



A Movable Painting Created by the Educated: Poverty Writing in *Under the Greenwood Tree*

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Abstract.

Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree* is an exploration of the contradictions within the early English countryside, recreating the lives of poor people under social change. This paper analyzes the manifestations of poverty under social mobility, and summarizes the causes and solutions from the perspectives of Hardy and Fancy, the “educated” people, in the context of the concept of “knowable community”. The analysis of poverty writing in this book needs to take into account the authors' dual roles as spectators and participants, and to focus on social change. As a prelude to the changes in the Wessex countryside, this novel reflects Hardy's sincere empathy for the obscure man, shows the spiritual strength of life's tenacious struggle when it is belittled by changes, and influenced his later works in many ways.

Keywords: poverty writing, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, Thomas Hardy

1. Introduction: Hardy's Identity and Poverty Definition

1.1 Thomas Hardy's Identity: A Double Perspective

Under the Greenwood Tree is often seen as Thomas Hardy's early idyllic ode to the rural tradition of patriarchy. It chronicles the childhood experiences of this impoverished writer. The Dewy's dwelling was described as “a long low cottage with a hipped roof of thatch”, and “having dormer windows breaking up into the eaves, a chimney standing in the middle of the ridge and another at each end” (Hardy, 2019), is a realistic prototype. It is the natural and quaint home of Hardy, far from the hustle and bustle of the city. Hardy's grandfather was the leader and cellist of the church's Stinsford band, the prototype of the Mellstock Quire, which disbanded in 1841 because of the changing times; his father and uncle were also members of it (Nie & Liu, 2014).



Maugham once wrote of Hardy that “even in his evening dress and stained shirt, with his high collar, he still had a curiously rustic look.” This quote demonstrates the contradictory nature of Hardy's identity. If Hardy was a peasant, a man of rustic appearance, then his writing on poverty would rightly stand in the shoes of a Wessex peasant. But if we look closely at Mellstock's 'countrymen', or 'rural capitalist' social classes: Shiner is a landowner, the Dewys and the quire are tenant farmers, merchants, craftsmen and labourers, but there is no real “peasant class”. Secondly, Hardy did not belong to any of the categories mentioned above, yet was passionately involved in the vernacular society. Hardy's father employed many construction workers and provided management for a mansion; Hardy himself was an architect who, having experienced poverty as a child and being aware of the employment relationship in his father's work, did not like to call his home a 'farmhouse'; his wife Emma, who came from a priestly family, thus changed his place in the social structure. His wife, Emma, came from a clergyman's family, and his place in the social structure was thus changed, with the educated rather than the landed classes; at the same time, through his family, Hardy maintained contact with small employers, merchants, craftsmen and tenant farmers, groups that were never fully distinguished from laborers in terms of gentry (Williams, 2013). This paper therefore tends to argue that Hardy had a dual identity in his writing. It is for this reason that he tells the story of the 'countryman', whose audience is mainly the growing middle class in the city, far removed from the rural society.

Looking back at the novel's connection to Hardy's life, the two main threads, the replacement of the Mellstock Quire by a one-man organist, are a metaphor for the changing nature of village life under both internal and external pressure. The emotional entanglements between country teacher Fancy Day, who returns from government school, Farmer Shiner, quire member Dick and Vicar Maybold are exemplary of the characters' relationships. The protagonists of Hardy's novels, represented by Fancy, are to some extent separated from village life, yet inevitably involved in the web of rural society because of certain family ties. In my view, the situation of Fancy is a microcosm of Hardy's perspective.

1.2 The return of Fancy Day: defining poverty

Raymond Williams argues that most novels are made up of “knowable communities” or communications (Williams, 2013). From this perspective, Hardy's Wessex social relations can be further abstracted as an exchange between the educated returnee and the traditional social group. Fancy in this text is the archetypal returnee.

“Poverty” is a relative and vague concept that is closely related to the class in which the characters live. The concept of “poverty” in this essay takes the economic situation of Fancy Day's family as a reference.



Fancy is the daughter of the forest keeper Gilfrey and the teacher of a large family nursery, and her family can be considered well-off. She receives a good education at a government-sponsored teacher training school and possesses the possibility of changing her family's economic status through marriage. It is also clear from the dialogue between Dick's father and son that her status bears some resemblance to that of Dick's mother, Ann.

