

HARDY AND HEBREWS: LANDSCAPE AND LANDMARK

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Despite Larkin's plea¹ a few years ago that a good Hardy critic was still needed, or perhaps because of it, there has flowed out from the realms of Academia over the last few years much Hardy criticism, some good, some indifferent; some making the isolated analysis, some trying to see overviews and trends through the whole corpus of novels and poetry. Whilst the older approach of Webster *et al.* has faded, that of seeing Hardy as a philosopher manqué, there are still attempts made (eg Kincaid, Hillis Miller),² though they are not systematic nor used as substitutes for reading the text itself. More recent approaches have been biographical (eg Gittings; Deacon and Coleman)³ or topographical (eg the 'Wessex' approach - Pinion, Williams and, in part, Enstice).⁴ Whatever intrinsic interest they have, their literary applications are limited. Biography is not fiction; Dorset is not Wessex; Schopenhauer was not Hardy. Hardy's plea that he was not a systematic speculative philosopher, but an intuitive artist who wrote of 'seemings' and 'tendencies' over a 60-year span, must not be ignored. Bayley writes: 'the component parts of the prose seem unconscious of each other's presence'¹ and Kincaid suggests that there is a formal incoherence in Hardy. There are clear but contradictory patterns, and therefore no expectations are ever fulfilled exclusively.

Judging by the many recent books and articles on Hardy, it would seem difficult to say anything new, especially about Hardy and Nature. However, even if I find it impossible to be original, it is, I think, possible to extend others' thinking and insights into more Christian modes of thought, and perhaps to try to make Biblical contrasts and differences. What I want to do in this paper is to discuss just a small part of what has been written recently on Hardy's use of landscape in his novels; and then to look at how the Bible uses landscape in the divine text, concentrating especially on the Book of Hebrews. I want to compare the treatments, see what significant differences there are, and try to formulate some conclusions. However, I shall avoid describing philosophic, topographical or biographical approaches to the subject.

I realise it might seem strange to pick on the letter to the Hebrews. My thesis is this: the Old Testament regarded place as concrete and actual - Israel, Egypt, the wilderness *etc.* These places also took on symbolic functions, but the symbols were never divorced from reality, either historic or political. There was no allegorisation, therefore. The communal bonding of tradition, or memory, was strong in establishing this permanent symbolic meaning, expressed particularly in terms of bondage and freedom; covenant and law; testing and glory, and so on. The Temple, for example, was seen literally as God's dwelling place, even though this went side by side with the realisation that no place as such could contain God.

In the New Testament, the Hebraic way of thinking had to radically alter in the proclamation of the New Covenant. Israel - the land/people/history unity - gave place to the new Israel. Jerusalem gave place to the vision of a future Jerusalem above. Memory and tradition located in places weakened, as a new community was formed on different premises. The nature of place, community and memory were thus radicalised and transformed.

In the letter to the Hebrews, this change of perspective is described more fully than anywhere else except, perhaps, parts of Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians. Life now becomes a journey of faith, not over an actual desert terrain. Christians become pilgrims in exile, but not to an actual Jerusalem from the

Diaspora. The city becomes either the gathered church now, wherever it is to be found, or the spiritual vision to become manifest at the end of the age. The opposition of Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion becomes allegorical. Images replace memories.

Unlike other epistles, the sense of community is weak here. There is no real 'Body of Christ' teaching or awareness, as there is in Paul or Peter. 'Dispersion', 'exile', 'suffering' are key words. The walk of faith is basically an individual one, though examples of the past are set before us; yet they do not walk side by side with us. We look forward, not back.

It seems to me Hardy has the same sort of concepts and awarenesses. Man is a pilgrim and exile, wandering over the face of the earth. In the earlier novels, there is a strong sense of community, 'the imperfect human paradise from which his characters (in the later novels) are cast out, to take their solitary way through the Victorian economic reality of the C19th'.⁵ Places become less and less like any geographical topos, and become more and more symbolic. Alcorn⁶ suggests that the development is from using metaphors to describe landscapes to making landscapes into metaphors. He writes 'Geography, like the medieval maps of love, becomes an emblem of psychology'. There is also in both the sense of unfulfilment - in Hebrews the 'blood of bulls and goats' of the Old Covenant which leave a man where he is in his guilt; in Hardy the 'unfulfilled intention' of Nature and the desire for love and completion.

But, of course, there are no examples, no quest of faith, no destination that can be named; no new covenant to complete the old. The quest, such as it is, is secularised, for there is no God, and therefore no ground for faith. But there is still the landscape over which the pilgrim must go, in his inner motivation towards spiritual fulfilment.

