



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**SEXUAL SCIENCE AS MANIFESTED IN  
HARDY'S MARRIAGE PLOT**

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**SEXUAL SCIENCE AS MANIFESTED IN  
HARDY'S MARRIAGE PLOT**

**By**

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
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*To my beloved husband,  
Josi Rizal,  
my precious daughter,  
Amalia Qistina,  
and  
my dearest parents,  
Ahmad Ibrahim  
&  
Sharifah Noor Hayati.*



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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This study starts with the exploration of Darwin's theory of 'Natural Selection' also known as 'Survival of the Fittest' (based on *The Origin of Species*). The exploration continues with the discussion on 'Sexual Selection.' Darwin's theory is investigated through the creative works of Thomas Hardy. The novels chosen for discussion are from the Wessex novels. *The Woodlanders* (1887) introduces the sense of struggle in nature as well as in characters; *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) represents the endless struggle of an unfortunate victim due to cruel environment; and finally, *Jude the Obscure* (1895) attacks the institutional law of marriage. The investigation mostly focuses on his marriage plot. Darwin's theory works towards establishing the defining features of struggle in Hardy's characterisation and structure of each text with regards to sexuality.

The nature of human evolution may be considered as the underlying theme in relation to the themes of struggle with morality, sexuality, and marriage of Hardy's works. The exploration of the nature of human evolution through Hardy's



work concomitantly relates to problematic relationship and marriage during the Victorian era while keeping in mind another underlying factor in Darwin's theory, that is, 'spiritual void' (the notion that God plays no role in the creation of different species). The behaviour of each character and the outcome of their action are explained scientifically. The survival of Hardy's characters depends on their ability to adapt to their surrounding environment.

The notion of 'adaptation' and 'maladaptation' to the environment are the reference points to understand the underlying forces of male and female sexuality in relation to marriage. The study's focus on the individual struggle against the Victorian morality (concerning the relationship between man and woman) is based on Darwin's explanation on human sexual instinct versus Victorian orthodox law. This struggle could either result in a strong marriage that stays at the end of the novel or death of the protagonist. Death is a reoccurrence event in his work. Finally, this research concludes with the tragic death of each character and why he/she is unable to survive in his/her marriage.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

**SEKSUAL SAINS YANG JELAS DIPAPARKAN DI DALAM PLOT  
PERKAHWINAN HASIL KARYA HARDY**

Oleh

**ASMA HANA AHMAD**

**Januari 2003**

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Tesis ini dimulakan dengan menerokai teori ‘Natural Selection’ yang diperkenalkan oleh Darwin di mana teori ini juga dikenali sebagai ‘Survival of the Fittest’ (berdasarkan buku *The Origin of Species*). Penerokaan ini seterusnya disambung dengan perbincangan ke atas teori ‘Sexual Selection’. Teori Darwin dikaji melalui hasil karya kreatif Thomas Hardy. Novel-novel yang di pilih di dalam perbincangan ini adalah terdiri daripada koleksi Wessex. *The Woodlanders* (1887) yang memperkenalkan pergelutan di alam semulajadi dan juga di dalam watak – wataknya, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891) yang mewakili pergelutan yang tidak berkesudahan disebabkan oleh persekitaran yang kejam, dan akhir sekali *Jude the Obscure* (1895) yang menentang institusi perkahwinan. Kajian ini memberi keutamaan kepada plot perkahwinan karya Thomas Hardy. Teori Darwin ini amat membantu kerana ia dapat menerangkan dan mengenalpasti jenis-jenis pergelutan di dalam setiap watak serta struktur setiap karya Hardy yang berkaitan dengan seksualiti.

Evolusi manusia secara semulajadi bolehlah dipertimbangkan untuk menjadi fokus utama berkaitan faktor-faktor seperti pergelutan moral, seksualiti, dan perkahwinan di dalam karya Hardy Penerokaan di dalam karya Hardy adalah sangat diperlukan didalam bidang yang menerangkan masalah perantaraan dan perkahwinan dengan masyarakat pada zaman Victoria Perlu diingatkan bahawa salah satu fakta penting di dalam teori Darwin adalah dimana beliau tidak percaya kepada aspek spiritual (Tuhan tidak memainkan peranan dalam ciptaan spesis yang berbeza) Sebaliknya, beliau percaya yang sikap dan hasil tindak-tanduk setiap watak dapat diterangkan secara saintifik Keupayaan watak-watak Hardy untuk terus hidup bergantung kepada keupayaan mereka untuk menyesuaikan diri dengan persekitaran mereka