Fancy's father believed that she should marry the local squire. Among her three suitors, Farmer Shiner and Vicar Maybold represent the “rich” of the old order and the new order of the times, respectively; While Dick's parents are both ordinary villagers, with his father being the village carrier. This shows that Dick and Fancy are not a good match, but he represents the “poor” who are willing to accept the new order. The other quire members and their families are accordingly classified as the poor who maintain the old order of the field.

1.3 The process of poverty writing analysis

The analysis in this paper is structured as follows:

The second part of this essay will examine the representation of life in poverty in Hardy's novels and its relationship to the deconstruction and reconstruction of the intelligible community from the perspective of his identity as an educated man with an affinity for his homeland. The third section focuses on the causes of poverty in Wessex, which alienates the author from the rural knowable community and soberly satirises both the poor and the rich classes. The fourth section summarises the way out of poverty that Hardy proposes throughout the book, and is a reflection of the complexity and contradictions of his dual identity. The final section shows the intertextuality of Hardy's texts, centred on the book, and is a summary of the book's influence on Hardy's later work.

2 Life of the Poor at a Glance: Nostalgia for the Homesick

2.1 Slow social mobility: Communicate with nature

2.1.1 “Static Novel”: Light as a Narrator

In his notes, Hardy once associated “vulgarity and truth” with Dutch School's paintings (Carpenter, 1976). Since the whole novel is a “rural painting”, the pace of the narrative must be slowed down again and again, so it is also characterized as a “static novel”. In fact, the subtitle of *The Poor Man and the Lady*, from which the novel is based, is even “A Story without a Plot” (Nie, 1992). In this way, the villagers in the foreground, who repeat the same actions, highlight the importance of the natural scenery as a backdrop in the overall story. Hardy undoubtedly wanted to show the real countryside through the characteristics of the Dutch school of painting (Luo, 2019); it was an effective way of showing the tradition. However, this



runs counter to the novel's theme of 'change' and the real social mobility of the countryside, which becomes seemingly 'untouched by time' through the form of 'painting'. This contradiction is a reflection of the complexity of Hardy's authorial identity and attitude.

For example, from the perspective of painting, the sky should belong to the category of rear view (Luo, 2010). The phrase “against the sky” appears several times, and the customs of the villagers are never far from nature. As for the light - usually natural light or candlelight in the book - they are like close-ups in a movie. For example, when the quire meets, “The descending sun appeared as a nebulous blaze of amber light.” And when Fancy first appeared in the book, the young girl “framed as a picture by the window architrave”, and “unconsciously illuminating her countenance to a vivid brightness by a candle” (Hardy, 2019).

2.1.2 Environmental Personification: The Link Between Labor and Emotion

Music and nature are the two unique “characters” in Hardy's works. A deeper explanation is that 'music' and 'nature' are elements of the quire's communal labor, so in effect Hardy makes a connection between labor and emotion through personification. Labor becomes a means of learning to socialize; the fictional characters become emotionally involved in their work. Poor people may lack an objective understanding of nature or fate, but they are often more sensitive to their surroundings.

In the opening chapter, Hardy described that “To dwellers in a wood almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature”, similar to the members of the quire. In Chapter 3 of the first part, Grandfather William says that the seventy-eighth song's tune made him mad enough that he would like to seize him, and tear him all to linnit. “Ay, he(instead of “it”)'s a splendid carrel--there's no denying that”. Also, in the beginning, the fir-trees “sob and moan”; holly whistles as it “battles with itself”; the ash hisses amid its “quiverings”; the beech rustles while its flat boughs “rise and fall” - all of which are allegorical preludes to tragedy. In both cases, there are hints of the quire's demise (Hardy, 2019).

Hardy also often uses birds as metaphors (Wu, 2009), such as while Fancy was helping her mother doing the things right, “Smiles and suavity were then dispensed all around by this bright little bird.”; Dick also said “I wish I were as rich as a squire, and the squire as poor as a crow”; the witch Elizabeth even told Fancy that little birds can “tell her things that people don't dream of her knowing”, and the novel does end with the sweet song of a nightingale celebrating the sweetness of love. But it can be seen that Fancy's emotional development comes more from choosing human labor: picking nuts, beekeeping, shoe-making, wine-making, rather than a permanent reliance on the, fatalistically general, forces of nature represented by the birds.