The nature of this landscape is crucial, it seems to me, and this is where I want to focus this paper. Both Hardy and the Bible share a concept of landscape, even if the concept of Nature in Hardy has little equivalence to the Biblical idea of Creation. Landscape is the visualised surface, or manifestation, on which man lives, works and travels. It is not his - it is given him. He is both part of it and yet separate from it. It contains time, but its time is not man's time. It is more than his environment, in that it is shaped but not created by man; it is less than it, in that it does not include society. I want to use the concept of *landmark* to focus on the interstices of landscape and man. To both Hardy and the Bible, it is landmarks that are of ultimate significance. Hardy states: 'An object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature. Hence clouds, mists and mountains are unimportant besides the wear of a threshold, or the print of a hand' (*Life of Thomas Hardy* p.116).⁷ Whilst landmarks are positive, for Hardy they are under threat, in the same way as man is. For the Biblical writers, they point to the covenant and God's purposes.

What is the connection, then, between landscape and revelation? Clearly, Biblical thinking subsumes landscape as part of Creation which bears witness to its Creator. Its shaping by man is a manifestation of man's stewardship. Harmonies would suggest a due reverence in man and a due sense of stewardship, which may be conscious or unconscious, as T.S. Eliot suggests in *The Idea of a Christian Society*. Disharmonies would suggest man's fall, or creation's fall with man. But for Hardy, the post-Romantic and post-Darwinian, the term 'creation' no longer exists. The traditional term 'Nature' is given new definition. It incorporates the new Renaissance consciousness of place, with the older idea of a mode of being, and then

includes a Romantic perception of a spiritual essence. 'Landscape' as a term was introduced from Dutch painting of the C17th and witnessed to this new sense of place. In the C18th landscape had come to suggest a pastoral set-piece, either to express rustic harmonies and order, or, later, the sense of 'the sublime'. The novel took no interest in it. As George Hobson showed in his recent paper,⁸ by the C19th the term 'nature' was an abstraction of a spiritual rather than rational dimension. Yet it was made up of an infinite series of rural or pastoral places and the people who lived in them, but did not include the artefacts of modern industrialisation. The novel also began to take an interest in it, even if by the back-door of the gothic novel. The term was thus ambiguously abstract and concrete, with some sense of time - an ambiguity that Hardy inherited and exploited as structure and pattern. But Darwinianism changed the nature of the abstraction and removed it even more decisively from any overlap with the term 'Creation'. The new revelation desecralised.

Hardy, Nature and Landscape

This threw up a number of problems for Hardy. At one level remains this very keen, poetic sense or consciousness of place. Gregor notes *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as 'A particular place in a particular time'.⁹ Landscape becomes therefore a discrete revelation of the concreteness and particularity of Nature. On the other hand, Hardy clearly wants to make landscape a revelation of inner states of being, just as did his contemporary Hopkins, and as did the Romantic poets before them. Landscape thus becomes the locus of interpenetration of spiritual and material; landmarks, as signatures of man's significance in Nature, do raise problems of time and history, at least in the novels. In the poetry, the problem is resolved fairly easily in terms of memory.

How are the two to be reconciled? Landscape does exist 'out there' for Hardy. Indeed, many patient researchers have tramped round Dorset trying to establish just how 'out there' it really was - which poses the question: what sort of 'out there'? The regional or landscape novel demands a solidity that allegorical or purely social settings don't. This solidity ultimately must stem from experienced landscape, re-ordered by the imagination, as Enstice shows well. (Compare the way the Psalmist re-orders Salvation History and Geography.) But does the re-ordering become a revelation - at one level of the characters' states of being, and at another, of the writer's? Hardy, again like Hopkins, demands a great deal of his perceived landscapes in terms of significance and consciousness - a consciousness which is basically of a spiritual nature, transfiguring by the eye of faith or unfaith. Can Hardy span the gap between the impersonal Greek concept of *cosmos* and the personal Hebrew one of *covenant* (into which we subsume both old and new creations), and can his characters subsume that between their physicality and their spirituality?

Hardy himself labelled the majority of his novels 'Novels of character and environment', leaving the relationship of the two terms ambiguous. This has left the way open for critics like Kettle or Raymond Williams¹⁰ to write in Marxist interpretations. I would suggest such interpretations are over-systematic and narrow, foregrounding historical and social change at the expense of other sorts of time and consciousness that have to do with man's spirit.¹¹ Let me focus by asking: does Tess die as victim to social prejudices and exploitation over which she has no control, or does she die as willing self-offering in witness to the human spirit in final victory over human flesh? This is still too unfocused (and platonic). To re-pose: is Tess 'cut-off' or does she reach destination in her travels? Stonehenge, as mythic landscape, would seem a strange

request-stop at which to get off the world. It is surely a terminus, where time, spirit, and consciousness are all merged into landscape.

