing the need for a fundamental compromise in her life.

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[56] Hardy, Tess, pp.53-54.

[57] Ibid., pp.78-79.

[58] Ibid., p.124.

Thus, when she considers the inevitability and uncertainty of her own death, she is not simply filled with despair. Instead:

> Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from a simple girl to a complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice. Her eyes grew large and more eloquent. She became what would have been called a fine creature; her aspect was fair and arresting; her soul that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize.[59]

It is interesting to note that Camus also expresses this qualitative change in character as a "leap."

> This subtle remedy that makes us love what crushes us and makes hope spring up in a world without issue, this sudden "leap" through which everything is changed is the secret of the existential revolution.[60]

Once the leap has been made new possibilities for meaning and happiness become evident. The freedom to redefine one's self through individual action is seen as continually present.

> After wearing and wasting her palpitating heart with every engine of regret that lonely inexperience could devise, common sense had illumined her. She felt that she would do well to be useful again -- to taste a new sweet independence at any price. The past was past; whatever it had been it was no more at hand...The familiar surroundings had not darkened because of her grief, nor sickened because of her pain...She was not an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensation, to anybody but herself...Most of her misery had been generated by her conventional aspect, and not by her innate sensations.[61]

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[59] Hardy, Tess, pp. 118-119.

[60] Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 97.

[61] Hardy, Tess, pp. 110-111.

The suffering that haunts Tess' life is largely determined by Tess herself. The gods and society only appear to act with malice when she interprets her particular suffering as the product of an evil external agent. The complicated unfolding of Tess' history, therefore, is meant to illustrate how the individual, in pursuit of wisdom, may be tempted by pride to see himself, or herself, as a victim. Tess' suffering, then, provides her with the occasions in which 'cold reason can come back to mock spasmodic weakness'.[62]

The juxtaposing of pride and wisdom is a central factor that governs Tess' tragedy. For example, Tess' pride, or more exactly, her exalted humility, finally moves her to reveal her past to Clare on their wedding night. The milkmaids at Talbothay's Dairy:

> ...had deserved better at the hands of Fate. She had deserved worse --yet she was the chosen one. It was wicked of her to take all without paying. She would pay to the uttermost farthing; she would tell, there and then.[63]

Unfortunately, Clare's reception of her history results in a rejection that reaffirms Hardy's premise that pride distorts wisdom. At first, Clare's insight into the human condition seems commendable. He recognizes that:

> This consciousness upon which he had intruded was the single opportunity of existence ever vouchsafed to Tess by an unsympathetic First Cause --her

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[62] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

> all; her every and only chance. How then should he look upon her as of less consequence than himself; as a pretty trifle to caress and grow weary of; and not deal in the greatest seriousness with the affection which he knew that he had awakened in her?[64]

In spite of Clare's fine sentiments, he is still incapable of acting in accordance with his earlier display of wisdom. Once he knows Tess' history, 'cold' logic departs and is supplanted by pride. He quickly forgets his wife's feelings and assumes her misfortune as a blot on his own character.

> "You don't in the least understand the quality of the mishap. It would be viewed in the light of a joke by nine-tenths of the world if it were known."[65]

It is only with time and a substantial amount of suffering that Clare is able to assess his attachment to Tess. Unfortunately, he has little time in which to expiate his guilt. Tess is imprisoned and executed for her murder of Alex. Clare, however, is given a chance to re-evaluate his philosophy of life. In a somewhat heavy-handed and romantic turn of events, Hardy unites Clare and Tess' sister, Liza-Lu. This sudden intrusion of Liza-Lu is, perhaps, the most disconcerting event in the novel, but the introduction of the "spiritualized image of Tess"[66] affords Clare with a chance to put into practice his newly acquired wisdom. Hardy's acknowledgement that the gods were finished with Tess does not interfere with the note of optimism that concludes the novel. When the couple look back at the flag that signals Tess' death, Hardy

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[64]Hardy, Tess, pp. 178-89.

[65]Ibid., p. 265.

[66]Ibid., p. 444.

points out that "it was with this blot, and not with the beauty, that the two gazers were concerned."[67] Both possibilities still exist simultaneously, but only for a moment does the "blot" take precedence. Tess' fate is sealed, but fate in general moves on to be lived and interpreted by others. Thus Hardy concludes the novel with the following sentence: "As soon as they had strength they arose, joined hands again and went on."[68]

Both Hardy and Grove seem to imply that there is no prescriptive philosophy that can provide a suitable solution to man's fate. As Grove cautions in In Search of Myself:

> Experience is strangely selective: mostly it teaches what we are looking for and for the reception of which we are prepared.[69]

With this realization in mind Grove places his role as a writer in a secondary position, a position which is important only in terms of his readers' response to his works. Therefore, he de-emphasizes his own function by referring to it as only an "occasion" which is aimed solely at "the mental and emotional reaction of him to whom it is addressed".[70] Grove's attitude here dictates the objectives, not only of his own works, but of those of all writers. In It Needs to be Said..., he cautions the reading public to avoid works that do not come to terms with the intricate and disturbing problems of existence:

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[67] Hardy, Tess, p. 446.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 156.

[70] Ibid., p. 353.

> As far as the public is concerned, such reading matter serves the same purpose which most of the appliances of what we call our great material civilization serve, namely the purpose of killing its time and of insuring it against the one thing needful, yet the one thing which, to an observer from distant climes or times, we all seem to dread more than anything else, namely the being alone with ourselves and facing of the fundamental facts of our lives.[71]

Grove places such a great stress on the writer as educator that he is quite willing to ignore any apparent weaknesses in Hardy's works because of their instructive value:

> It does not matter whether we shake our heads at the curious mixture of humour and romanticism with a classicistic realism of which much, perhaps most, of his works consists....It is irrelevant that occasionally we get tired of the ceaseless repetition, in verse and prose, of the same themes and thoughts; that we fret at the lack of finality in the form in which they are expressed; that we are repelled by the naked outcropping of purely intellectual intention in the rich soil of his imaginative recasting of reality.[72]

In spite of the above flaws that Grove believes he sees in Hardy's works, he is still willing to admit that Hardy, as "educator", towers above such figures as Ibsen and Tolstoi. Ideally this is the kind of classification Grove aspires to himself. Along with such writers as

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[71]Grove, It Needs to be Said..., p. 10.

[72]Grove, "Thomas Hardy: A Critical Examination of a Typical Novel and his Shorter Poems", University of Toronto Quarterly, I (July, 1932), p. 490.

Hardy, Ibsen and Tolstoi, Grove is attempting to show life as a pursuit of perfection. However, like Hardy, Grove constantly tries to remind his readers, through a wide range of varied experience, that such a pursuit also indicates that imperfection is necessarily the nature of life. To resolve this dilemma both writers must attempt to avoid dogmatism founded on pure conjecture and cheerful acquiescence founded on ignorance.

If there is an ominous blackness brooding over either Grove's or Hardy's characters it is a blackness which is not meant to blindly reduce the individual characters to submission. The apparent gloom, however, does act as a necessary counterpoint or contrast against which the characters must strive in order to discover meaning for themselves. As Grove cautions in It Needs to be Said...:

> Tragic does not mean gloomy or hopeless. If it did, tragedy would not have remained, throughout the millennia, the highest form of literary art. The word implies a standing up to one's destiny.[73]

The truth for either Grove's or Hardy's vision, therefore, seems to rest with the individual's ability to face up to his own destiny. Such a possibility is indeed a difficult proposition because of the obscurity afforded by life itself. What is needed, then, is a particular kind of stance that lends to the individual the potential to see himself as more than just a suffering victim. Perhaps the most reasonable starting point in the quest for meaning is found in Senator Samuel Clark's logic:

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[73]Grove, It Needs to be Said..., p. 153.

"I've always been a pessimist," said the senator. "In the sense that I go around things to look at their other side."[74] This "other side" attitude is one which gives to some of Grove's and Hardy's characters the potential to discover happiness for themselves. By being willing to admit that there is more than suffering in the world such characters as Abe and Ruth, and Diggory and Thomasin are capable of discovering some meaning and a little happiness. They allow themselves to remain open to experience and as a result they find it unnecessary to complain about life's trials or God's injustice. Thomasin, for example, finds herself disgraced when her projected marriage to Wildeve fails to materialize, yet she condemns neither her husband-to-be, nor God. She is so self-less that she even finds it necessary to apologize to her aunt, Mrs. Yeobright, for the disgrace she might have caused her:

> 'Excuse me --for humiliating you, aunt, by this mishap: I am sorry for it. But I cannot help it.'
>
> 'Me? Think of yourself first.'
>
> 'It was nobody's fault. When we got there the parson wouldn't marry us because of some trifling irregularity in the license.'[75]

Thomasin's disposition stands in direct contrast with the disposition of those who set themselves against the world. Unlike Thomasin, these unfortunate individuals appear to suffer most from the fact that there seems to be an external opposition to their wills. As Sue Bridehead

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[74]Grove, The Master of the Mill, p. 312

[75]Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 47.

proclaims in Jude the Obscure:

> 'There is something external to us which says, "You shan't!" First it said, "You shan't learn!" Then it said, "You Shan't labour!" Now it says, "You shan't love!"[76]

Sue's conclusion here is perhaps more severe than the ones discovered by other Grove and Hardy figures, but the inevitable rejection of individual freedom is something that they all seem to share. In the end Sue's logic compells her to proclaim that:

> 'We must conform!'she said mournfully. 'All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!'[77]

Grove and Hardy do not impose divine oppression on man. They only show him in a position where he can discover it in terms of his own deficiencies. Their method of presentation seems to indicate that if the true nature and meaning of man's relationship to a supernatural or divine order is to be discovered, then it must be done by reassessing the nature of individual existence. Grove's Amundsen, for example, uses God's apparent harshness to justify his own cruelty and his own inability to see life as more than just the pioneer's struggle for survival. His apparent consolation is that:

> "It has pleased God to confine her to her bed," Amundsen replied with corresponding choice of words in Swedish. He shrugged his shoulders and raised his hands in a deprecatory gesture. "It is a visitation. One must be resigned."[78]

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[76] Hardy, Jude the Obscure, p. 349.

[77] Ibid., p. 354.

[78] Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, p. 20.

His wife has had several miscarriages, but not because of God's injustice. Her suffering and loss is due to her husband's blind dictates. Grove obviously wants his readers to see Amundsen's logic for what it really is, a callous neglect of the quest for meaning. Grove does his best to show Amundsen's shallowness in its worst possible light:

> "She is in the hand of God," Amundsen replied sententiously. "What is to be will be. I am a sinner and a stricken man." It sounded as if he boasted of the fact.[79]

Accordingly, Amundsen is rewarded with all the hostility that he believes exists in God's universe. He dies alone when his sleigh overturns.

Hardy's vision is indeed close to Grove's. His Mayor of Casterbridge is probably the best example in all of English literature of a writer's display of the divine laws of cause and effect, but at no time does Hardy remove from Henchard's shoulders the responsibility of choice. Hardy's apparently deterministic vision has one main objective: to show how, through a multitude of chances, man can misuse his freedom of choice. It should be noted that Hardy also points out that an awareness of the concatenation of events would help man to exercise his freedom of choice, but he cautions against putting too much faith in one's ability to interpret cause and effect relationships. He therefore has Arabella launch her affair with Jude by hurling a most inappropriate part of the pig remains at him.

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[79] Ibid., p. 24.