2.2 Groups on the Brink of Deconstruction: The Incompatibility of Wealth and Solidarity

2.2.1 Characteristics of the Dutch School's Paintings

In 1863 Hardy commenced keeping a notebook about “School of Painting”, whose impact can be seen in the subtitle of this novel. Therefore, in order to summarize Hardy's depiction of life in poverty, it is necessary to clarify the characteristics of the Dutch School's rural paintings.

The Dutch School emerged in the Netherlands in the 17th century. It broke away from its dependence on the court aristocracy and the Catholic Church to serve the emerging civic class. In addition to portraits and religious and historical paintings, it also developed landscapes, customs, still-life paintings and animal paintings. In the novel, Hardy expresses the definition of a good story through the mouth of Reuben: all true stories have a coarse touch or a bad moral; decency and virtue belong only to parables. As shown by the phrase “David Teniers' paintings are true and vulgar” in Hardy's Notes on the School of Painting (Weber, 2016), this view coincides with the objects depicted by the Dutch School. Therefore, the picture of poverty in Hardy's works can be developed in accordance with the characteristics of the Dutch School.

2.2.2 The Mellstock Quire in the Preface

In the preface, Hardy argued that “One is inclined to regret the displacement of these ecclesiastical bandsmen by an isolated organist or harmonium player” (Hardy, 2019). The reason he given is that “an important union of interests has disappeared”. The quire usually appears as a whole, such as Fancy’s first sight towards the quire group was simply “a dark semicircle”.

He also recalled how the musicians charged for Christmas, “Amounting altogether to not more than ten shillings a head annually--just enough...to pay for their fiddle-strings, repairs, rosin, and music-paper (which they mostly ruled themselves)”; and “their music-books were home-bound” (Hardy, 2019). These poor people on meager incomes always did their best in the quire, guiding the parishioners to enthusiastic participation in church activities - with the Mellstock Quire's Christmas performance served as the beginning.

There is a kind of forced dissolution of the group into individual panic as the old quire is uncomfortable and even humbled by the loss of its qualification to run church services. Before the real change came, the simple music played by the quire as a group was a better match for the simplicity of the church than the ornate style of the individual players (Hardy, 2019). The replacement of the quire by the organ means the disappearance of a knowable community. The members replaced communication with silence and was the beginning of a social change.



2.2.3 Revelry at the Tranter's Party

Music and dance are often thought of as symbols of the harmony of rural society, though George Wharton points out that the tranter's party is a form of dissipation of modern civilization by the workers of a traditional agricultural society (Wotton, 1985).

The party of dance revealed those rural people's obsession with music from another perspective, and seems to symbolize the triumph of the poor group. At the Christmas party held in tranter Reuben's house, this group of people, whose only characteristic is ordinary, all forget themselves in the dance, and let themselves dance more and more wildly (Hardy, 2019); at this time both the reserved and elegant Fancy and the arrogant Shiner join them. Although Fancy's beautiful clothes and Shiner's new strap still show their special status, they are undeniably become "knowable" about the traditional patriarchal joy of the poor --that is, a manifestation of the dissolution of industrial civilisation by rural communities.

2.2.4 Folkloric Skills: The Antithesis of "Educated"

The novel vividly recreates the folk life skills of the Mellstock people in shoemaking, winemaking, and beekeeping (Hardy, 2019), which demonstrate the hard work and simplicity of the poor group and their wisdom in following the laws of nature. --This is the "knowable" knowledge and wisdom of the village people, in a way the antithesis of "educated", so much so that the novel is temporarily divorced from the theme of "change" to reveal a continuity. This is further evidence that in presenting a picture of the lives of poor people, Hardy's perspective is that of a part of his childhood homeland, a passionate participant.

In the shoemaking episode, Mr. Penny, the shoemaker, had the wisdom of "show him a man's foot, and he'll know that man's heart" (Hardy, 2019); in the winemaking episode, the villagers believe that cider made from fenced apples and watered down is better than branded wine. This is in stark contrast to the back of the Fancy picking nuts and other labor, but also pay attention to clothing, cutting a long time and deliberately look sexy; Or her mother Jane, always worried about people running away with a story "that Jane Day's tablecloths are as poor and ragged as any union beggar's!" (Hardy, 2019).