Even if we reject the formulation in Hardy that character is produced by environment, we must, I think, agree that environment is a shaping structure. Since 'environment' is a term that incorporates both society and landscape, we would need to suggest further that both elements contribute to the shaping, but that the overall development in Hardy's fiction moves from the external shaping of place and society (as in *Under the Greenwood Tree*) to the inner shapings of the 'landscapes of the mind' of *Tess* or *Jude*. I think Enstice demonstrates this admirably, and I see no point in repeating his argument. Places become less and less detailed and concrete, and the sense of community (including our well-known 'rustic chorus') almost disappears, till Sue and Jude wander as aliens over the blurred, almost surrealistic face of the earth, where, as Schwarz says, 'The I-Life is quite different from the not-I world'.¹² Keith notes that it is in *The Return of the Native* that words like 'isolation', 'loneliness', 'solitude' become central concepts, working against a sense of vital community.¹³ The shaping is, as Enstice shows, thus towards inner awarenesses or progress, although I hesitate to use the latter term. Do Henchard, Tess or Jude progress? Without destination, can one progress? In so far as they are tragedies, moving towards a destiny, if not a destination, they do progress in stature - character - but, of course not in the cultural-social way Hardy's contemporaries understood the term. Such tragic structures are completed by a landscape which is both very concrete and yet an encapsulation of an inner journey. The tragic protagonist always *comes in* somewhere, defined by landscape, and goes out somewhere: these become the boundary landmarks, into which are set the landmarks of courtship, marriage, unfaithfulness and sorrow. Each landmark is structurally connected, both plot-wise, topographically and within the characters' consciousness, to form an overall landscape - which, for all the continuity of Wessex, is specific to each novel, each character, again as Enstice shows. So each character has his own landscape, and his 'progress' is marked by specific and unique landmarks, even though they may mark the same thing.

Another landscape structure is the cyclic pattern of the seasons. This has been said so often that, again, it is hardly worth repeating. What we get is the development from the simple season/plot pastoral nexus of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, through the mythological complexities of season/plot/character in *The Woodlanders*, to the season/inner consciousness nexus of *Tess*. The mythic remains: Tess is the Demeter figure Angel sees, being buried in the winter, and rising into Spring. This cyclic myth represents the sort of time which, it seems to me, is vital for any great tragedy.

I have been trying to show in a very general way how Hardy does reconcile different functions of his landscape. But I realise I need to be more specific. Let us start at one of the problems that the different perceptions of Nature and the different functions of his landscape raises: the question of the Pathetic Fallacy. Lodge suggests he is not sure whether the Pathetic Fallacy is a fallacy or not. Alcorn¹⁴ feels, for example, that Hardy's personification of Egdon Heath is not meant as a pathetic fallacy, but is to be taken literally. This is stated in the overall context of an argument which posits a closing of the Romantic gap between object (nature) and subject (the poet-knower). The nature novelists avoid this dualism by 'closing the personal subject within the impersonal world of Nature'. I am not clear myself how a personification can be taken literally. Nor does the poet-knower find equivalence in the novelist-knower, since there is the third party of the characters. With *Tess*, this third-party perception becomes crucial. Let me take the well-known episode of Tess in the swede-field, at the beginning of Ch. 43:

'The swede-field in which she and her companion were set hacking was a stretch of a hundred odd acres, in one patch, on the highest ground of the farm, rising above stony lanchets or lynchets - the outcrop of siliceous veins in the chalk formation, composed of myriads of loose white flints in bulbous, cusped, and phallic shapes. The upper half of each turnip had been eaten off by the live-stock, and it was the business of the two women to grub up the lower or earthy half of the root with a hooked fork called a hacker, that it might be eaten also. Every leaf of the vegetable having already been consumed, the whole field was in colour a desolate drab; it was a complexion without features, as if a face, from chin to brow, should be only an expanse of skin. The sky wore, in another colour, the same likeness; a white vacuity of countenance with the lineaments gone. So these two upper and nether visages confronted each other all day long, the white face looking down at the brown face, and the brown face looking up at the white face, without anything standing between them but the two girls crawling over the surface of the former like flies.'