> It had been no vestal who chose <u>that</u> missile for opening her attack on him. He saw this with his intellectual eye, just for a short fleeting while, as by the light of a falling lamp one might momentarily see an inscription on a wall before being enshrouded in darkness.[80]

Hardy's irony is obvious: Jude must use his "intellectual eye" to interpret this overt action. The question remains, just how often is one confronted by such readable incidents as Arabella's "missile" attack?

Both Hardy and Grove seem to agree that even though the events in men's lives are not always readable, they are to a great extent manageable. By admitting his inability to impose an absolute order upon existence the individual must look first within himself for the potential for order. The result is the kind of questioning Niels arrives at in <u>Settlers of the Marsh</u>:

> Are there in us unsounded depths of which we do not know ourselves? Can things outside of us sway us in such a way as to change our very nature? Are we we? Or are we mere products of circumstances?[81]

The distinction Niels seems to be trying to make rests with what he feels himself to be and what the world appears to make of him. Perhaps a reason for envisioning a cruel and relentless divine will springs from the inability to discriminate between what a man is and what he wants in order to attain meaning and happiness. It is this tension between being and having that gives man an image of himself and a projection of

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[80] Hardy, <u>Jude the Obscure</u>, p. 47.

[81] Grove, <u>Settlers of the Marsh</u>, p. 166.

that self. The problem with this dichotomy is that having is often associated with becoming when, in fact, it is only a minor part of the process. Grove points out in In Search of Myself that:

> It is the peculiar American philosophy of life that to have is more important that to be or to do; in fact, that to be is dependent on to have, America's chief contribution to the so-called civilization of mankind, so far, consists in the instalment plan; and that plan imposes a slavery vastly more galling, vastly more wasteful than any autocracy, any tyranny has ever imposed. A free life is impossible under its rule except for the rich who can dispense with it; that is axiomatic.[82]

Becoming, then, moves beyond the realizable ends that 'having' usually seeks as end. The first indicates a realized potential while the second implies the need to continue development. Being and becoming involve the kind of attitude Grove expresses in A Search for America when he states:

> Whatever I might have to go through, if finally I arrived somewhere, if I achieved something, no matter how little, it would be my own achievement; I must be I. [83]

As was pointed out earlier, the major characters of Grove's and Hardy's novels display egos that are initially independent and, at the same time, usually determined to attain some realizable end. As Len points out to Lydia in The Yoke of Life:

> "I've had three wishes since I was I.

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[82] Grove, In Search of Myself, pp. 452-453

[83] Frederick Philip Grove, A Search for America, (Toronto:McClelland and Stewart,1971), p. 30

> One of them was to possess all knowledge. Another, to see the Lake...
>
> "The third wish," he added, "was to possess you." [84]

The three principle domains of having are implied here. Man generally seeks completion of his being through intellectual pursuits, through material acquisitions, or through possession of another's love. Len displays the drive to have, but it does not consistently appear to be associated with a desire to become. His tragedy, much like the one experienced by Hardy's Jude and Eustacia, stems from the over-emphasis that he places on his first premise that "he was he", and not on a premise of what he could become through his love for Lydia; or what he could become through his studies.

Aside from the problems of being and having, both Grove and Hardy consider the forces within man that motivate him to envision a vindictive external will. What Len and Jude, and several other characters in Grove's and Hardy's novels, fail to come to terms with is the fact that man is the possessor of both intellect and instinct. When Jude returns to Christminster for the last time, he proclaims his sense of emptiness:

> For who knowth what is good for man in this life?-- and who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?[85]

Earlier in his speech to his peers he implies the reason for his own

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[84]Grove, The Yoke of Life, p. 298.

[85]Hardy, Jude the Obscure, p. 338.

vision of a void:

> And what I appear, a sick and poor man, is not the worst of me. I am in a chaos of principles --groping in the dark --acting by instinct and not after example.[86]

Later, after the death of their children, Jude tries to placate Sue with this consolation:

> "You have been fearless, both as a thinker and a feeler, and you deserved more admiration than I gave. I was too full of narrow dogmas at the time to see it."[87]

Jude is always seen in the extremes of either instinct or intellect. It is his confusion between these two possibilities that makes him the perfect prey for a woman like Arabella. His reaction to her, an instinctual one, goes to the opposite extreme with Sue. Her ethereal being compells him to adhere to a life that ignores instinct. At the end of the novel Jude becomes aware of his self-imposed tradition of folly. He proclaims to Sue that, "we are acting by the letter; and the letter killeth!"[88]

Grove, like Hardy, saw that man possessed this inner conflict of instinct and intellect, and like Hardy, he was aware that man uses his religious beliefs as a repository for both. Such a vision is not invented by either writer. Even before Grove and Hardy turned their visions to the "arbitrary and freakish operation and disposition of an

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[86]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 337.

[87]Hardy, <u>Jude the Obscure</u>, p. 356.

[88]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 402.

extra-human order",[89] man had created for himself such figures as blind-folded Eros, who was responsible for the dilemmas of many an apparently unwary victim. The process of metaphysical externalization displays man's predisposition to discover security through a rationale that is greater than his own. Perhaps Jude's and Sue's suffering is unlike the suffering most men might encounter, but the truth Hardy is indicating is no less valid. In Jude's and Sue's case it is the failure to discriminate between instinct and intellect that results in their vision of a hostile world. Their subsequent lament is, therefore, only a cry of personal defeat, and not a comment by Hardy on the nature of a divine will.

Grove, like Hardy, places the emphasis on the truth to be learned from individual failures and not from dictating an over-all cosmic view. Life for Grove appears to demand that human experience contain a continuous process of evaluation. The error, in an approach to this process of evaluation, rests with the belief that there can be one absolute and final conclusion. For example, Len has allowed his instinct and intellect to war against each other and as a result he concludes that:

> He could not expect that things should come up to his expectations. He, being the apex of creation, looked back on its lower manifestations and saw all the previous errors; in a moral sense, he could have made a better piece of work of it.[90]

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[89] Joseph Warren Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 236.

[90] Grove, The Yoke of Life, p. 222.

He tenaciously clings only to a vision of Lydia because:

> In order to justify his condemnation of the world, he needed to idealize her; and he did so with the facility of his youth. She must be enshrined so that she might save him; the flesh had begun to trouble. To give in to the flesh meant utter ruin. The spirit in him needed reincarnation and it found it in a fiction of her.[91]

The world's apparent opposition to Len's will eventually results in his return to, and recognition of, the importance of instinct. Grove surrealistically shows Len's new awareness in the following passage:

> Confusion invaded his brain. With his mind's eye he saw a stiff derby hat. Into it he must break three eggs, being careful that none of the white got into it, only the yolks. What do with the whites? Let them run on the pavement! The yolks he must beat with an egg-beater. Yes, that would solve the problem. Yet, it was not altogether clear. He reached for the derby hat, struggling to his feet.[92]

The three yolks represent, "he, she and the landscape".[93] The possible play on the words yoke and yolk becomes as much a comment on the nature of the true commitment to life as the names Sterner and Fawley are comments on individuals who misuse the freedom to discover a meaning for their lives. The return to instinct also puts Len back into a history which has envisioned a superior will or force that rules over both intellect and instinct. It is a hard knock to his 'refined'

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[91] Ibid., p. 178.

[92] Grove, The Yoke of Life, p. 255.

[93] Ibid., p. 256.

sensibility and as such the complaint against, and rejection of, an external will is inevitable. Grove presents Len metaphorically calling God upon the carpet:

> In passing, a sign caught his eye. He went back and read it painstakingly as though the mechanics of reading were still troubling him. "Northern Fish Company." As he went on, he kept repeating these three words, saying them in all sorts of cadences, with varying intonations, now questioningly, now threateningly, now like an imprecation in a commination service. It was a game. At last his inflections became ironic, Byronic, pathetic like the ravings of Lear on the heath.[94]

Len's anguish is too great to allow him to 'play games': the "game" here refers to life and its apparent meaninglessness.

In the end Len comes to terms with life by facing life's one absolute: death. Grove sees Len's final act of suicide as a creative act. By perishing with Lydia, Len establishes a permanence that is somewhat akin to the kind of permanence displayed by the figures in Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn". In his autobiography Grove writes that: "The Yoke, whatever it may be worth, stands beyond pessimism and optimism."[95] What this means basically is that Len's embrace of death indicates neither the positive, nor the negative, effect of a vision of an external will. Len offers to Lydia a kind of immutability that is founded on his assertion, "We are we".[96] They leave this world,

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[94] Ibid., p. 256.

[95] Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 357

[96] Grove, The Yoke of Life, p. 347.

however, with one more conviction than the absoluteness of death, that is, the new conviction of an absolute love between just the two of them. In this sense their deaths are creative, but in terms of human experience the void still remains. The very nature of death makes Len's 'creative' act seem, at best, a very paradoxical conquest. It has meaning, but, as Eliot says in "The Wasteland", it is also:

> The awful daring of a moment's
> surrender
> Which an age of prudence can never
> retract.[97]

Lydia's first reaction to Len's plan reflects the human predisposition to cling to life and not to death for meaning and satisfaction: "'Death?' she said and shivered. 'Life is sweet now.'"[98]

It is ironic that Grove once wrote that, "for Hardy, all things are fundamentally wrong; they can become right only through man's victory over God."[99] Grove's own view, especially concerning Len, could also be awarded this same charge. Yet, Grove never allows his vision to dwell only on this possibility because the resulting display of self-righteousness would make his figures worthy of scorn and not sympathy. Len's act remains an assertion of an individual will, but Grove tempers this act by pointing out that Len's attempt to gain a "victory over God" leaves a gap. Len has acquired the knowledge of an absolute that man cannot normally count on, but in order to gain this he has had to

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[97] T.S. Eliot, <u>The Complete Poems and Plays</u> (New York: 1962), p. 49.

[98] Grove, <u>The Yoke of Life</u>, p. 347.

[99] Grove, "Thomas Hardy: A Critical Examination of a Typical Novel and his Shorter Poems", <u>University of Toronto Quarterly</u>, I (July, 1932), p. 491.

reject all the rest of human experience. Therefore, Grove concludes the novel with this incident:

> When, a week later, the new-born child [the son of Len's brother Charlie] was christened, he was given the name of Leonard, in commemoration of one who was dead and as a promise, perhaps, that he should have the opportunities which his older namesake had lacked.[100]

Perhaps Grove's charge against Hardy may seem reasonable in terms of such statements as the following one from Hardy's Return of the Native.

> Human beings, in their generous endeavour to construct a hypothesis that shall not degrade a First Cause, have always hesitated to conceive a dominant power of lower moral quality than their own and, even while they sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, invent excuses for the oppression which prompts their tears.[101]

However, aside from the intended irony, what Hardy is implying here is not the need to gain a "victory", but the need to avoid a philosophy than can allow man to formulate excuses. Hardy generally does not exhort man to seek a triumph over God; rather, he tries to show the importance of a reasonable evaluation of life. He points out the result of a misapplication of the "victory" philosophy in Far From the Madding Crowd. Oak's dog, "George's son", does his job of driving

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[100] Grove, The Yoke of Life, p. 354.

[101] Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 387.

the sheep so well that, "he was considered too good a workman to live."[102] The poor brute pursues his role to a point beyond his experience and the result is the destruction of Oak's entire flock. Hardy makes full use of this incident to make a wry comment on the parallel human possibility:

> ...another instance of the untoward fate which so often attends dogs and other philosophers who follow out a train of reasoning to its logical conclusion, and attempt perfectly consistent conduct in a world made up so largely of compromise.[103]

There can be no doubt that the world that both Hardy and Grove envision demands "compromise". Hardy's Jude, for example, is compelled to discover that, "what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener."[104] However, there comes a time when even compromise seems impossible, as Niels discovers when Sigurdsen dies.