2.3 The Loss and Rebuild of Knowable Community: in Terms of Language

2.3.1 Knowable Community of Hardy's Wessex: Linked Inequalities

The "Character and Environment" series of novels exemplifies the Wessex sociality. This means that the poor and the rich - two unequal social existences - are bound to associate and judge each other - and so prejudice arises.



The poor usually exude awe and inferiority in the presence of the rich. As Dicks feeling towards Fancy's shoes, "evidencing a nature and a bias". Occasionally, they would admire the beauty of Fancy, object to the arrogance and insolence of Shiner, and appreciate the concessions of Maybold.

Probably because of the same religious beliefs, the quire harbored no ill will toward the rich. For the rich of Mellstock, to be respected and praised by the poor, they must also respect the music, which the poor regard as their life. It was while the two newcomers were thanking them for their songs that the quire first saw Fancy and Maybold. They were a bit earthly, as they compared Fancy's beauty to that of a beautiful wax figure, and judged that Fancy could play Maybold for all he was worth. In short, the poor are unpretentious but shallow.

The phrase "poor and ignorant" seems to be enough to sum up the poor in the eyes of the rich; Vicar Maybold's attitude towards the poor is okay; But the important thing is that Fancy discovered the good qualities of the rural poor in Dick.

In Farmer Shiner's opinion, however, even sharing the same road with the poor is an exasperating thing ("Bother those people! Here we are upon them again"); the wealthy status made him tend to walk the way "all to himself". The immediate reason for the replacement of the quire is that Shiner, as a church deacon, recommends Fancy as organist to Maybold in order to have more contact with her. In this way, it seems that the rich act somewhat selfishly.

Vicar Maybold, on the other hand, has seen the funny, "fragmented" situation of the curious group of the poor (Luo, 2010): "...above Mr. Penny's head is Maier's face and shoulders, above Maier's cap is Spinks' forehead and eyes, under Spinks' arm is part of Bowman's face, and behind is the crescent-shaped heads and faces of the others" (Hardy, 2019). It seems that only when the poor appear as a group do they stand a chance against a single rich man.

2.3.2 Humorous Satire: A Condescending Attitude

The humor and comedy often comes from the cutting of the characters' images - in most cases, the poor - especially when they are shown as a social group with a traditional sense of ritual or propriety. It is worth reflecting on the fact that this dramatic language is often accompanied by an interpretation of the pathetic aspects of the poor.

In terms of image cutting, the portrait of Dick is comically depicted. "His profile appearing on the light background like the portrait of a gentleman in black cardboard"; not only that, from his nose and chin to his neck and shoulders, his only feature is "ordinary". From his status as a poor man, this feature is ridiculous and regrettable.

The humor in rituals and ceremonies is mainly attributed to the importance that the poor group places on traditional customs. The apparent recklessness and boldness of the poor is in



fact an attempt to cover up their inferiority and curiosity due to their low status and limited experience. The most typical example is in the episode of the tranter's party and the interview with Vicar Maybold. The poor people who lightened their clothes when they feel hot as dancing wildly, ignoring the eyes of the opposite sex. In another chapter, however, they failed to give up the ritual of polishing their shoes because of the neatness of the road. From another point of view, for silly Leaf, the participation in the negotiations is again only because he “never in his life seed a quire go into a study to have it out about the playing and singing” (Luo, 2010).

In general, the whole piece of work is nothing but a faithful record of the poor, which shows the disintegration of the collective traditional rituals during the social change. With this level of understanding, the tragic shadows hidden under the peaceful and sunny atmosphere of Hardy's early novels are more easily perceived.

2.3.3 Dialects and Colloquialisms: Continuity under the Theme of Change

Raymond Williams argues that when people 'live in ballads', the language presents 'tradition' rather than 'human relations' and does not contribute to the presentation of the theme of change (Williams, 2013). This criticism and Hardy's identity are This criticism is in line with Hardy's dual identity and Fonsi's ambivalent identity. However, this does not prevent the reader from appreciating Hardy's linguistic art.