This is a brilliantly evocative piece of landscaping, but is it meant to evoke Tess's state of mind, her spiritual death of love and feelings, her withdrawal into the earth?¹⁵ If it is, then we have the landscape as projection of Tess's consciousness. Or is it meant to evoke a sympathetic nature, 'literally' in harmony with Tess - Alcorn's denial of the fallacy? Or is it meant to represent Hardy, as author, making a statement about the indifference of Nature? We can collapse Tess and the landscape; or we can collapse Hardy and landscape; but I don't think we can collapse all three. The following paragraph does not help:

'They worked on hour after hour, unconscious of the forlorn aspect they bore in the landscape, not thinking of the justice or injustice of their lot. Even in such a position as theirs it was possible to exist in a dream.'

Though characters exist unconscious and 'in a dream', we do not, since the text makes us very conscious and very alert - though Hardy's attempt to point us in the direction of justice or injustice may not seem very consonant with the powerful impression of the blankness of the landscape. So we are conscious of Tess; we are conscious of Hardy; we are conscious of the landscape. What we cannot work out, it seems to me, is any intended pattern between all three. Thus we could interpret landscape as fallacious, or as concrete. My own feeling is that the boundary between character and landscape exists simultaneously with the sense of continuity between the two. This is the creative tension in Hardy's writing here.

I would like to illustrate this further with reference to *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Near the end of Ch. 1, we have the famous authorial statement suggesting that nature and man do not exist in harmony or sympathy with one another, but are arbitrarily connected:

'In presence of this scene after the other there was a natural instinct to abjure man as the blot on an otherwise kindly 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 aloud.'

Thus there is a refusal of pathetic fallacy. When we come to the descriptions of Casterbridge itself, we are presented with a double perspective (cf.4). One is from the summit of a hill, which is then enhanced 'to birds of a more soaring kind'. This perspective sees clear borders between town and country; a geometrical shape, with no sprawly suburbs. The other perspective is 'the level eye of humanity', where Casterbridge

becomes 'an indistinct mass ... gradually dissected by the vision into towers, gables, chimneys and casements'. But this indistinction stays as the travellers enter the town - in fact, becomes a jumble of houses, shops and implements. Each of the implements for sale represents a country activity - ie town and country are closely interconnected; there is no clear economic division.

Further descriptions bear out this dichotomy. In Ch. 9, the market lacks all boundaries - country invades town. There is 'individual unrestraint as to boundaries'. In Ch. 14 we have one paragraph suggesting boundaries, 'a place deposited in the block upon a corn field', yet Ch. 9 had stated that Casterbridge differed 'from the many manufacturing towns which are as foreign bodies set down, like boulders on a plain, in a green world with which they have nothing in common'. Ch. 14 then continues by undermining such a mathematical boundary. Though it has no suburbs, it has a 'purlieu', Durnover, where the farmers live within the town and go to work over fields. Barns exist in the High Street, alongside the burgesses' houses. So town/country boundaries again seem dissolved.

The other set of landscape features in Casterbridge derive from the Roman past. The opening of Ch. 9 describes the Roman setting:

'Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley and precinct. It looked Roman, bespoke the art of Rome, concealed dead men of Rome. It was impossible to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town fields and gardens without coming upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire.'

The salient landmark then focused on is the Amphitheatre, which appears to have strong boundaries, such that no outsider can see in. This enclosure has a bad atmosphere, however - someone was put to death there; furtive meetings arranged. Life-enhancing activities (boys playing cricket) are stifled.

Clearly the reference has immediate symbolic function. Henchard is to meet Susan there, just as later he arranges to meet Lucetta there. Such furtive meetings presage an unhappy end. Both meetings, too, represent 'skeletons'. We may think we can put a boundary between the present and the past; Hardy suggests this is a delusion. The 'skeletons' can be dug up at any time by chance.

The invasion of the past - either our personal past or the historic past - into the present always produces tragic consequences for Hardy. On Tess's wedding night we see both come together. While George Eliot would see this as a clear moral structure of life, Hardy is perhaps more ambiguous about it. In Ch. 43 of *The Mayor*, Hardy describes:

'Two miles out, a quarter of a mile from the highway, was the prehistoric fort called Mai Dun, of huge dimensions and many ramparts, within or upon whose enclosures a human being, as seen from the road, was but an insignificant speck. Hitherward Henchard often resorted, glass in hand, and scanned the hedgeless Via - for it was the original track laid out by the legions of the Empire....'

We have here a layer of prehistory, which places the purely historic. Egdon Heath also represents this layer - a layer which makes human activity look minuscule and which ultimately seems to discount human activity, including religious institutions and dogma. This landmark thus acts as a reductionist perspective. Yet

Henchard comes with a telescope: through this perspective, humans are enlarged and become the centre of attention. Hardy's poem *At a Lunar Eclipse* conveys much the same double perspective.