> He himself--this very afternoon there had been in him the joy of grass growing, twigs budding, blossoms opening to the air of spring. The grass had been stepped on; the twig had been broken; the blossoms nipped by frost.... He, Niels, a workman in God's garden? Who was God anyway?.... Here lay a lump of flesh transformed in its agony from flesh in which dwelt thought, feeling, a soul, into flesh that would rot and feed worms till it became clay....[105]

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[102] Hardy, Far From the Madding Crowd, p. 47

[103] Ibid., p. 47.

[104] Hardy, Jude the Obscure, p. 21.

[105] Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, pp. 101-102.

For both writers, man is perpetually compelled to accommodate himself to "Time" and "Chance". Niels questions the existence of a loving God when Sigurdsen dies, but he does so because he has confused these two possibilities. Hardy discriminates between these two conditions or elements when he describes the suffering wife of Michael Henchard in The Mayor of Casterbridge:

> When she plodded on in the shade of the hedge, silently thinking, she had the hard, half-apathetic expression of one who deems anything possible at the hands of Time and Chance, except, perhaps, fair play. The first was the word of Nature, the second probably of civilization.[106]

The distinction between these two possibilities is simple and appropriate. Time is the unquestionable dictator of decay and death; while Chance is the earthly force that regulates the consequences of man's endeavours. For Niels Time seems unreasonable when it dictates the death of his old friend, Sigurdsen. His feeling of joy at the birth of Nature stands in stark contrast with his despair at the death of his friend. Like most individuals, Niels looks upon Time as a benevolent force, and as a result, once misfortune strikes he is reluctant to admit that Time consists of the paired opposites of birth and death. The realization of the inevitability of death causes Niels to consider the value to be gained from life. In his attempt to gain meaning for his existence he contemplates man's role in the domain of Chance:

> The highest we can aspire to in this

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[106]Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, pp. 2-3.

> life is that we feel we leave a gap behind in the lives of others when we go. To inflict pain on others is undergoing the supreme pain ourselves: that is the sum and substance of our achievement. If that is denied, we shiver in an utter void....Thus would he shiver....[107]

Niels thoughts hint at a substantial truth: Chance affords man the opportunity to alter his circumstances, and as a result, the opportunity to formulate some meaning for existence. Because Ellen is reluctant to marry Niels he chooses not to act in accordance with the possibilities provided by Chance. By refusing to pursue a fuller meaning for his life, Niels relegates Chance to the same unyielding position as Time, and so he is 'destined' to suffer.

Hardy's Time and Chance dichotomy is useful, but if it is misused, as it is in Beach's The Technique of Thomas Hardy, it can lead to an over-emphasis of Hardy's handling of incident in his novels. For example, Beach writes that:

> He [Hardy] seems to read life in terms of brute incident, things happen. And he craved, moreover, complication of incident, a web of action crossing and recrossing.[108]

The conclusion to the above comment concerning Hardy's technique is that: He escaped almost wholly the great contemporary tendency to subordinate incident to psychology.[109]

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[107]Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, p. 102.

[108]Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy, p. 12.

[109]Ibid.

Fortunately or unfortunately, Hardy is not as much an outsider as this critic would have us believe. One has only to look at the actions and psychology of Michael Henchard to witness the fact that Hardy is concerned with the problems of accurately presenting human characters. As Roy Morrell points out in The Will and the Way:

> It is a common criticism that Hardy's interest in chance led him to ignore character; but the truth is that he often defines character in terms of chance, in terms of a man's ability to stamp a design upon the neutral chances that touch his life.[110]

It is an error to discount Hardy's concern for psychology. He is a master at applying deft touches that accurately fill in the kinds of characters that are confronted with a world that demands compromise.

In The Mayor of Casterbridge Hardy quotes from Novalis that "character is fate".[111] This idea makes sense especially in terms of the subset of fate that includes Chance. Unlike Time, Chance is not an absolute. The individual has freedom to become through Chance even in the face of Time. Earlier it was mentioned that an obsession to overcome an absolute external force leads to a suffering self-righteousness that does not command sympathy. For Hardy, then, it would seem that man's fate must include both action in the realm of Chance and faith in the meaning of that action even in the face of

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[110] Roy Morrell, The Will and the Way (Kuala Lumpur; University of Malaya Press, 1965), p. 55.

[111] Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, p. 135.

Time. Faith does not imply hopeless resignation, though it may include just a little acquiescence. As the old maltster points out in Far from the Madding Crowd:

> "Don't let your teeth quite meet, and you won't feel the sandiness [of a piece of meat] at all. Ah! 'tis wonderful what can be done by contrivance!"[112]

Grove, like Hardy, sees the function of incident as a means for man to discover himself. His vision of character and fate is not unlike the one displayed by Hardy. In Our Daily Bread, when John Elliot is considering his children he compares the function of character and fate to the process of photographic development:

> Thus his children appeared to him. The developing solution was life itself. They had been mere blanks more alike in the lack of distinguishing features than differentiated by the small deviations in texture. Like those first patches on photographic prints certain peculiarities had asserted themselves in each of them, mysterious in their significance. Perhaps, if a person had been able, with his imagination, properly to interpret them, he might have changed the picture that was to appear by and by. But insight was lacking. Development went on; and suddenly character and fate became readable as the features connected themselves to each other.[113]

Unfortunately, John Elliot lacks faith in his children's ability to formulate a meaning of life through their own instincts and intellects.

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[112] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p. 67.

[113] Frederick Philip Grove, Our Daily Bread, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928), p. 135.

His tragedy stems from the fact that he has put his faith in law and not in man's capacity for self-realization through his deeds. Thus, for Elliot, his children become as unfathomable to him as a vision of the power of a divine will:

> At this stage of his own life and development John Elliot came to call this mysterious quality in the characters of men and women God.[114]

All that is left to the aging man is frustration and isolation. Because of his lack of faith in his children, Elliot is incapable of envisioning any freedom of choice for himself. His concept of being, therefore, is static and, as a result, life obviously offers little meaning to him:

> Correct them? How can you correct what you do not know? Blame them? The picture on the blank sheet appeared because the hidden chemistry of the underlying strata had been influenced in some incomprehensible way. Only that appeared which was already invisibly traced in its layers. There was something uncanny about it. We can but become what we are....[115]

John's wife, Martha, fails to place her faith in anything beyond the trust she has in her "upright"[116] husband. She has come to respect his law, but coupled with this sentiment is an awareness of her own instinct. She needs discovery of meaning through her own life, through her instinct and intellect, but she feels compelled to ignore her being in order to acquiesce in her husband's static vision.

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[114] Ibid., p. 135.

[115] Grove, Our Daily Bread, p. 135.

[116] Ibid., p. 29.

There is no becoming through chance for John Elliot, and by extension, no chance for his wife. John's weakness stems from the fact that his one consolation is rooted in Time: "He had always felt himself to be continuous with his ancestors."[117] His outlook is one in which individual experience is relegated to a secondary place in order to discover security in continuity, that is, security in time. Martha rebels against this by dragging her suffering body to one last dance before she perishes. She dies leaving the defiant statement: "For once in my life I have had a good time."[118]

When Elliot is confronted with old Mr. Harvey's questions: "How can I cease to be I?"[119] he is faced with doubt. He can only respond with: "I don't know. Perhaps there's a future life. Perhaps not."[120] His doubt here is obviously a universal part of the human condition, but it is important to note that he completes his statement with the following observation:

> "...It wouldn't do to tell the youngsters."
> "Why Not?" the other asked. "Tell me that. Why not?"
> It helps to keep them in order." John Elliot said. "Reward and Punishment."[121]

Obviously, Elliot's version is one that destroys man's potential for discovery of himself in terms of Chance. In terms of Time, his theory

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[117] Ibid., p. 12.

[118] Ibid., p. 131.

[119] Ibid., p. 161.

[120] Grove, Our Daily Bread, p. 161.

[121] Ibid., p. 161.

of continuity through law dwarfs his existence to such an extent that the problem of choice seems irrelevant. Through Elliot's approach man appears to have only one freedom--to obey. Martha's lament accurately shows what can happen when one submits unreasonably, first to human, and then to divine law:

> "Oh, she cried, I don't even know any longer whether there's a God or not. If there is, I don't care. Come here, listen. I want to whisper to you. You may think I've had so many children because I was fond of them. No! They just came. Because I lived an evil life with your father. Look at me!-- And she suddenly bared her body: a terrible sight!"
> ...Another time she said, "Gladys, I am the harlot of Babylon!" And she wailed and cried, half, I believe, from pain; half from despair.
> "She always talked of the despair she was in. There is nothing left to me but despair! Despair!"[112]

It may appear that acquiescence differs only in degree from the terms submission or resignation, but as Roy Morrell points out in The Will and the Way:

> ...between saying, thus, that life is difficult, and saying that it is impossible, there is not a slight difference of degree, there is all the difference in the world. In the first case, there is point in exploring where the possibilities of freedom and happiness may lie--and the more remote they are, the more urgent the inquiry might be deemed. In the second case, there is no point.[123]

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[122] Ibid., p. 133.

[123] Morrell, The Will and the Way, p. 17.

The elements of freedom and happiness are discovered in the works of both writers by a process of 'externalization' in which man takes advantage of the opportunities offered by Chance. As was stated earlier, man discovers himself through a process in which his experience causes him to open out his vision of the world and beyond. In Fruits of the Earth, Abe becomes aware of this process of 'externalization' through his contact with his son Charlie:

> He was making this child happy; and that made him happy in turn: with a happiness unknown to him at less magic times: this hour was fraught with something which redeemed the workaday world. Why had he never enjoyed it before? With a pang he realized that he was missing much in life.[124]

Thus, from this external chance at happiness Abe must exercise his freedom of choice. Unfortunately his former materialistic vision has led him to measure out Chance in terms of harvests. Abe is one of the many who fail to discriminate between Time and Chance. As Hardy points out, Chance evolves from civilization and it is subjected to Nature's Time. Once Charlie is accidentally killed, Abe realizes that there will be other harvests; Time will inevitably follow its seasonal cycles. What he discovers is that he has lost a chance to open out his experience in a positive way in order to discover happiness and the power of his own freedom even in the face of Time. For Grove and Hardy this failure to take advantage of Chance inevitably results in a

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[124] Grove, Fruits of the Earth, pp. 105-106.

common complaint. Hardy's Clym Yeobright fails to reconcile himself with Eustacia and, as a result, he laments over his own culpability: "I did not invite her back till it was too late."[125] John Elliot Jr. discovers this same complaint when his mother is near death:

> He had hurt her. If she was going to die, he could never make up for it. It was too late! Too late! These two words were the two most grimly terrible ones in the whole human vocabulary.[126]

Later in the novel John Elliot Sr. reinforces this fact as he stands beside the coffin of his much wronged son-in-law, Peter Harrington.

> Why, indeed, should they sorrow? Because this man who lay there, stark and dead, had passed from among them. Because never again, once the lid of the coffin was closed, would they see his good honest face, his smiling lips, and the knowing irony in his eyes. Because, above all, if they had ever wronged him...they could never, till they themselves lay low, make up for such a wrong![127]

In an essay entitled "One Speaking Into a Void", Isabel Skelton writes:

> ...[from] the determined interest in conditions immediately beside us in both time and space to which Mr. Grove holds us, it would see if we distinctly heard him command "Occupy yourself with this, poor, helpless, puny human atom that you are, because it is all that is given you to know."[128]

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[125]Grove, Our Daily Bread, p. 121.