Language can be regarded as the identity card of a character, or the spokesperson of a place. Hardy has been called a “true native” and a “master of dialect” by Wheatley, while this novel happened to be the one in which dialect appears most frequently. This confirms what Reuben Dewy expressed: Hardy presents us with a real picture of rural life, not just an allegory.

A small part of the dialect is in the vulgar invective of villagers such as Mr. Penny the shoemaker, which will not be expanded in this article; more interesting are the colloquialisms. For example, “neither to the right hand nor to the left” was used to describe determination, “before you can say Jack Robinson” to indicate a moment, “when the pinch comes” to mean a difficult situation, and “chanticleer's comb is cut then” to indicate that the person has wilted and lost his pride. These phrases are closely related to the life of the poor in the countryside.

There are also folk songs about poor workers. For example, Dick's opening song “With the rose and the lily and the daffodowndilly, the lads and the lasses a-sheep-shearing go”; and Shiner's song “The miller was drown'd in his pond, The weaver was hung in his yarn, And the d- ran away with the little tail-or, With the broadcloth under his arm” (Hardy, 2019), which was sung while pulling Fancy in the honey-picking scene, implies the poverty of the villagers' life in the form of lyrics.



3 Poverty Tracing: Internal Contradictions Centred on Education

3.1 Geographical Factors: The Obscured Countryside

Chapter 4, Part I refers to the geography of Mellstock. It was “a parish of considerable acreage, the hamlets composing it lying at a much greater distance from each other than is ordinarily the case” (Hardy, 2019).

Looking back at reality, the story is set in Mellstock in the 1840s, realistically positioned in Bockhampton, Hardy's hometown during his childhood (Nie, 1992). At the time, England was nearing the end of the Industrial Revolution, yet this remote southwestern frontier village still retained the nature and primitiveness of an agricultural society. The disconnection from capitalist industrial civilization was the reason for the villagers' poverty, but when capitalism really invaded, it brought a tragic future to the powerless ones. From the perspective of an educated person - or the author Hardy - it is dispassionate to point out that this is an irreversible historical process.

The slow social mobility, as well as change, due to the fact that Mellstock is so marginalised, is in fact mainly caused by the conflicts within this community.

3.2 Female Marriage and Childbearing: the “Angel in the House”

The most immediate result of social mobility and internal conflicts is the difficulty of marriage choices. In the Victorian era, marriage was a choice for women as the weaker party in terms of their economic status and social conditions (Neil, 2004). The girls are asked to be obedient to their father and to be the “Angel in the House”. Fancy eventually rejects the gold-digging prejudice and chooses Dick, becoming a member of the “poor” group. In addition, their respective parents were also the ones who experienced the relationship between marriage and poverty. Dick's parents also have a huge gap between rich and poor, while Fancy's parents have a small gap between them and can still be considered a middle-class family.

Another cause of poverty is that women have many children. The Dewys had many children, but the situation of Thomas Leaf's mother was more typical. She had twelve children in succession, all of whom, with the exception of the silly Leaf, either died in the womb or died at a very young age; Jim, mentioned in the story, lived for only four hours and twenty minutes. And she was a widow, working to earn a living, the situation became more difficult. So when Leaf met with Vicar Maybold, he accepted a half-crown coin as alms.

3.3 Attitudes and Mindsets: Wessex People under Change

Poverty caused by attitudes or mindsets can be specific to the education, beliefs and attitudes toward new things.

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One example of this is the female view of childbearing mentioned in the previous section. The women, represented by Thomas Leaf's mother, thought that having more children would give them something to fall back on in the future, and as a result, the whole family fell into poverty due to overpopulation or early death of children. From a modern point of view, this is a tragedy caused by women's lack of education, or lack of awareness of family planning.

In fact, the poor, with the exception of Spinks, all lacked education; they believed in God religiously, obeyed the laws of nature, and were paid a pittance in the quire. Perhaps it was the relatively closed environment of Mellstock that made the acceptance of the new things represented by the organ much more difficult for the older quire members than for the young Dick. They saw the strings as a symbol of the good life and traditional order, while the organ represented the cold, unforgiving side of the new. Of course, the quire was able to win an overwhelming victory in numbers, and this so-called 'group justice' was one of the reasons why they dared to interview with such a rich man. Yet the quire did not make good use of the wisdom of the group: because the leader, the aged William, was too old-fashioned, the older group of the poor unanimously showed their opposition to change. In doing so, they may lose some opportunities to become rich in the wave of social change.