This, it seems to me, is the central crux of Hardy's tragic vision. Man is both insignificant, a 'speck', and yet he has a centrality about him that raises him to a significance ultimately greater than the rest of the universe and its forces. This significance is spiritual rather than moral, and is *achieved* through suffering stoically 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'.

The double perspectives we have noted, and the ambiguity of boundary/non-boundary, are extensions of this tragic vision, which is, as I have said, a tension of opposites. Hardy's art is therefore one of irreconciliation, and I would not entirely agree with Lodge, that Hardy has confused himself with the richness of his own writing, nor with Gregor, that 'the narrator's reading (is) only as sharp and fitful as our own'.¹⁶ The 'pathetic fallacy or not' is part of this also - this tensed ambiguity. Landmarks measure opposites, and landscape is both objectively 'out there' and yet also the map of the limits of the protagonist's own experiences, sufferings and consciousness.

Thus Casterbridge landmarks are arranged to demonstrate Henchard's 'progress' in suffering - the two inns; the two bridges; the Amphitheatre; the market, as well as the fair at Weydon Priors, marking the final return to the place of his first sin. In the same way we could plot Tess's or Jude's 'progress'. Landmarks are thus both public and private; public, in that they exist objectively; private, in that they mark the features of inner consciousness and the progress of the human spirit, as we have just said.

In the poetry, landmarks are associated with memory, and become a great deal less ambiguous, though the ironic tensions still remain in a more personal and poignant way. J. Hillis Miller's fine exposition of *From Wessex Heights*¹⁷ sets this out well. The landmarks are features of Hardy's inner landscape, yet memory is only triggered off by actual physical re-visiting of the real landmarks. This is Hardy's pilgrimage. When this pilgrimage is placed on characters in a novel, the ironic tensions of memory cease and a much more complex 'web' of tensions is set up.¹⁸

Tony Tanner has explored the concept of movement and landscape in *Tess* quite brilliantly.¹⁹ It takes very little to extend his notion of movement to that of pilgrimage. Dorothy van Ghent's concept of 'thereness' is crucial here, too.²⁰ *Tess* seems to land itself particularly to this concept of pilgrimage without destination, and the actual hostility of distance. In *Jude the Obscure* there is travel rather than travelling; nevertheless, its lack of destination is more real, since Jude holds the mirage of destination in Christminster, culminating in the final anti-Jerusalem scenes of his deathbed.²¹ The earlier novels have a more muted sense of travel and pilgrimage; not surprisingly, since Hardy, as has been stated, began with a sense of rootedness and community.

A look at Hebrews

At this stage, we really need to look at our Biblical material, to obtain a more specifically Christian perspective. As we have stated, the letter to the Hebrews has less of a sense of community or 'the body' than the other epistles - perhaps this is because it was written to a diaspora. Such sense of community as there is, is as fellow-travellers, where the past heroes are to a certain extent collapsed in time in the journey of faith in

Ch. 11. It is movement which is a concept central to both Hardy and Hebrews, though there is no sense of the Hardyean ironic criticism of the 'modern vice of unrest'. In Hebrews, movement is purposeful pilgrimage to a destined end, which is in no way illusory. The movement is both physical and historical (in terms of salvation history, of course), but compared to Hardy, lacks a physical landscape correlative. Here we move from the Psalms of Ascent to allegory. Yet the physical creation is not denied - in fact, the opening chapter affirms it (1:2,3). But it is, of course, Creation and not Nature. It is a finished creation (4:3), yet God shows a continuing dynamic concern for it, not an abandonment (2:8-10). In that Creation is through and for Christ, it has purpose and a reconciliation of physical and spiritual. Man is not just significant, as in Hardy, but has authority, all things having been made subject to him. Yet we can only see this by faith (11:3). This is the transformation which interprets movement into pilgrimage; nature into creation; action into obedience; and ultimately, suffering into perfection (2:10) rather than just moral grandeur.

The object of the pilgrimage is variously defined. In Ch. 4 it is 'Rest', which is placed in the Creation pattern of the sabbath (v.4). Creation therefore is not just beginning, but ending. The central Old Testament locus for pilgrimage is seen as the Exodus (Ch. 3), the journey to the Promised Land which is specifically equated with this rest. Failure is seen in terms of disobedience and faithlessness and so the destination is unreached. The physical significance of the Israelites actually having reached Canaan is dissolved or even disallowed (v.8) - the failure continues on the one hand; the unfulfilled promise continues on the other. The need for striving and the promise to attain go hand in hand. Ultimately the 'rest' is relocated 'through the heavens' (v.14); there is no earthly equivalence, only a spiritual one (vv.10,11). In the same manner priesthood is re-interpreted and relocated spiritually (9:23,24). But there is also an internalisation (8:10; 10:15,16).