[126]Ibid., p. 348.

[127]Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 383.

[128]Isabel Skelton, "One Speaking Into a Void", Frederick Philip Grove, ed. Desmond Pacey, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1970), p. 28.

The application of the above dictum fits Grove's vision to some extent, but this approach also implies a kind of resignation that Grove sees as most debilitating. As has been stated before, Grove continually looks at both the good and bad aspects of life that may be derived from human experience and, as a result, he sees man's limitations not only as limitations, but also as opportunities. There can be little doubt that his vision of man is rooted in a concern for man "in both time and space", but aside from this fact, Grove is also trying to do more than just copy life. In writing he believes that an artist has to translate the matter of life into the essence of art.

> For art is essentially that activity of the human soul--a necessary activity from which we cannot escape forever--which converts the concrete fact into a spiritual experience.[129]

Thus if sense is to be made out of his vision one has only to return to the data presented as human experience and search for and extract the "spiritual experience which has eternal life."[130] For example, in Butterfly on Rock, Jones writes that:

> ...fundamentally, what Grove subjects to scrutiny, tests in dramatic action, and finally questions in novel after novel is the arrogant and aggressive masculine logos, the God or father figure of western culture. One suspects that he was also fighting elements of this figure in his own personality. It would appear certain that he had to contend with such a figure in dealing with his own father, an experience which no doubt sharpened his awareness of the problem.

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[129] Grove, It Needs to be Said..., p. 29.

[130] Ibid.

> Unquestionably, a theme which preoccupies Grove in his earliest as in his latest novels is man's will-to-power and its ultimate futility....[131]

Jones' isolation of the authoritarian figure is relevant. It is the kind of "experience" that Grove is trying to present. The assumption that Grove is trying to reconcile himself with the man who so dominated his earlier years has some validity. This conjecture is interesting, but somewhat limited, especially in the light of the work done by Douglas Spettigue on Grove's history. Quite conceivably the figure of Grove's father in In Search of Myself, could also be the product of Grove's imagination. Perhaps it may be useful to know what the man was like, but this connection, used without caution, can lead one to play down Grove's pursuit of universally valid human experience. The fact that he presents these figures may indicate that Grove is attempting to come to terms with the distinction between the concepts of authority and power. Spalding and Elliot, like Hardy's Michael Henchard, symbolize the existence of authority because of their situations in the family unit. They are all associated with the idea of order; yet, inevitably, there is a tragic realization for them when they discover that their authority is not synonymous with power. In each case they find their power questioned when they attempt to impose their authority upon another's will. The common error here is that the freedom of choice is ignored for the sake of authoritarian security. In The Mayor of Casterbridge, Henchard discovers that his dictates concerning

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[131] D.G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock, (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 73.

Elizabeth-Jane's courtship with Donald Farfrae could cost him the last person who really cares for him. It is because Henchard is alone and suffering that he comes to re-evaluate his relationship with his stepdaughter.

> Time had been when such instinctive opposition would have taken shape in action. But he was not now the Henchard of former days. He schooled himself to accept her will, in this as in other matters, as absolute and unquestionable. He dreaded lest an antagonistic word should lose for him such regard as he had regained from her by devotion, feeling that to retain this under separation was better than to incur her dislike by keeping her near.[132]

John Elliot, in Our Daily Bread, is called "Lear of the prairie",[133] and the similarities between Elliot and the suffering Lear are striking. But what is most important to note is the similarity they display in their misunderstanding of the nature of power. Though Lear brings much of his misfortune upon himself, at one point in his suffering he proclaims:

> As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods,
> They kill us for their sport. (IV,i,37-38)

It is not difficult to see Lear's conclusion here as an extension of his own misapplication of authority and, in particular, his own misunderstanding of the nature of power. Undoubtedly, most power is based on fear, but the fact remains that the most effective use of power is

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[132] Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, p. 348.

[133] Grove, Our Daily Bread, p. 258.

founded on love. Both the "gods" and men who wield power in order to gain dominance through the submission of others inevitably invite rebellion. The cliché that "one can catch more flies with sugar than with vinegar" comes closest to defining the true domain of power on either a human or a divine level. Thus, if one is to possess power over another, then the degree to which that power can be maintained is dependent upon the amount of love that exists between the one who commands and the one who is commanded.

In order to nurture the attachment between the ruler and the ruled, Grove points out that sympathetic understanding is necessary. In _In Search of Myself_, he writes about his father in the following manner:

> He was self-willed, headstrong, subject to sudden bursts of uncontrollable anger, true; he had never been checked in his life: he lacked the imagination to place himself in the position of others....[134]

Similarly, in _A Search for America_, Phil Branden points out to the wealthy Mr. Mackenzie that, "the most fundamental part of your education is forgotten. You are not taught to see the other fellow's point of view."[135] The failure to realize the needs and hopes of others leads to unsatisfying dictatorship. John Elliot becomes an isolated and discouraged old man in spite of his large family. He believes all his life that happiness and meaning are to be found in the family unit.

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[134] Grove, _In Search of Myself_, p. 93.

[135] Grove, _A Search for America_, p. 379.

Unfortunately he never respects the individual needs and emotions of his children. In one brief but telling scene Grove shows the irony of Elliot's position as patriarch. When greeted by his daughter, Isabel: "He stood and held his cheek up, pointing to the place where he wanted to be kissed."[136] To Elliot the sign of affection is only important as a sign. There is no need for spontaneous expressions of affection, only duty and obedience. The failure of Grove's authority figures repeatedly attests to his belief that power based on fear is a shallow and unsatisfying possibility. Thus Grove seems to discount the effective use of all power when it is based on fear. The individual may or may not outwardly conform to the rule of another. Though he may appear to act in accordance to another's will there is always the chance of an inner revolt of the will. The confrontation of two wills under these circumstances may generate self-control on the part of the one who is ruled, but inevitably separation results when authority does not use its power to guarantee self-fulfilment and a chance to express individual freedom.

In Fruits of the Earth, Abe Spalding comes to the conclusion that:

> Because nature plays human beings a scurvy trick in allowing a blind instinct to mature before thought and instinct are sufficiently developed to act as a check. It was he, the father, who must counterbalance it. [137]

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[136] Grove, Our Daily Bread, p. 271.

[137] Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 237.

With this conclusion in mind, Abe forbids his daughter to marry for at least one year. He believes that she is at an age when she is "just ready to develop her inner life and by satisfying sexual instincts higher things would cease".[138] Perhaps Abe is right, but his interpretation leads to difficult consequences:

> With a pang Abe realized that, in the eyes of the girl, he lived as a sort of doom personified, as a law from the verdict of which there is no appeal. That misconception put him on the defensive; he justified himself to himself. But as a matter of fact he felt far from certain that what he did was the right thing to do.[139]

Necessity dictates that he re-evaluate his conclusion, but it is almost too late. Before he can announce that he agrees to his daughter's marriage, Marion tries to elope. At this stage Abe realizes that Marion's rebellion would only foster resentment of his authority. He is compelled to respect her freedom of choice or lose her. Her rebellion indicates to him that his sense of power as head of the household does not grant him the right to impose his will on the other members of his family. Once Abe is capable of seeing his daughter's point of view, he no longer needs to 'justify himself to himself'. He comes to realize that his position of authority can only be maintained by expressing his power in terms of the needs of others. The use of his power, though apparently limited by traditional standards, becomes creative in that he uses it as a means of expressing his affection and

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[138] Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 237.

[139] Ibid., p. 247.

respect for his daughter. He declares that the possible separation of father and daughter "will not do".[140] His one stipulation to the marriage is that it take place in his home. In the end it seems that Abe is becoming aware of the nature and extent of power.

The most complete picture of the extent of human power in Grove's works occurs in The Yoke of Life. If Len has any power over Lydia it is due to their love. The degree to which this power works on Len, himself, is also indicated by Grove:

> He thought of the new Lydia whom he had seen, resurrected and unlike her who had stirred impure blood; unlike also the deified, ethereal, flesh and blood; yet purified by he knew not what. He knew not what? by love.[141]

Their deaths become, for Grove, a testimonial to the possibility of the absolute power of human love. Len's and Lydia's discovery is, of course, an exception to the general rule, but this does not alter the truth of what they discover. Generally, most men never realize this absolute power from their human experience and as a result they tend to misinterpret divine power.

Aside from discovering the nature of absolute power through the use of Chance in a social context, man also has an opportunity to realize a vision of absolute power in Time through Nature. This will be considered in detail later. However, for both Hardy and Grove, when Nature is seen without man's misapplication of authority it is a mani-

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[140] Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p. 324.

[141] Grove, The Yoke of Life, p. 324.

festation of God's absolute power, that is, the absolute power of divine love. As Grove points out in The Yoke of Life:

> "Look at that," the old man said, his voice sounding hushed in the vastness of space. "Whenever the world is as God made it it's glory! Only where man sits down, it's spiled!" [142]

Hardy, like Grove, seems to feel that Nature is in perfect harmony and only when man imposes his intellect upon this order is the harmony interrupted. In The Return of the Native, for example, Book One, chapter two is entitled "Humanity appears upon the Scene, Hand in Hand with Trouble".[143]

The prime reason that man fails to see the harmony around him stems from the flaw that Abe Spalding displays before Charlie's death, that is, through the confusion of the domains of Time and Chance. Granted, man does not have the freedom in the realm of Time that he does in the realm of Chance, but this is still no excuse for complete resignation. If one is to find meaning and satisfaction in spite of the decrees of Time, then one must recognize the domain and values of Chance. The advice that both Hardy and Grove offer recalls Andrew Marvell's rationale to take advantage of Chance to express love:

> But at my back I always hear Time's
> winged chariot hurrying near; And
> yonder all before us lie
> Deserts of vast eternity. [144]

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[142] Grove, Yoke of Life, p. 180

[143] Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 15.

[144] Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress", The Selected Poetry of Andrew Marvell, ed. Frank Kermode, (Toronto: Signet Classics, 1967) p. 76.

The responsibility rests with man. If meaning is to be discovered then each person must go beyond Lear's lament that:"...nothing can be made out of nothing."(I,iv.147). Man's existence is akin to the second "nothing" in Lear's equation. What Grove and Hardy seem to imply is that man must discover more than 'nothingness' for himself so that the balance of the equation may be altered and meaning given to the first "nothing".

The question of whether or not Grove and Hardy are optimists or pessimists is basically irrelevant. The nature of their art would seem to indicate that they are trying to "educate". In his essay on Thomas Hardy, Grove classifies Hardy, with Ibsen and Tolstoi, as one of the "three great educators of the second half of the nineteenth century".[145] Grove specifically points out the virtues in their methods when he states that:

> All three have attacked conventional standards of morality and conduct. They have questioned things. Now it is the task of every educator to question things...for education is the process of calling forth in us thoughts and reactions which while they lay dormant in us, yet had never been evoked before; the educator is necessarily heterodox; he who is orthodox can never be anything but an inducator.[146]

The heterodox nature of an "educator" may place Grove and Hardy at odds with accepted values, but it is not a logical conclusion to assume that

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[145] Frederick Philip Grove, "Thomas Hardy: A Critical Examination of a Typical Novel and His Shorter Poems", University of Toronto Quarterly (July, 1932), I. p. 490.