In contrast to the stubborn old-fashionedness of the old quire members, Dick is clearly the image of the new Wessex man that Hardy strives to portray. Rather than the cynicism of the previous generation, the younger generation, led by him, embraced this innovation with tolerance and progress. Dick ended up marrying Fancy and became relatively wealthy, which perhaps implies Hardy's affirmation of the new Wessex mindsets.

3.4 Generational Patriarchy: Lack of the Successor

The novel's emphasis on generational patriarchy is expressed through a number of details. But it is easy to notice that at a macro level, it is expressed in the novel's division into four parts: autumn, winter, spring and summer, which are narrated in chronological order. Other details like the father and son share a shoe last and only get a shoemaker to make slight alterations because of the cramped feet; A pair of green-faced clocks produced by competing merchants in the Day's family, one of which is used as Fancy's dowry; Fancy twice tries to make the wedding more elaborate, but in the end the wedding is held exactly according to tradition as her mother wanted (Luo, 2010). It is because all these customs are temporarily inherited that the novel can end with a happy ending.

In order for the village to develop, someone has to critically inherit the tradition. Recall above that while blind female childbearing can lead to poverty for the entire family, it is impossible to generate wealth without sufficient labor. Part of the poverty in Mellstock Parish



is caused by the rural generational problem (Luo, 2010)-i.e., the increasing prominence of the succession problem as the agricultural population ages and as urbanization proceeds.

The description “There was Lower Mellstock, the main village...the spot being rather lonely now, though in past centuries it had been the most thickly-populated quarter of the parish” (Hardy, 2019). refers directly to the loss of rural population due to industrialization and urbanization. With children prone to early death and those who know traditional customs, such as Grandfather William, aging, the rural legacy is lacking and the whole area is trapped in poverty.

4 The Way out of Poverty: Paradoxical Analysis of the Pressure to Change

4.1 Education: With Class and Wealth

In the eyes of the quire members, Spinks, who had run a night school, was an erudite and eloquent man; Michael's conversation with him referred to “Learning's a worthy thing, and ye've got it” (Hardy, 2019). This metaphor about wealth expresses the possibility of solving poverty through education.

Another example is the fact that Fancy's high ranking in training school made her unique in the minds of the quire members and gave her access to the upper class through marriage. The fact that “her name stood first among the Queen's scholars of her year” and “she sat for her certificate as Government teacher and had the highest of the first class” (Hardy, 2019) was one of the reasons why her father felt that Dick was not good enough for her. In addition, Fancy's mother had also worked in education. All these can prove the important role of education as a way out of poverty.

However, it is her good education, which is incompatible with her vernacular status, that makes her social status and influence a major threat to the stability of village patriarchy (Neil, 2004).

4.2 Beliefs: Nature and Religion

Influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, Hardy advocated the melioristic thought (Nie & Liu, 2014). He wanted the poor to struggle for a better life based on adaptation to their environment. The seasonal arrangement, the beautiful natural setting (Nie & Liu, 2014), the appearance of labor words such as “shearing” in folk songs and the depiction of villagers' labor such as shoemaking and beekeeping, and the witch's foreknowledge of world events through the birdsong in nature all reflect his idea of placing hope in nature. The young generation led by Dick's acceptance of the organ in response to the times is also, in a sense, a sign of respect for the laws of nature.



On the other hand, Hardy was born into a family with a strong Christian atmosphere and was very religious in his early years, Wu (2011) believing that faith in God is one of the ways to get rid of poverty. The novel opens with a Christmas tour of the quire in a Christian setting, with the seventy-eighth chant guiding people to “remember the fall of Adam”, “remember the goodness of God”, and “give thanks to God” (Hardy, 2019). Also after the quire disbanded, William paraphrased lines from the Bible-Psalms to rebuke the members who wanted to leave.

But in Hardy's later works, nature was undermined by industrial civilization; He began to doubt the power of God (Nie & Liu, 2014).