The Old Testament is thus opened up again as movement/journey/pilgrimage which is both Christ-directed (in heaven) and heart-directed (cleansed and purified by the Holy Spirit). Ch. 11 is the *locus classicus* for this. The focus is Abraham's journey, not the Exodus one which betokens failure (v.8-10). Abraham is called; a destination is promised, but no direction. The land he settles in is and yet is not the promised land (v.9). It isn't, because it has no city, and therefore is no country (v.14-16). So he has to live in tents. The writer purposely refuses further equations with Old Testament fulfilments, even David's city, Jerusalem. The true country and destination is heavenly. Yet the answer is not Bunyan's - it is not death, but rather is the destination of a faith which can be actualised here and now; just as Christ as high priest, at God's right hand, can also be reached now, 'today'. So a different paradox is set up: how can we both be pilgrims, and yet arrive 'today'? Movement is salvation; to find here and now our permanent home is death (13:13,14); yet how can we be in movement and yet enter 'rest'? The allegorical mode, as with Bunyan, is to collapse the paradox and resolve it in terms of death, as we have said. I see no suggestion in Hebrews that this is legitimate, and to that extent the letter steps this side of allegory, despite what we have suggested before in terms of landscape. It seems to me the problematic is much more akin to that of Hardy - as paradoxes and tensions that must be maintained at all costs. But unlike Hardy, there is no irony; rather the affirmation of the worth of this life to be lived with the privileges given as if having arrived, and yet with more to enter into.

In terms of landscape, therefore, the Old Testament features of desert and city are dissolved; only to be dramatically recreated in Ch.12. We are suddenly thrust back imaginatively to the Exodus (v.18-20), and

then, to our relief, replaced in Zion, which now for the first time is named (leaving out the account of Melchizedek, king of Salem: 7:1-12). It is immediately defined as 'Mount Zion and the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem'. Out of here God speaks, just as, under the Old Covenant, he spoke from Sinai. So the two mountains become symbolic of the two covenants. Again, the paradox is that we both need to reach Mt. Zion as our destination, and yet we 'stand before it' (v.22). It is faith, in a sense, that 'resolves' the paradox, but faith is allied to obedience (v.25); so it is provisionally we stand. To 'stand before' is not necessarily to 'enter in'.

Landmarks therefore are at a minimum; such as there are lie before us - one, to the side (Mt. Sinai/wilderness) is to be avoided; the other, Mt. Zion, we head for in company with the men of faith (Ch. 11) who yet, again paradoxically, did not 'enter upon the promised inheritance' (11:39). So side by side lie the existential quality of the journey, seen in a faith-obedience (pr)axis, and the realisation of an achieved goal, seen in a Christ-covenant axis.

Conclusions

What can we draw together by way of comparison and conclusion? We have already stated that both Hardy and the writer to the Hebrews see their landscapes as landscapes of faith. Hardy's faith is, in the first place, the faith of his characters to achieve fulfilment and personal happiness. This is unexceptional and largely instinctive. It is usually expressed to themselves in terms of love, which Miller suggests as a Hardyean substitute for religious faith,²² though it may also take the form of ambition (Jude, Henchard); escape (Eustacia); altruism (Clym); social status (Grace and Fitzpiers). This search drives them into supposed destinations, movements and a pilgrim role. Landmarks symbolically mark their supposed progress and the boundaries of their experience. In the second place, Hardy's faith is his own sets of irreconcilable tensions of paradoxes, which work in ironic juxtaposition to his characters' faith. Movements, destinations and landmarks are seen from double or even triple perspectives, and become ambiguous, though never losing focus. Nor do they lose geographic reality; they exist as place and feature in themselves – not, obviously, as something outside the text, but as bearing literalness. Hardy's irony seems to state that there is no ultimate destination apart from death, and the place of death is usually insignificant. (Giles and Henchard die in huts; Jude in lodgings). Tess stands as a remarkable exception. It seems to me the sense of fulfilment in Tess (who ironically has all her journeys forced upon her till the last one) undermines Hardy's own irony and makes *Tess* a rather special novel.