[146] Ibid., p. 491.

their contrary approach is morbid. It must be remembered that an individual who is stricken with a morbid sensibility limits his emotional reaction and, as a result, he becomes incapable of becoming universal. By Grove's and Hardy's standards this would indeed be a severe limitation. As Northrop Frye points out:

> Literature is conscious mythology: it creates an autonomous world that gives us an imaginative perspective on the actual one.[147]

Grove and Hardy as "educators" are obviously trying to develop the "imaginative perspective" of their readers, and because of this their works reflect, as nearly as possible, a sensibility that evokes a "universal" response. The ideal is commendable, but obviously Grove knew that his approach, like Hardy's, might be misunderstood. His ambition is to help develop man's ability to evaluate human experience. Like Hardy, he sees a deficiency in his fellow men, but this deficiency is also an opportunity, and so Grove, like Hardy, attempts to be an "educator". Grove maintains this attitude in his writings. In order to educate he knows that he must avoid the sensational and observe the human; thus he writes:

> Strongly-seasoned meats may be congenial to us in an occasional craving of our palate; but for our daily meal we want plain bread--the bread of sanity."[148]

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[147] Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden, (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1971), p. 335.

[148] Grove, It Needs to be Said..., p. 64.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF NATURE IN THE WORKS OF FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE AND THOMAS HARDY

Both the prairie and heath appear to minimize the meaning of man's existence. For both Hardy and Grove, however, the truth about man's being is founded on this apparent lack of meaning which surrounds man. Their approach is never meant to show man's condition in its worst possible light; instead, it is meant to show man in a position in which he can make the most of discovering his own place in Nature. Their outlook seems to echo Thoreau's sentiments that, "the laws of the universe are not indifferent, but are forever on the side of the most sensitive." For both writers, therefore, the emphasis is necessarily placed on the individual's participation in Nature's flux. Time and change are inevitable, but their meaning is subsequently ordered by man. It is man's compulsive ordering of natural phenomena that makes him more than just a part of nature. In Far from the Madding Crowd, Hardy acknowledges man's ability to order experience. It is, however, interesting to note the casual words of caution interjected by him at the end of his observation:

> The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, having first expanded with a sense of difference from the mass of civilized mankind, who are dreamwrapt and disregardful of all such proceedings at this time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. After such a nocturnal reconnoitre it is hard to get back to earth, and to believe thatthe consciousness of such majestic speed is derived from a tiny human frame.

[1]Henry David Thoreau, Walden, (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1948), p.183.

[2]Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, pp.16-17.

Unfortunately man has separated himself from Nature by divorcing his intellect from Nature by an act of will. As Jones points out in Butterfly on Rock:

> ...the more completely man sets himself against nature and her imperfections the more completely he alienates himself from his world. And when he turns his theological or his technological weapons upon nature in the hope of completely walling out or annihilating the threats of disorder, suffering and pain, he quickly reaches a point where the supposed instruments of his salvation become rather the instruments of his death. [3]

Hardy's and Grove's use of rural settings, therefore, is not a nostalgic return to the simpler forms of human experience; rather, their return to Nature is an attempt to see man as an active agent who participates in, and acts in accordance with, the vital forces around him. Grove writes of the people of the prairie that:

> They strive for a final evaluation of life in terms of that eternity which is always present to them; they strive for a recognition of man's true place in nature, defined by the fact that he alone of all created beings was given the gift of reason; and they strive for a determination, within themselves and their own lives, of the balance so far attained between man's beasthood and man's godhead. [4]

Grove's and Hardy's characters have the freedom to choose to act in spite of the acquired values discovered from Nature by their peers. The point that both writers make, however, is that man cannot blame Nature for its apparent severity. For both Hardy and Grove, man, himself, may proclaim

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[3] Jones, Butterfly on Rock, pp.7-8.

[4] Grove, It Needs to be Said..., p.162.

Nature as severe, but in doing so he is usually seeing his own misfortune in terms of the laws that have been extrapolated from Nature. As Grove cautions in A Search for America:

> Physical facts can be taken as they are; you do not condemn or approve of a river valley or a mountain. But an outlook or a philosophy is either good or bad--a doctrine of life, of either death or life: you must side for or against it; in order to make your decision, you must first know. 5

The centre, then, for Grove's and Hardy's concern for the acquisition of meaning from Nature is with man's ability to gain knowledge from his surroundings by evaluating his experiences and judging the data at hand in accordance with previously acquired knowledge. The result or conclusion, then, becomes part of the material that Grove has referred to as "the balance so far attained between man's beasthood and man's godhead". For both Hardy and Grove, the truths to be discovered about man are rooted in Nature, but they become moral problems because they are ordered by man and codified into laws. The misapplication of Nature as a source of equitable laws only leads to suffering and despair. The dilemma that man must recognize is that any gain of self-knowledge might lead to despair, in spite of good intentions. In Settlers of the Marsh, Grove indicates that Niels' murder of Clara compels him to recognize his own "beasthood". It is more than coincidence, however, that it is through Bobby that a misunderstanding of the quest for meaning through Nature comes to light:

> He had often, of late, heard Niels mutter certain words. On this summer day they took a meaning for

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[5] Grove, A Search for America, p.146.

> Bobby. "And he that increaseth knowledge
> increaseth sorrow.... "
> He had been happy, constitutionally happy.
> He would never be quite so happy again, but he
> would be more thoughtful. 6

From his newly acquired knowledge Bobby must make a judgment. His concern for his friend appears to remove him from a concern for his own particular role as a source of meaning through Nature, but Grove interjects the following lines:

> Bobby, young as he was, came to know the bitterness of regret and repentence....
> Several times he rose, walked about, fought
> down his sobs... .
> Niels lay like a log.
> All life on the Marsh would be changed....
> Slowly the sun rode on and finally sank to
> the west. 7

Even as Bobby convinces himself that Niels' misfortune has substantially altered the Marsh, Nature moves in undisturbed order all about him. The fact remains that Bobby's logic and awareness are not rooted in his entire experience. He assumes Niels' dictum to be an absolute when, in fact, it is only an extreme of the "balance". What he fails to see at this juncture is that Nature, as it evolves through time, is not just a destructive force that has dictated his friend's misfortune: it is also a creative force that can inspire hope. Like most individuals Bobby sees himself as outside Nature and, as a result, he is reluctant to judge the sequence of events in his life on the Marsh in terms of an overall view of his position in Nature.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to man's discovering his own ability to formulate meaning for himself ~~is~~ with his inability to recognize and

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[6] Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, p.189.

[7] Ibid., p.189.

appreciate his own insignificance. There may seem to be a paradox here, but, for both Hardy and Grove, Nature commands only humility; not submission. In order to recognize his own "beasthood" the individual must see himself as an instinctive creature caught up in the necessities of Nature. In terms of his "godhead" the individual must recognize that he, himself, is responsible for discovering meaning in the apparent chaos that stands before him. Both intellect and instinct can and should work in harmony with the above objectives in mind, but, as both Grove and Hardy demonstrate, a prolongued exposure to the harsher side of Nature can bring about a separation between the two. There is nothing either forced or contrived on either writers' part in their separation of instinct from intellect in the face of Nature. To both writers the separation of potentials is the result of a particular kind of inactivity that fails to recognize the importance of building upon the knowledge and emotion gained from Nature in order to create meaning for existence. For them, a separation of the parts of man's being is not unlike the inevitable separation of oil and water in a motionless vial. What both writers are chiefly concerned with, however, is the activity or motion that keeps the intellect and instinct in harmony.

It should be mentioned at this point that the activity necessary for the maintenance of the whole man in the face of Nature is founded neither on the pursuit of material security, nor on the imposition of religious doctrine. The first blindly roots man to the soil, and ignores the possibility of any greater meaning to be gained from Nature; while the second, irrationally projects man's vision beyond an intimate and individual relationship between himself and his surroundings. The solu-

tion is that each man must choose to act as a part of, and a focal point in Nature.

Undoubtedly Hardy's Egdon Heath and Grove's prairie world impress upon the reader the apparent indifference of Nature. Grove writes in Over Prairie Trails that:

> Once I passed the skeleton of a stable--the remnant of the buildings put up by a pioneer settler who had given in after having wasted effort and substance and worn his knuckles to the bones. The wilderness uses human material.... [8]

Hardy agrees that the harsh realities of the heath use up human capabilities. When Mrs. Yeobright walks across the heath Hardy includes the following paragraph:

> She first reached Wildeve's Patch, as it was called, a plot of land redeemed from the heath, and after long and laborious years brought into cultivation. The man who had discovered that it could be tilled died of the labour: the man who succeeded him in possession ruined himself in fertilizing it. Wildeve came like Amerigo Vespucci, and received the honours due to those who had gone before. [9]

His subtle condemnation of Wildeve implies a great deal. Throughout the novel Wildeve appears above the necessities imposed on man by the heath. His existence is in the realm of self-seeking romanticism that leaves his life devoid of meaning and full of anxiety. "To be yearning for the difficult, to be weary of that offered; to care for the remote, to dislike the near; it was Wildeve's nature always".[10] It is obvious that Hardy's

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[8] Grove, Over Prairie Trails, p.11.

[9] Hardy, The Return of the Native, p.43.

[10] Ibid., p.223.

sympathies are with Wildeve's predecessors.

It becomes obvious from reading both Grove's and Hardy's works that an individual who confronts the apparently vast and insensitive environment acquires a contrasting degree of depth and sensitivity. Grove's Abe Spalding, for example, first views the prairie as a defineable challenge to his will:

> Yet this prairie seemed suddenly a peculiar country, mysteriously endowed with a power of testing temper and character. But that was exactly what he wanted: a 'clear proposition' as he had expressed it, meaning a piece of land capable of being tilled from line to line, without waste areas, without rocky stretches... He wanted land, not landscape; all the landscape he cared for he would introduce himself. [11]

The possibility of a "clear proposition" is comforting to Abe because it enables him to see himself as an active agent. From his belief that the prairie affords him the greatest degree of freedom for action, he eventually discovers that the prairie also demands from him a larger understanding of his own place in the 'proposition':

> Abe looked about and seemed to see for the first time. There were his wind-breaks, tall, rustling trees, full-grown poplars interspersed with spruces, maturing. They would age and decay and die; already some showed black knots of disease; others, their bark having burst, grew huge buttresses resembling proud flesh. They would die and decay; unless they reseeded themselves as they seemed to do; then they would spread and conquer his fields and the prairie, converting it into a forest-clad plain. Yet, if that prairie were capable of bearing a forest, would not the forest have invaded it long ago?

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[11] Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p.12.

> Even the prairie was engaged in a process which would do away with it. Abe looked at the ditches running full of a muddy flood; and his mind lost itself in the mysteries of cosmic change. [12]

Hardy, like Grove, allows his characters the freedom to reach beyond immediate experience and consider things cosmic in design. When Diggory Venn, in The Return of the Native, sees a wild mallard on the heath he feels, "himself to be in direct communication with regions unknown to man".[13] An opening-out of awareness is essential and Hardy stresses this fact by adding the following statement:

> But the bird, like many other philosophers, seemed as he looked at the reddleman to think that a present moment of comfortable reality was worth a decade of memories. [14]

In Hardy's eyes only birds and limited philosophers fail to take into account the wider sense of meaning to be gained from Nature. The comfort of the immediate present cannot substantially alter a judgment that must be founded on all human experience. In the domain of Nature the inevitabilities of birth, decay and death are always simultaneously present and, as a result, they must all be included in a vision of life regardless of how painful that vision might be. For both Hardy and Grove, the individual must continually incorporate new sensations and judgments with established concepts and emotions. The procedure, however, is not nearly as complicated as most individuals would like to believe. In Settlers of the Marsh, for example, Niels comes close to discovering the initial value of his exposure to Nature, but unfortunately he uses his vision to diminish his own function as a focal point for meaning:

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[12] Hardy, The Return of the Native, p.95.