4.3 Morality: Never Be “Gold-digging”

Although Hardy hoped that the poor would escape the fate of poverty, he opposed the gold-digging path out of poverty.

The social changes caused by Victorian industrial development were sweeping through Wessex (Draper, 1987), thus money-worship was prevalent, marriages broke down class barriers had to break through the shackles of secularism (Goode, 1988). Fancy and Dick are united by true love; Reuben also said that Dick's mother attracted him “mainly by spirit, not material things”.

From the perspective of Fancy's emotional journey, the first person she rejects is the wealthy but arrogant Farmer Shiner, who is a representative of gold-digging. Then, she fails to resist the upper-class life represented by piano and carriage and agrees to the proposal of Vicar Maybold, which makes her morally condemned inside. As for Fancy's vanity, Hardy criticizes in Dick's voice (Hardy, 2019) that what she loves best in the world “is her hair and complexion. What she loves next best, her gowns and hats; what she loves next best, myself, perhaps!” (Hardy, 2019) - a foreshadowing of their marital crisis here.

4.4 Compromise: Negotiation under Change

The replacement of the Mellstock Quire by the organ is in fact a microcosm of Victorian social change. Hardy's understanding of the root causes of change can be considered thorough, but unfortunately, he never found the right way out for the poor to cope with the change.

The quire, upon learning of its fate to be replaced, simply asked the vicar to postpone the time until Christmas; And Maybold, fairly kind to them, quickly agreed. As for Fancy, she herself did not mean to replace the quire at all, Instead, she wished the organ to exist alongside it. Even the novel does not essentially defeat the crisis of marriage or change and ending with a seemingly harmonious traditional wedding ceremony. This shows that in his early years, Hardy focused more on the beauty of the idyllic ideal; He would rather believe that everything



would be compromised as it should be, and did not give much thought to address the negative effects of such kind of social change (Nie & Liu, 2014).

5 The Book on Hardy's Later Poverty Writing

5.1 Motif: Romance and Change

In general, this novel pioneered Hardy's rural fiction, defining the author's moderate realist style and his sympathy for nature and the people of the countryside. It can be said that it served as a motif for Hardy's later works (Nie & Liu, 2014).

In terms of narrative mode, Hardy has created the “Character and Environment” novel series by showing the character and spiritual pursuit of characters under social change through the allegorical scenes of the main characters in the triangular relationship (Nie & Liu, 2014). He was always concerned with the lives of poor people, searching for a balance between natural landscape and patriarchal change. The most obvious examples of the “*Under the Greenwood Tree* motif” are the marriage choice and identity entanglement of Grace in *The Woodland Dweller* and the misaligned relationship between Tess, Yare and Clay in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, which are all developments or variations of the triangular relationship model of this novel (Nie & Liu, 2014).

In the characterization, an intense conflict driven by a sense of morality arised within Fancy after she agreed to both Dick's and Maybold's marriage proposals. Richard Carpenter regrads this as “a conflict between the old and the new, between the natural, simple, static village life and the unnatural, discursive, mechanical world of the new order” (Carpenter, 1976), i.e., the Wessex countryside versus modern capitalist society. This hesitation and contradiction also developed into the typical characteristics of new Wessex women such as Bathsheba, Eustacia, Grace and Tess in Hardy's writing.

In terms of expression, Hardy's novels continue the connection with arts like music and painting, while retaining the poetic mystery of nature (Wu, 2009). Thus, they are mostly known for their poetic descriptions of the environment and simple scenes of folklore. The mysterious Eaton Heath is also personified in *The Return of the Native*; the birdsong, together with other music of nature, is secretly the song of the main character's destiny.

It is thus clear that Hardy's later compositions are logically related to this novel in terms of ideological themes, character portrayal, and expressive techniques. The difference lies in Hardy's recognition of the inevitability of social change in destroying the idyllic ideal, and thus the sad elegy eventually replaces the cheerful country dance.



5.2 Development: From Hidden Worries to Facing up to Tragedies

At the ending, the absence of Vicar Maybold - a symbol of the new bourgeois order - seems to represent the triumph of traditional patriarchy. The novel comes to an end in a beautiful and harmonious atmosphere. But Fancy does not reveal the fact that she had agreed to the vicar's proposal, and the marriage with Dick faces a rift of trust at any moment (Hardy, 2019). Hardy concluded by saying that Fancy's exquisite eyes do not match the poor life of Dick's carriage family; in other words, the author himself does not think highly of the marriage.