To the writer to the Hebrews, faith is specific; it is an apprehension of revealed truth in the heart, and it provides motivation both to obedience and to journeying. Unfaith is to stay put, to put down roots where you are. Faith is to see this world as impermanent, and the wilderness image is central for the idea of testing. Suffering and being tested are seen as a Christlike process to bring perfection. Christ's perfection achieved salvation: we inherit that. To Hardy endurance undermines his characters' faith, which is illusory anyway, but it can produce nobility and patience. This is most clear with Tess, possibly least clear with Jude. It has been argued,²³ correctly I think, that Henchard's 'progress through suffering' is a shedding of stereotypical male attitudes to a more feminine sensitivity and awareness. However, whatever the endurance/ suffering it cannot achieve any sort of salvation, even any sort of amelioration.

We have already remarked on the fact that Hardy's landscapes become less and less detailed. Enstice has traced this. At one level this could be taken as a social allegory of mechanisation - machines destroy the work of man; man becomes subsumed into the machine. *Jude* reinforces this by increasing the speed of travel to railway speed; one journey is like another journey. Landmarks by the way are obliterated. Here is a growth towards anonymity, certainly. But at least railway journeys are not dangerous. Foot journeys are, as Tess bears out. The anonymity of the Hebrews landscape is held in check, not by 'the fires of hell flickering at the edge', as C.S. Lewis describes *Pilgrim's Progress*, but by the vision of the heavenly city ahead, and by the stories of fellow-travellers. In Hardy, only the protagonists tread the journey, alone; no-one else has ever gone the same way. Hardy isolates his pilgrims in time, as he does himself in the poetry:

'But was there ever
A time of such quality, since or before,
In that hill's story? To one mind never,
Though it has been climbed, foot-swift, foot-sore,
By thousands more.'

At Castle Boterel

The mention of fellow-travellers is only to deny their companionship with him. Even the setting of the poem suggests the poet's isolation, both in the present, and in time re-called.

At another level, the landscape of Hardy can be seen as a spiritual allegory for loss of faith. In other words, his landscapes and landmarks witness to presence only by a prior witness to absence and loss (others may put it the other way round). The loss is difficult to define. It is not as in George Eliot or Matthew Arnold, where a loss of definite faith is specified. Hardy, of course, had some such loss as this, and his well-known cynicism over Christian dogma may be related. But a poem like *God's Funeral* suggests that ultimately it is both a generalised personal sense of loss, keenly felt by Hardy, and also, I believe, a loss of the sense of the sacred in Nature. In other words, Nature is no longer Creation. It is fallen, together with man, but there is nothing from which it has fallen, to which it may be redeemed.

Here we may perhaps reconcile the two levels, the social and the spiritual. Mechanisation is a type of secularisation.²⁴ The sacred comes through a sense of God creating and upholding. When man creates, not as sub-creator, but in his own right, for his own ends, the sense of sacred is lost, and the mechanical is substituted. This process is even hinted at in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. The choir is lost to the organ. Fancy Day plays, not because music-making is part of a creative artistic tradition, but because the new vicar fancies her. Thus, in *Tess*, the reaping scene where Tess's child is brought to her to suckle, is replaced by Tess sitting on a machine, planting without any sense of creativity in her. In fact, Alec, the secular lover, spots her easily.

Nevertheless, though the loss is for Hardy a loss of the sacred, he still retains a fundamental perception of the spiritual. Sometimes this is externalised in the plot characterisation. Tess's lovers represent pure spirit (Angel) and pure body (Alec). Likewise, Jude's two women (Sue/ spirit; Arabella/body). But this externalisation only represents an inner, irreconcilable consciousness. Both Tess and Jude are keenly aware of the dichotomy of body and soul, and ultimately see their fallenness in terms of this irresolvable dichotomy. Earlier protagonists are not so clearly dichotomised, but the division is still to be seen. Here, it seems to me,

is the absolute importance of landscape to Hardy: it is the one mode of expression he can guarantee for the spiritual, and in this he is as Romantic as Shelley or Wordsworth. Landmarks ultimately represent the progress of the human spirit in all its conflicts. Only they have sufficient imaginative validity to do this.

The writer to the Hebrews has no such problems - the guarantee for him of the spiritual is the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit. Landscape is not needed to express this, since the sacredness of life is already assured in Creation. The eyes of faith are already sufficient to ground the spiritual in the sacred; there is no pressure to protect the spiritual as such. We are assured that our pilgrimage is a holy one, and that the outer reality does not just express an inner reality. The new covenant is written in our hearts *after* it has been established in the heavenly Jerusalem. Covenant time does not belittle man - indeed, the fact that Jesus became man establishes his greatness. The eyes of faith penetrate clock-time and see past, present and future in an expanding and liberating perspective. As Christians, there are resolutions for our perspectives, though, as we have said, not at the cost of collapsing the paradoxes. Hardy represents the case of the spiritual man blind to the sacredness of landscape, where landmarks become patterns without purpose, and the pilgrimage is ultimately to unfaith. It is as though he is saying: 'the only pattern there is the pattern of my fiction. There is no further analogy. The only control of events is my control as author. The only consciousness there is mine as narrator. There are no further analogies for anything beyond.' The irony of this must, eventually, undermine itself and in its own way witness back to pattern and presence as the ground of our being.