[13] Ibid., p.95.

> It was not an easy task. To drown one's thought in labour is very difficult on the farm: everything is conducive to contemplation. No high ambitions lead you away from the present; and yet those ambitions which are indispensable, the lowly ones, are really the highest on earth: the desire for peace and harmony in yourself, your surroundings. . . .
> But there were no surroundings--there was no little world, no microcosm revolving within the macrocosm. There was the duty to the farm, the country, the world: cold, abstract things devoid of the living blood. . . . [15]

Niels is on the verge of a major discovery. He has the surroundings in which to see himself as more than an intellectual receptor of universal chaos; yet, he fails to appreciate the fact that the straightforwardness of his life makes him a focal point for meaning in the cosmic design. Niels' logic is the inverse of the kind suggested by Thoreau in Walden. Thoreau writes of man that: "In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness."[16] In A Search for America Grove stresses the utilization of the logic that the unsatisfied Niels rejects. Phil Branden discovers a pertinent truth in Carlyle's Sartor Resartus:

> "The fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your numerator as by lessening your denominator."
> Here was said what interpreted for me the phrase "going out west." It seemed uncanny. I was looking for guidance, and guidance had been vouchsafed. I was going to lessen my denominator. [17]

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[15] Grove, Settlers of the Marsh (Toronto, 1966), p.207.

[16] Thoreau, Walden, p.270.

[17] Grove, A Search for America, p.219.

He expects to intensify his reaction to life in general by reducing or simplifying his immediate environment.

Hardy sees his choice of setting as a means to an end. He refers to the heath as "grand in its simplicity"[18] and he indicates that it is, in fact actually in keeping with man's sensibility":

> It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature--neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly: neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and endearing; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. [19]

Hardy's vision of the heath fits the sentiment that Grove holds concerning the prairie. Both see their settings as mirrors that can help man to see himself in a more meaningful perspective. By placing their characters against "the more elemental things, things cosmic in their associations, nearer to the beginning or end of creation"[20] both writers make it rather obvious that the individual must attempt to come to terms with the most fundamental aspects of existence. The truth remains, however, that man is often reluctant to give his attention to what appears to be the unsympathetic side of Nature. In The Yoke of Life, Len Sterner comes to a harsh conclusion about man's fate when he considers the death and destruction he has witnessed in Nature:

> "Get used to the presence of death," he said. "This wind means death to thousands of creatures.

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[18] Hardy, The Return of the Native, p.12.

[19] Ibid., p.13.

[20] Grove, Over Prairie Trails, p.51.

> I saw, this morning, fish stranded on the shore, and crows waiting to devour them. I saw the holes of rats and gophers filled. We are no more life than they, little as we may think of them in our ignorance." [21]

Although Len does face up to one of the harsher aspects of existence found in Nature, he fails to acknowledge a positive or creative aspect. He turns his intellect to the destructive elements he sees before him in order to justify his own suicide. Len is guilty of stressing only his own logic and, in doing so, he negates his own ability to create meaning for his own existence. His one-sided pursuit of meaning is as debilitating as other men's limited pursuit of meaning from only the positive side of Nature. Both approaches to establishing meaning in Nature result in a common dilemma. When the individual tries to impose his own partial and limited laws upon existence he concludes that it is Nature's law to be harsh and indifferent. The result of his conclusion is a corresponding degree of individual harshness and indifference concerning man's place in Nature. In this way man's final judgment results in the kind of lament made by Sue Bridehead in Jude the Obscure: "O why should Nature's law be mutual butchery!" [22]

Grove and Hardy have not unsympathetically imposed Nature's realities on man; rather, they show how man has freely chosen to interpret his own existence in terms of what he believes he sees in Nature. Nature, therefore, is more than just a backdrop. On the night of Eustacia's flight from Clym, a storm has settled over the heath. From

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[21] Grove, The Yoke of Life, p.309.

[22] Hardy, Jude the Obscure, p.318.

Eustacia's point of view, "Never was harmony more perfect than that between the chaos of her mind and the chaos of the world without."[23] Eustacia sees her plight as a part of the general chaos of the world. To her, suffering is the result of an external force thwarting her will. She sees herself as a prisoner of the heath and, as such, finds herself in harmony with the heath only when it appears in its worst possible light. During the same storm, the opposite sensibility emerges when Thomasin sets out to intercept her husband before he meets Eustacia. She has always felt at home on the heath and, as a result, her outlook towards Nature, at its worst, is far different from Eustacia's:

> To her there were not, as to Eustacia, demons in the air, and malice in every bush and bough. The drops which lashed her face were not scorpions, but prosy rain; Egdon in the mass was no monster, but impersonal open ground. Her fears of the place were rational, her dislikes of its worst moods reasonable. At this time it was in her view a windy, wet place, in which a person might experience much discomfort, lose the path without care, and possibly catch cold. [24]

The fact remains, then, that self-indulgence will not make Nature any more bearable, nor will it bring characters like Eustacia any closer to learning about their own existences. A slightly more tolerant view of Nature can be found in Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge. After the sale of his wife at Weydon-Priors, Michael Henchard discovers that:

> Outside the fair, in the valleys and woods, all was quiet. The sun had recently set, and the west heaven was hung with rosy cloud, which seemed permanent, yet slowly changed. To watch it was like looking at some grand feat of stagery

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[23] Hardy, The Return of the Native, p.359.

[24] Hardy, The Return of the Native, pp.369-370.

> from a darkened auditorium. In presence of this scene, after the other, there was a natural instinct to abjure man as the blot on an otherwise kind universe; till it was remembered that all terrestrial conditions were intermittent, and that mankind might some night be innocently sleeping when these quiet objects were raging loud. [25]

Henchard's realization is tempered with a great deal more sympathy than is Eustacia's. The result is that Henchard is capable of avoiding a condemnation of either Nature or mankind because of his own mistakes. The sympathy that Henchard discovers through Nature is the emotion that both Grove and Hardy see as the catalytic agent in the activity of discovering meaning. Man must choose to act in spite of either the pleasant or unpleasant aspects of Nature, and he must choose to do so without willfully dictating that it is only Nature's law that makes men suffer.

Early in The Yoke of Life Grove shows that sympathy may evolve from Nature. Len can respond to Nature in spite of the fact that the family crop has been ruined by a hail storm:

> Buds that had been only half developed when the hail broke the protecting leaves had swollen with the pressure of the sap deflected into them, in order to put forth a new crop of belated leaves. The boy did not know this; his knowledge of nature was not theoretic; it was pragmatic, taking the facts and interpreting them in terms of moods.
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> It was the first time that he experienced anything like this, a longing for a sympathy in nature. [26]

Len's state in life is not unlike the condition of the injured plants. As time passes his instinctual rapport with Nature is damaged by his

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[25] Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, p.13.

[26] Grove, The Yoke of Life, pp.67-68.

intellectual development. The result is that his eventual 'pragmatic' acquisition of facts succumbs to his 'logical' attempt to order external phenomena so that he may justify himself. Once intellect gains dominance then instinct, like the damaged plants, can only struggle for life in the face of an unsympathetic Nature. Since Nature remains a force outside Len, then, it remains a force that acts against him. Abe Spalding and Niels Lindstedt are, to some degree, guilty of the same response to Nature. Unlike Len, however, both Abe and Niels alter their visions as a result of the difficult circumstances in their personal lives. It seems to be a universal fact that humans, in general, require a shock to their sensibilities before they can stop to evaluate their situation in Nature. Grove and Hardy repeatedly supply "jolts" to their characters' sensibilities for this reason. The misfortune, however, is never as important as the subsequent reaction to the misfortune.

By placing the stress upon the activity and not upon the hardship suffered, both writers indicate that man's relationship with Nature is necessarily a continuous process. Man's chief responsibility, therefore, is to act in accordance with what he sympathetically discovers in Nature in order to create meaning and some happiness for himself.

Abe's neighbours in Fruits of the Earth negate the possibility for effective human action in the face of Nature. Their logic is founded only on the principle that: "What must come would come; no use trying to fight; no use worrying. Too bad if anything happened; but if it did, it could not be helped."[27] Abe, however, disagrees with their philosophy.

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[27]Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p.115.

In spite of a shortage of threshers and the impending rains he still manages to save his crop by stacking it. His victory over Nature, however, does not make him complacent. The fact that he is the only one in the area who has saved his crop only impresses upon him the need for action.

> Abe might have exulted. Instead, he felt like a man who has, without knowing it, crossed a lake covered with thin ice. The fact that he had been very near to losing the greatest crop he had ever raised drove home to him how much uncertainty there is even in the most fundamental industry of man. If he had not stacked! [28]

Hardy's Gabriel Oak resembles Grove's Abe Spalding in that he is also a man of action in the face of Nature's necessities. Gabriel manages to save Bathsheba's harvest largely because he does not see man as outside Nature's domain. He is, perhaps, the most sympathetic man to come in contact with Nature in all of Hardy's novels. He is, in fact, so closely attuned to all natural phenomena that he has no difficulty predicting the certainty of a storm:

> Every voice in Nature was unanimous in bespeaking change. But two distinct translations attached to these dumb expressions. Apparently there was to be a thunder-storm, and afterwards a cold continuous rain. The creeping things seemed to know all about the later rain, but little of the interpolated thunder-storm; whilst the sheep knew all about the thunder-storm and nothing of the later rain. [29]

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[28] Grove, Fruits of the Earth, p.122.

[29] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.272.

Neither Gabriel's nor Abe's success is meant to be taken as a statement that man can always triumph over Nature. Both incidents, however, do indicate that man can create chances for success, happiness and meaning in his existence by actively participating in the flux of Nature. For Hardy and Grove, Nature remains an awe inspiring force, but it is a force that is more than just an external agent that commands submission. Their vision of Nature is man-centred and, as such, the emphasis is on man's ability to recognize Nature's power and effectively incorporate its lessons into his own ever changing sensibility. Both Grove and Hardy are aware that man's vanity and his pursuit of limited materialistic goals have hindered him from seeing himself in a more enlightened perspective. In spite of man's apparent weakness, however, neither writer abandons the hope that man can discover a greater understanding of himself. In the preface to Over Prairie Trails, Grove pointedly proclaims: "I love Nature more than Man".[30] Although Grove's drives over the prairie display his own sensitive rapport with Nature, his works, in general, display his conscientious concern for, "the balance so far attained between man's beasthood and man's godhead".[31] Hardy, like Grove, never turns unsympathetically from man's plight. His vision of Nature, like Grove's, is grounded in an affection and respect that never leads merely to self-indulgence. In The Return of the Native, Hardy expresses a belief that his vision of the heath is actually in keeping with a refined need to re-evaluate existence:

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[30] Grove, Over Prairie Trails, (Toronto, 1970), p. xiii.

[31] Grove, It Needs to be Said..., p.162.