However, Hardy did not let the love between Fancy and Dick end in tragedy. Even the representative of the new order, Vicar Maybold, appears courteous and gentle and friendly both in his opening treatment of the quire's Christmas carols and in his subsequent negotiations with the quire. This is because early in Hardy's composition there was still an idealistic illusion of the balance between traditional patriarchy and modern civilization. This ideal is humanitarian because Hardy brings everyone back into their own knowable community and original social relations.

Having explored the factors in this book, Hardy entered the stage of tragedy, and chose to confront the sufferings of the poor. It is also notable that the relationship between social change, knowledge and wealth is further explored in *The Return of the Native*: "Yeobright had a conviction that the want of most men was knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence... In passing from the bucolic to the intellectual life the intermediate stages are usually two at least, frequently many more; and one of those stages is almost sure to be worldly advance." The cruelty of class separation is stronger when the knowledge of wisdom and wealth is severed (Williams, 2013).

5.3 Rhetoric: The Book on Hardy's Poetry

The novel is influenced by the verse in Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It* (Nie, 1992), and the characters are portrayed more like troubadours. The book therefore influenced Hardy's later poetry, most typically in the use of rhetorical devices - especially the humorous elements, such as the personification of nature and music, or the comical folk songs and sayings.

WHEN I look forth at dawning, pool,
Field, flock, and lonely tree,
All seem to look at me,
Like chastened children sitting silent in a school.

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In the poem *Nature's Questioning*, Hardy let man act as a metaphor, likening nature to a child in a schoolhouse, thus expressing the inner communication between man and nature (Wu, 2009). Reading this poem, it is not difficult to recall the plantation that “whispered thus distinctively to Dick's intelligence” in the book.

Another poem *The Ruined Maid* borrows the form of the traditional English ballad of condemnation. Through the dialogue between a prostitute who has entered the city to earn a living and her old friends in the countryside, the poem contrasts the changes in the girl's wealth, language and dress before and after entering the city. The rural language in the poem is similar to the role of dialectal colloquialisms in the book; Both of which are expressions of the simplicity and nature of the country people.

“You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!”
“Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined,” said she.

“At home in the barton you said 'thee' and 'thou',
And 'thik oon, 'and 'the's oon, 'and 't'other'; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!”
“Some polish is gained with one's ruin,” said she.

“Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak
But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!”
“We never do work when we're ruined,” said she.

Moreover, the poem retains the forms in which the poor are ridiculous because they are pathetic. For example, the girl who has fallen into the city wears gloves, while Dick wears gloves as a symbol of status for the first time after his new marriage. However, the humor has deepened into irony. Yet the contrast and irony in the poem more profoundly reflect Hardy's



sympathy and regret for the poor who have distorted their humanity to acquire wealth under change.

6 Conclusion: The Spiritual Continuity of Hardy's Tragic Protagonist of Poverty

In the process of poverty writing, it is the warmth, orderliness and continuity of love and labor that defines the knowable community Hardy knew, lost and mourned. Hardy grieves for isolation and separation, but finally learns to confront tragedy without fear. The fading is real, a tragedy, because the labor under socialization is real, the unfulfilled desire is real. The passion of the returnees comes from an interconnected community of labor; a passion that seeks self-realization in different ways. People make bad choices that lead to their own greater poverty and even death, but their choices are made under great pressure: whether that pressure is a cognitive bias against their own class or a deliberate alienation from the new order.

Hardy insists on setting the world of ordinary people as the tone of his major novels, and always with his central characters as a way of affirming them (Williams, 2013). This subjective empathy likewise becomes the power of poverty people.

Hardy portrays characters who are belittled in their struggle to grow up, but who still struggle to love, to do meaningful work, to learn, to teach; who survive stubbornly in the midst of intersecting poverty, an impulse that will break through and transcend the sadness of isolation and alienation. This is not only the continuation of village patriarchy, but also a history and a spiritual power.

This reminds us readers that behind poverty is “human”, whereas behind literary narratives is “humanitarianism”- that is the significance of “poverty writing” regardless of era.

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