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1984

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- 1 Phillip Larkin, 'Wanted: Good Hardy Critic' (*Critical Quarterly* 8.2).
 - 2 H.C. Webster, *On a Darkling Plain: the Art and Thought of Thomas Hardy* (Chicago, 1947).
James Kincaid, 'Hardy's Absences' in *Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy* ed. Dale Kramer (Macmillan, 1979).
J. Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance & Desire* (OUP, 1970).
 - 3 Robert Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy; The Older Thomas Hardy* (Heinemann, 1975, 1978).
Lois Deacon & Terry Coleman, *Providence and Mr. Hardy* (Hutchinson, 1966).
 - 4 F.B. Pinion, *A Hardy Companion* (Macmillan, 1968).
Merryn Williams, *Thomas Hardy and Rural England* (Macmillan, 1972).
Andrew Enstice, *Thomas Hardy: Landscapes of the Mind* (Macmillan, 1979).
 - 5 Enstice *op. cit.* p.37.
 - 6 John Alcorn, *The Nature Novel from Hardy to Lawrence* (Macmillan, 1977), pp.2,64.
 - 7 cf. Tony Tanner: 'without the human presence, sheer land and sky seem to have no formal, architectural significance. The human form brings significant outline' ('Colour and Movement in *Tess*' (v. *infra*) Sect. vi). While Tanner is talking of the need of human presence to structure, it could be seen perhaps that human beings themselves become landmarks and therefore organising principles.
 - 8 George Hobson, 'Several Issues related to the Theology of Natural Revelation' (Literary Studies Group, Oct. 1983).

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- 9 Ian Gregor, *The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction* (Faber, 1974), p.36.
- 10 eg Arnold Kettle
Raymond Williams, 'Thomas Hardy' (CQ 6.4).
- 11 Thus Terry Eagleton, 'Thomas Hardy: Nature as Language' (CQ 13.2). This is a particularly good study of *The Return of the Native*, examining the use of apparently contradictory perspectives to convey the subject/object, flesh/spirit dualities, and the imagery associated with this. Eagleton appears to put aside a social interpretation here, interestingly enough, though elsewhere he manages to combine the two eg his introduction to the New Wessex Edition of *Jude*.
- 12 Daniel Schwarz, 'Beginnings and Endings in Hardy's Major Fiction' in Kramer *op. cit.*
- 13 W.J. Keith, 'A Regional approach to Hardy's Fiction' in Kramer *op. cit.*
- 14 Alcorn *op. cit.* p.4. cf Lodge's introduction to the new Wessex Edition of *The Woodlanders* (1974) p.26f.
- 15 David Lodge, 'Tess, Nature and the Voices of Hardy' in his *The Language of Fiction* (1966). I am heavily indebted to this chapter as I am to Tanner's article (v. inf.)
- 16 Lodge *op. cit.* Gregor *op. cit.* p.32.
- 17 J. Hillis Miller, 'Wessex Heights' (CQ 10.4).
- 18 For an exploration of this, v. Gregor (*op. cit.*)
- 19 Tony Tanner, 'Colour and Movement in *Tess*' (CQ 10.3).
- 20 Dorothy van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form & Function* (Rinehart & Co. 1953).
- 21 cf. Barry Qualls, *Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction* (CUP, 1981): 'The great anti-type...Hardy. He does not question if we can know God or nature or the godlike, or man's relationship to them; he *knows* man cannot achieve such visions. Although he structures his fiction around pilgrimages, it is simply to parody the effort; paradises avail no-one, only a more intense awareness of hell and cataclysm. *Jude* dies with no saving memories, neither the word nor the voice of human beings' (p.192).
- 22 Miller, *Distance and Desire* (*op. cit.*), p.114.
- 23 Elaine Schowalter, 'The Unmanning of the Mayor of Casterbridge' in Kramer (*op. cit.*).
- 24 cf. Mary Jacobus, 'Tree and Machine: *The Woodlanders*' in Kramer (*op. cit.*). She makes the connection between mechanisation and the split between Mind and Nature, relating this back to Shelley in particular.