> Haggard Egdon appealed to a subtler and scarcer instinct, to a more recently learnt emotion, than that which responds to the sort of beauty called charming and fair.
>
> Indeed, it is a question if the exclusive reign of this orthodox beauty is not approaching its last quarter. The new Vale of Tempe may be a gauntwaste in Thule: human souls may find themselves in closer and closer harmony with external things wearing a somberness distasteful to our race when it was young. The time seems near, if it has not actually arrived, when the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind. 32

What Hardy and Grove seek to evoke and develop, therefore, is the realization that man must act in order to discover meaning; but in order to act in the most profitable way, he must temper his approach with toleration. In A Search for America, Phil Branden's comment concerning his quest for the 'true' America basically sums up Grove's and Hardy's use of Nature for the quest of meaning and happiness in man's existence:

> So long as my search remained geographical, it must of necessity be a failure; at the same time this geographical search, though it might not bring me nearer to the thing sought for, was slowly fitting me to undertake the real search. Also, it taught me toleration. 33

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[32] Hardy, The Return of the Native, pp.12-13.

[33] Grove, A Search for America, p.260.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FUNCTION OF SOCIETY IN THE WORKS OF FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE AND THOMAS HARDY

Both Hardy and Grove appear to agree that there is nothing so unworthy as a man than to suffer blindly at the hands of man-made laws. Since man has free will, then he has the freedom to express his humanity in ways that may not always be considered conventional. For both writers, the problem that confronts man is that he must reconcile his own freedom with that of a society that appears to judge uncompromisingly. However, neither Hardy nor Grove proposes that man reject social laws because they only appear to unsympathetically over-simplify an individual's responsibility to participate, understand and communicate with his peers. What they do propose in their novels is the need for individual compromise in social action so that the precepts which appear rooted in time may become a viable and intimate part of the changing co-ordinates of human experience.

In Grove's A Search for America Phil Branden's rhetorical question: "How can anybody with imagination, sympathy and brains be anything but a radical?"[1], reflects the inextricable problem that faces both the individual and society in general. How can an

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[1]Grove, A Search for America, p. 377.

individual act with "imagination, sympathy and brains" if, in fact, he neglects the concerns of his fellow man? How can society brand the individual as "radical" just because he independently and conscientiously seeks to discover meaning and happiness for himself? Are the laws of society so rigid that the individual must see himself as outside society as the result of his pursuit of both meaning and happiness? In order to resolve the dilemma both Hardy and Grove attempt to show that the individual's goals are not so radically different from those of society. What both writers try to impress upon their readers is that society's laws are never as absolute as the individual would like to believe. For the individual, as with society, the fact remains that there are no inseparable opposites in life. Good can only be seen and appreciated for its value when its opposite, evil, is confronted and understood. Similarly, suffering can only have meaning when happiness has been defined and projected as a future possibility based on hope. What Grove and Hardy seek to establish, therefore, is a perspective for man which is generally broader than his own experience. Society may appear to infringe upon his rights and freedoms, but man must attempt to reconcile himself with society's laws so that he may gain a more comprehensive meaning of himself.

In Grove's and Hardy's novels the failure to discover meaning and happiness in society is usually due to the individual's selfish preoccupations. The numerous laments concerning society's injustice can usually be traced back to this narrowness of outlook.

In the Return of the Native, for example, Eustacia proclaims to her illicit suitor, Wildeve:

> "But do I desire unreasonably much in wanting what is called life--music, poetry, passion, war, all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world? That was the shape of my youthful dream; but I did not get it. Yet I thought I saw the way to it in my Clym."[2]

She admits that her choice of Clym as a husband was largely determined by his ability to give her what she desires. She has acted in terms of a sensibility best summed up by Hardy when he writes:

> As far as social ethics were concerned Eustacia approached the savage state, though in emotion she was all the while an epicure. She advanced to the secret recesses of sensuousness, yet had hardly crossed the threshold of conventionality.[3]

On the night she flees to meet Wildeve, Eustacia ponders her situation only to resolve that it is not her fault at all. The problem, however, is that she is unable to see why all her misfortune should come upon her when she has acted so 'properly'.

> "How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me!...I do not deserve my lot!" she cried in a frenzy of revolt. "O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been

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[2] Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 289.

[3] Ibid., p. 103.

> injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!"[4]

Her lament concerning Heaven's injustice offers her no consolation. To her, Heaven is only an incomprehensible force that does little but thwart her will. In order to attain her goals she willingly acknowledges conventional actions only when they satisfy her needs for a suitor's attentions. Unfortunately she never bothers to question the meaning and order to be gained from a point of view that is larger than her own. It comes as no surprise that she has no trust in Heaven, because she indicates, from her selfish acts, that she has no trust in man. To her husband she states:

> "Your blunders and misfortunes may have been a sorrow to you, but they have been a wrong to me. All persons of refinement have been scared away from me since I sank into the mire of marriage....You deceived me--not by words, but by appearances, which are less seen through than words."[5]

Like Hardy, Grove sees social laws and convention as a means of enlarging the individual's insight into the nature of good and evil. Since man must act in order to establish meaning for himself he may find his task somewhat easier because of the presence of a body of pre-established co-ordinates. Even if the individual feels trapped by convention he must learn to appreciate the fact that social forms

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[4] Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 361.

[5] Ibid., p. 335.

help to indicate alternative choices for action. The fact that these co-ordinates also carry with them a subsequent judgment concerning the path chosen makes them no less relevant. By condemning or approving of an act of society implies specific goals which include not only the desire for order, but also, the desire for the development of man's potential to discover happiness. In The Yoke of Life, Grove's Len Sterner rejects man's social awareness because he believes that the collective aims of man are not worth his attention and respect. Grove, however, quickly points out that city life is not to be blamed for Len's narrowness of judgment:

> The city no longer daunted or awed him. It amused him, instead. What amused him was the seeming futility of most of its pursuits; he had not yet become critical enough to see their serious side. As during the first months in the lumber camp, he lived by himself, without friends or acquaintances; in the city, but not of it.[6]

Len justifies his rejection of city life by convincing himself that its aims offer only suffering and despair:

> His eyes had been opened with regard to vast realms of knowledge which had so far been closed to him. It was not book-knowledge; it was knowledge of the nether realms of life. Yet this new knowledge did not make him glad; it made him feel guilty.[7]

Unfortunately Len is unable to temper his judgment with sympathy. For

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[6]Grove, The Yoke of Life, p. 232

[7]Ibid., p. 129,

him the world appears divided into separate and opposing opposites that offer no hope of amelioration. Len feels justified in condemning society after seeing only one side of its nature. To him the evil encountered exists without a corresponding degree of goodness. Guilt is the only response available to him because his awareness recoils unsympathetically from evil. What is ironic is that Len never realizes that his judgment concerning the evil around him must be founded on a particular notion of the nature of goodness. His revulsion leads him to suppose that all men are incapable of judging in terms of the good in their lives. If, in fact, such were the case society would have broken down long before Len's dilemma takes place. For Len hope is non-existent. He believes that his vision of the "beast in man"[8] entitles him to label the world as "hell". After his experience in the bush he proclaims to Lydia:

> "Somewhere is paradise; but all about is hell. And those who live in hell, since they can't enter paradise, throw at least brands of the fire of their torment into it. I have looked into that hell. But to me, where you are, is Eden."[9]

But Len is deceived by appearances. His reference to Lydia as "Eden" is most ironic. His perceptions of his fellow men, and now his perception and judgment concerning Lydia, indicate that Len believes that he has separated good from evil. The fact remains, however,

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[9]Grove, The Yoke of Life, p. 158.

[10]*Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

that Len's vision of Eden is actually dependent upon an already 'fallen Eve'. His vision of happiness on earth, or to use Len's metaphor, his vision of paradise, is dependent upon his total rejection of the presence of evil. Len soon discovers that his idealized vision of goodness and happiness is, in fact, a shallow dream. When he hears Lydia announce: "The man who wants to marry me must come in a sixty-horse power car",[10] his hope for meaning and happiness departs. When Len finally returns to the wilderness he returns with his idealized image of Lydia. His quest for the real Lydia in the city has only confirmed his vision of man's self-created hell. He believes that he must endeavour to maintain his earlier image of her if he is to gain any happiness and wholeness of being. The truth remains, however, that his vision is insubstantial. He knows that at any time his mood or passion may cause him to recall that his "Eden", Lydia, is not unlike the young prostitute he met in the city. When Lydia proposes that they make a cabin in the bush and attempt to reconstruct their lives, Len replies:

> "Suppose we did what you suggest. I have thought of it myself. It cannot be done. One day when you are in my arms, I should suddenly see you with my mind's eyes, as I saw that girl!"[11]

Len has conditioned himself to believe that evil is the natural way of man and that he, himself, by an act of will, can eliminate it from the

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[10]Grove, The Yoke of Life, p. 186.

[11]Ibid., pp. 347-348.

world. He comes to believe, then, that he must flee in terror from any sentiment that might be construed as base. All that is left for Len, therefore, is to choose to die. He cannot exist and not recognize that man's life must necessarily allow for both good and evil.

Hardy's and Grove's novels present numerous figures who reject society's laws. Hardy's Jude and Sue suffer repeatedly due to their attempt to reconstruct the tenets of marriage. Grove's Edmund Clark rejects man's moral code by justifying his belief that the ends always justify the means. To people like Jude, Sue and Edmund, necessity is a force that is more than 'the mother of invention'. For them necessity appears to guarantee success just because there seems to be no co-ordinates of human experience against which they can measure their personal advances. Edmund, for example, justifies his grandfather's insurance swindle in the following manner:

> It was against man's law; granted. He obeyed a higher law. No great man has ever hesitated about breaking man's law when a greater purpose was to be served by its breach.[12]

It is more than just ironic, however, that these individuals all suffer at the hands of their fellow men. By personally choosing to alter the precepts organized by society they stand alone when the time comes to defend their actions. Their dilemma is not unlike the one realized by Clym in The Return of the Native when he decides to educate the peasants of the heath:

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[12]Grove, The Master of the Mill, p. 225.

> He wished to raise the class at the expense of individuals rather than individuals at the expense of the class. What was more, he was ready at once to be the first unit sacrificed.[13]

Perhaps there is something noble about the desire to alter precepts as apparently rigid as those of the social order. Hardy's caution, however, indicates that unless one is interested in self-sacrifice, then a gradual change is always more advantageous to the individual than a total rejection of any norm.

Both Hardy and Grove place their trust in man's ability to discover meaning and happiness for himself. Their belief is that man can attain these ends in spite of any apparent opposition. As long as man can realize that all men have the freedom to choose to act and the freedom to redefine their acts in terms of future possibilities, then no man is condemned to a life of suffering. The fact that the individual can experience loneliness and despair stems from a misunderstanding of man's freedom to define and redefine himself in the light of shared experience. The point at which man ceases to broaden his interpretation of life begins with his failure to understand and communicate with other men. In A Search for America Phil Branden points out to the wealthy farmer, Mr. Mackenzie that:

> "I contend that, as things stand to-day, the most fundamental part of your education is forgotten. You are not taught to see the other fellow's

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[13] Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 179.

point of view."[14]

Mackenzie fails to realize that the discontent of his farm hands is largely due to his own short-sightedness concerning their basic needs. He has come to believe that his wealth is synonymous with power and as a result he believes in his dictum: "I am the people."[15] His appreciation of his own situation is indeed debilitating. Grove acknowledges that the separation of an individual from his society because of wealth guarantees only a false perception of mankind. It is interesting to note that Grove includes the following quotation from Robert Louis Stevenson in the beginning of Book One of A Search for America:

> As long as you keep in the upper regions, with all the world bowing to you as you go, social arrangements have a very handsome air; but once get under the wheels, and you wish society were at the devil. I will give most respectable men a fortnight of such a life, and then I will offer them twopence for what remains of their morality.[16]

The key to happiness and meaning in man's social situation appears basically to begin with Phil Branden's realization: "He who asketh little enjoyeth much. With that thought patience came and hurry departed. I was no longer the 'modern man' who has not Life."[17]

The fact that wealth may separate man from other men is not a

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[14] Grove, A Search for America, p. 379.

[15] Ibid., p. 376.

[16] Ibid., p. 1.

[17] Ibid., p. 343.

major theme in Hardy's works. To Hardy wealth plays only a small part in the social stratification of the people of the heath. Birth, breeding, background and money are all a part of the conditioning that can remove man from the concerns of others. Eustacia, for example, is distinct from her peers on the heath only slightly, but she does all in her power to widen the gap by stressing her right to all the benefits of the upper class. The truth remains, however, that the benefits that the upper class may afford an individual do not exempt him from discovering how his position fits into the grand scale of human experience. Grove's Phil Branden is only in America for two days when he discovers that:

> ...what we call culture, education, breeding is largely a matter of environment, something that it takes very long to acquire but which may, after all, be acquired and, therefore, lost. It overlies the human nature which is common to us all and which is not an overly or adorable thing like a thin veneer which may easily be dented or even pierced.[18]

Both Hardy and Grove seem to agree that the important quality in a man is his ability to see and respect the rights, desires and limitations of other men. In A Search for America, Grove writes that:

> ...there seemed to be two gates through which you could enter into the democratic spirit: natural good-will and shrewd intelligence. Both, of course, may be inborn or acquired by education. Of the two, the natural good-will

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[18] Grove, A Search for America, p. 56.

> stands, morally speaking, on a higher level, for it simply accepts what is best in human nature and rejects what is low or accidental.[19]

Both approaches to discovering the "democratic spirit" depend on man's activity. He must always choose to act sympathetically towards others or lose his own ability to see the meaning to be gained from his life. The "democratic spirit" implies that the one who is judged must always be given the benefit of the doubt. As Hardy cautions in Far from the Madding Crowd:

> We learn that it is not the rays which absorb, but those which they reject, that give them the colours they are known by; and in the same way people are specialized by their dislikes and antagonisms, whilst their goodwill is looked upon as no attribute at all.[20]

Sympathy and understanding are the foundations upon which Hardy and Grove develop their own interpretations of man. Their portrayal of the individual failures of men and women to attain happiness and meaning for themselves is not founded on unfeeling cynicism. What they attempt to do, however, is to display to their readers the various short-comings in man, and to project these weaknesses to meaningful and logical consequences. If the world appears to show no sympathy it is only because man himself has chosen, through his actions, to create a world that lacks this possibility. The task before man, therefore, is not an easy one. Since ideals are a part of

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[19]Grove, A Search for America, p. 56.

[20]Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, pp. 169-170.

man's collective conscience, they have a place in time and a place in the individual's sensibility. Their place in time, however, does not imply that man must seek security in nostalgia. Instead, he must realize that the value of an ideal varies with the complexity and sacrifice of individual choices for action. Thus, Grove's belief that, 'there can be no room for judgment: only sympathy'[21] seems sound. Individual morality must be allowed to grow and develop as an extension of each man's ever changing awareness. In A Search for America Grove writes:

> We come indeed from Hell and climb to Heaven; the Golden Age stands at the never-attainable end of history, not at Man's origins. Every step forward is bound to be a compromise; right and wrong are inseparably mixed; the best we can hope for is to make right prevail more and more; to reduce wrong to a smaller and smaller fraction of the whole till it reaches the vanishing point.[22]

Hardy also stresses the importance of individual responsibility and its relationship with time. In Tess of the d'Urbervilles, he describes at length the reason for Angel's shortsightedness:

> With all his attempted independence of judgment this advanced and well-meaning young man, a sample product of the last five-and-twenty years, was yet the slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teachings. No prophet had told him, and he was not prophet enough to tell himself, that

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[21]Grove, It Needs to be Said..., p. 68.

[22]Grove, A Search for America, p. 382.

> essentially this young wife of his was as deserving of the praise of King Lemuel as any other woman endowed with the same dislike of evil, her moral value having to be reckoned not by achievement but by tendency. Moreover, the figure near at hand suffers on such occasions, because it shows up its sorriness without shade; while vague figures afar off are honoured, in that their distance makes artistic virtues of their stains. In considering what Tess was not, he overlooked what she was, and forgot that the defect can be more than the entire.[23]

After his hardships in Brazil, Angel's judgment of Tess is radically altered. His suffering and sense of guilt enable him to reformulate his philosophy.

> Who was the moral man? Still more pertinently, who was the moral woman? The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay, not among things done, but among things willed.[24]

Tradition might have man believe that marriage affords him with a concrete and visible union that guarantees sympathy from at least one other individual. The problem, however, is that what may exist in theory may not always exist in practice. Hardy does agree that the aims of marriage are indeed noble, but he is always reluctant to see the contract as bearing an absolute guarantee. In Far from the Madding Crowd he interjects the following wry comment:

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[23] Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, p. 300.

[24] Ibid., p. 381.

> Love is a possible strength in an actual weakness. Marriage transforms a distraction into a support, the power of which should be, and happily often is, in direct proportion to the degree of imbecility it supplants.[25]

Grove's treatment of marriage differs little from Hardy's. He sees marriage as "a beginning, not an end"[26] for his novels and, as a result, he does not hesitate to show repeatedly how marriages can break down due to misplaced idealism. For both writers the examples are numerous, Grove's Henrietta, in Fruits of the Earth, sees marriage as a financial arrangement. Hardy's Arabella sees Jude basically in terms of his earning power. Both Grove's Ellen, in Settlers of the Marsh and Hardy's Sue, in Jude the Obscure, see marriage as a convention which robs women of their right to think and act independently. Hardy's Eustacia and Grove's Clara distort the nature of marriage by developing an ideal of love that they never share with their husbands. In all the above cases the results are the same: oppressing disillusionment and isolation. The above examples may appear relatively one-sided, but the fact remains that men are equally as guilty of the short-comings that result in the disintegration of marital harmony. Jude and Niels Lindstedt, for example, are their own worst enemies. Both characters are incapable of seeing women in human, as opposed to conventional,terms. Niels' conscience compels him to marry Clara because he believes that morality demands that he act with absolute propriety, thus, an illicit moment with Clara demands his total

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[25] Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p.34

[26] Grove, It Needs to be Said..., p.124

commitment to her. Similarly, Jude is more intent upon 'doing the right thing' than attempting to understand his spouse. Both men have stylized visions of home and hearth that do not always include the necessities of day-to-day human relationships. Perhaps Eustacia's suitor, Wildeve, falls into a related category. Like Niels he prefers to see women as fresh from a pedestal and removed from human concerns. The opposite attitude, total indifference, also exists in Grove's and Hardy's novels. Again, the examples are numerous: Grove's John Elliot and Hardy's Michael Henchard are the epitome of male indifference. Henchard sees his wife as merely a chattel that may be disposed of to the highest bidder; while Elliot sees his wife literally as the 'seed-bed' in which he may plant a harvest against the ravages of time. The list of examples could go on, but the point must be made that neither Hardy nor Grove believes that men must necessarily dominate women, or that women must be submissive in order for harmony to be discovered in marriage.

More often it is the stark necessities of life on the heath and prairie that lead one to believe that Grove and Hardy consider society to be male oriented. However, their views of the social structure are not as chauvinistic as they seem. In In Search of Myself, Grove writes that:

> A pioneering world, like the nomadic world of the steppes, is a man's world. Man stands at the centre of things; man bears the brunt of the battle; woman is relegated to the task of a helper. It is an unfortunate arrangement of nature that the burden of slavery, for such it is in all but name, should be biologically

> aggravated. As it is, it cannot be helped; and any artistic presentation has to take it into account. But it is not to be imagined that my sympathies were with the men. Quite the contrary. My sympathies were always with the women. Yet I am no sentimentalist; in my books I gave the facts and let them speak for themselves; I paid my readers the compliment of crediting them with the ability to interpret them correctly. 27

Hardy pays the same compliment to his readers. Even though the jaded Arabella can proclaim that, "There's nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf taskmaster for taming us women,"[28] Hardy's respect and sympathy are still with women. In Tess, for example, women seem to be destined for oppression. Hardy points out that:

> As Tess grew older, and began to see how matters stood, she felt quite a Malthusian towards her mother for thoughtlessly giving her so many little sisters and brothers, when it was such a trouble to nurse and provide for them. 29

Hardy uses this example, however, to illustrate Tess' compassion. As a result of the Durbeyfield's oppression:

> ...Tess became humanely beneficient towards the small ones, and to help them as much as possible she used, as soon as she left school, to lend a hand at haymaking or harvesting on neighbouring farms.... 30

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[27] Grove, In Search of Myself, P.224.

[28] Hardy, Jude the Obscure, p.329.

[29] Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, p.46.

[30] Ibid.,p.47.

The convention of marriage offers one general truth: sharing is the basis of harmony. In Settlers of the Marsh Niels evaluates his marriage to Clara in the following manner: "He felt as if he were surrounded by a huge vacuum in which the air was too thin for human relationships to flourish...".[31] His reflections lead him to consider marriage as a shallow and meaningless type of compulsion:

> Was there anything in it that bound
> man and wife together? ...Nothing.
> They lived side by side: without
> common memories in the past; without
> common interests in the present;
> without common aims in the future.
> Why were they married? 32

The possibility is that if the individual is unwilling to accept the responsibility of sharing then he must inevitably share in the unpleasant consequences. The convention of marriage does offer two basic choices: sympathetic co-operation or indifference. Obviously only one path promises a hope of acquiring meaning and happiness in life. It should be obvious that both Hardy and Grove are in favour of the convention of marriage, but only in so far as it clearly indicates the need for an absolute commitment to the united pursuit of meaning and happiness. The convention of marraige offers a means of discovery, but ultimately the individuals involved must choose to use the convention as a life-long program that can aid them in their pursuit of meaning and happiness.

Both Hardy and Grove generally see man's social order and laws as co-ordinates that may aid him to find fulfilment. They do

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[31] Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, p.129.

[32] Ibid., p. 137.e

not propose that all conventions are absolutes that compel man to act unmeaningfully, but they do see conventions as guideposts that help to indicate the direction and consequences for patterns of action. Both writers continually stress the need to participate with others in the quest for meaning. Withdrawal into the self results in unjustifiable despair and meaningless inactivity. At one point in A Search for America, for example, Phil Branden's inability to find work leads him to condemn "the system" he sees in America:

> Unhappiness I felt vaguely to be a sufficient indictment of the system, a confirmation of the justice of my resentment, a justification of my late inactivity. I doubt whether that night I should have changed things had I by some effort of will been able to do so. 33

The justification of any individual should never be the result of an independent and isolated examination of any 'system'. Man needs other men in order to hone his own sensibility to greater perception, thus the need for men and their laws. As Thoreau writes in Walden:

> Our notions of law and harmony are commonly confined to those instances which we detect; but the harmony which results from a far greater number of seemingly conflicting, but really concurring, laws, which we have not detected, is still more wonderful. The particular laws are as our points of view, as, to the traveller, a mountain outline varies with every step and it has an infinite number of profiles, though absolutely but one form. Even when cleft or bored through it is not comprehended in its entireness. 34

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[33] Grove, A Search for America, p.138

[34] Thoreau, Walden, p.243

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