Adaptasi dan maladaptasi kepada persekitaran adalah rujukan yang penting untuk memahami pengaruh yang tersirat pada seksualiti lelaki dan wanita berhubung perkahwinan Tesis ini memfokuskan kepada pergelutan individu menentang moral Victorian (berkenaan hubungan lelaki dan perempuan) dan berasaskan kepada penerangan Darwin terhadap deria seksualiti manusia yang berlawanan dengan undang-undang ortodoks Victorian Pergelutan ini boleh berakhir dengan ikatan perkahwinan yang berkekalan diakhir novel ataupun berakhir dengan kematian watak utama Kematian juga berlaku berulang kali di dalam karya beliau Tesis ini diakhiri dengan perbincangan tentang kematian tragik setiap watak dan mengapa watak tersebut gagal di dalam perkahwinan mereka



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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2003 to conduct the final examination of Asma Hana Ahmad on her Master of Arts thesis entitled “Sexual Science as Manifested in Hardy’s Marriage Plot” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) regulation 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



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ASMA HANA AHMAD

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I have used the following abbreviations throughout this these:

<i>Origin</i>	On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection of the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life (1859)
<i>Descent</i>	The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex (1871)
<i>Woodlanders</i>	The Woodlanders (1887)
<i>Tess</i>	Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891)
<i>Jude</i>	Jude the Obscure – 1895 (1895)

### NOTES:

This thesis uses the author system of parenthetical documentation which records the author's last name and the page of reference. However, the first reference to a book includes it's full title.

All quotes from other sources are in double quotations. Where the author is quoting or giving special emphasis to certain phrases by including them in quotation marks, I have used single quotes within double quotes. Phrases in single quote in the text indicate my emphasis of phrases that are ambiguous or doubtful.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines Thomas Hardy's treatment of marriage and sexuality in relation to Darwin's theory during the Victorian era<sup>1</sup> (broadly designated the era during which Queen Victoria reigned; 1837-1901). Darwin's theory, as a type of scientific evolution, became a powerful idea, which promoted a generation of a new type of literary fiction, including those written by Hardy. This study analyses Hardy's protagonists and links their sexual behavioural patterns to the Darwinian theory of humankind's animal past (that humans and animals descended from the same species) to illustrate the interrelationship between literature and biology. The animalistic behaviour of Hardy's characters is then compared with the Victorian social code of conduct. Furthermore, Hardy's marriage treatment is being discussed in relation to Darwin's theory and the Victorian code of morality. This research is an analysis of human behaviour without religion, where it is based on human instinct alone; man lives without morality.

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<sup>1</sup> Also known as the "age of transition"- change from medieval tradition of social and religious hierarchy to scientific revolution. Houghton, Walter E. *The Victorian Frame of Mind*. Chap. 1, p. 1-7.





## Background of the Study

Before we explore the characters' behaviour in the selected texts, we need to discuss the influence of Darwin's theory of evolution on Hardy's novels, and at the same time study the sociohistorical content of the Victorian Era. The Victorian Era, known as the age of paradox and power, is mainly designated during the heyday of British imperialism when Queen Victoria was the Empress. Queen Victoria ruled from 1837 until her death in 1901. Victorian England saw great expansion of wealth, power, and culture. As quoted by Walter E. Houghton in his book, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, this is when "mankind have outgrown old institutions and doctrines, and have not yet acquired new ones" (1). This period of scientific, philosophical and religious revolution has become a period of paradox when the socio-cultural values were destroyed by institutions of power such as the church.

Houghton later adds that the revolutionary change is divided into two phases, destruction and reconstruction, "As the older of doctrines and institutions is being attacked or modified or discarded, at one point and then another, a new order is being proposed or inaugurated" (3). Both destruction and reconstruction were visible by 1830.

The traditional belief of Orthodox Christianity, on the other hand, is verbally attacked by scientific and philosophical thoughts proposed by John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, John Henry Newman, and Thomas Henry Huxley. Mill, one of



the most important thinkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the head of the utilitarian movement promoted the rights of workers and women. Newman, an English religious thinker, writer and founder of the Oxford Movement emphasised on traditional belief that was akin to Catholicism. Darwin, being an English naturalist proposed that humans, chimps and gorillas shared a common ancestor. Thus, the produced suitable genetic variations are random and this was not caused (as religious thinkers would have it) by God. The idea of God played no significant role in the scientific world.

Nonetheless, the centre of Victorian life was the family. Family routine activities such as: “the gathering of the whole household for family prayers, the attendance together at church on Sunday morning, the reading aloud in the evenings, the annual family vacation” (341) are well known to the Victorian society. Home is said to be a “sacred place” (346). Therefore marriage seems to be very valuable for a Victorian couple.

In the Victorian home where children are around, “sex was a secret” (353). Sex is seen to be the wives’ duty in fulfilling their husbands’ sexual needs (desire). On that account, “adultery, especially in the case of a wife, ... was spoken of with horror” (356). This is what happened when Hardy introduced his controversial novel, *Jude the Obscure* (*Jude*), which later ended his career as a novelist.



Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was an English novelist and poet of the naturalist movement who powerfully portrayed his characters based on his own community, Dorset. He described Dorset, in his texts, as struggling against their passion and external circumstances. Hardy's time, the early stage of the Victorian age, was characterized by religious and philosophical doubts arising from the new theory of human evolution in *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection (Origin)* (refer to Appendix A) and *Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex (Descent)* (refer to Appendix B) by Charles Robert Darwin. The social and moral problems due to the new industrial conditions (where machines successfully replace humans) also suggested that the society has undeniably evolved and adapted to the changing environment (Quayum & Talif 260-1).

Darwin posited that vast numbers of species (including humans) existed on earth at one time, but several died out. Those survived were the ones that had best adapted to their environment. Though he did not (as many people would think) say that human was descended from monkeys, but he has stated that humans and monkeys were collateral descendants of one ancestor. Thus, he suggested that life had evolved under its own laws, and that there was no need for God as both Adam and Eve and the animals had evolved under the law of evolution from their ancestors and lived in the Garden of Eden. This philosophical proposition could not be discussed publicly during the Victorian Age whereby Christianity had great influence on the society.



The evolutionary characteristics such as human sexuality and the survival instinct mentioned by Darwin were reflected in Hardy's fiction, and such characteristics were manifested mostly in his portrayal of women. From the early stages of his career, Hardy was known for the portrayal of his female characters. According to critics, he was perceived as a misogynist. In the later stages of his career, he was known as an anti-feminist. In Victorian England, Hardy was viewed as a blasphemer especially in *Jude* where he related sexual attraction as a natural force which was sympathetic to the human will. The sexual attraction between Jude and Sue was so strong that they defied marriage by committing adultery which was against the Christian values held by the Victorians. As a result, the harsh criticism that he had received on this novel discouraged him from writing more novels.

It is an old adage that every man is the product of his age. Hardy was most certainly the product of his age in which he lived. During the Victorian period, "Hardy's introduction to the modern thought was brought about through his contact with a young man whom he met in Dorchester, Horace Moule" (Chandra, 11). Hardy was persuaded by Moule to read *Essays and Reviews*, which consisted of "powerful and influential collection of polemical studies" (11). This book was published in 1860 by a group of dissident churchmen and critical dons who questioned and verbally attacked the dogmas of the Church of England. It was also through Moule that Hardy was introduced to *Origin*.



The first edition of Darwin's *Origin* which appeared on November 24, 1859, was sold out on the day of publication. The second edition became available only in January 1860. It was in this book that Darwin explained his theory of biological evolution, usually referred to as the theory of natural selection. Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection states that, because of the problem of food-supply, a young born to any species have to intensely compete for its survival (survival of the fittest). Therefore, each generation will improve its adaptability over time. Hence, the process of natural selection has become the source of evolution for all species. In this book, Darwin barely mentioned the evolution of human beings because he feared the readers' negative reaction to his issue of human evolution would be so violent that it would forestall his evolutionary thesis. As one faithful reader and believer of the theory of scientific evolution (particularly Darwin's), Hardy gave up the idea of preparing going to the church. Instead, he worked on developing his understanding towards human evolution.

Hardy was among those who were revolutionized as much as Darwin in relation to human evolution. Darwin's idea was crystallized in his *Origin*, and Hardy's ideas in relation to human behaviour can be unravelled in his creative works. Both of them have struggled with religion as a principle to guide human behaviour. However, Hardy's works showed that his struggle with religion created superficiality in human behaviour. All his characters did not reflect any religiosity in them (as what was expected in Victorian reality). The characters were a



reflection of man without morality and acted on human desire or animal instinct without spirituality.

*Thomas Hardy: A Study of his Writings and their Background* written by William Rutland provides a critical study of Hardy's novels and most importantly their backgrounds. His wife, Mrs. Florence Hardy, claimed that Hardy "had been among the earliest [followers] of *The Origin of Species*" (54). One of the greatest influences upon the whole of English thinking in the later nineteenth century was the theory of evolution propounded in Darwin's epoch-making book *Origin*, and its sequel, *Descent* (54).

Darwin's theory of evolution grew from Empedocles of Arigentum, Sicily (490 – 430 B.C) who first proposed a clear concept of evolution; all living things arose spontaneously from muck, slime, vegetable matter, and the like. Anaxagoras (490 – 428 B.C.) of Miletos attributed the adaptations of organisms but only to a limited extent. Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), one of Plato's students accepted the principle of flux (flow); transition from inanimate matters to plants, from plants to plant-animals (eg. corals), and from the latter to animal forms. After a few hundred years later, George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), a great naturalist and journalistic propagandist was convinced of the unity of nature and accepted the principle of flux. Later, he was convinced that animal species undergo alterations from time to time but retain indications of their forebearers (for example, a pig has retained its now useless lateral toes).



Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), grandfather of Charles was himself an ardent proponent of the evolutionary concept for many years before his grandson was born. However, Lamarck (1744-1829), a biologist and palaeontologist, was the first to establish the theory of descent as an independent scientific generalization of the first order, as the foundation of the whole Biology. The writings of Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck were parallel with the French Revolution. Nevertheless, their writings had influenced and contaminated the radical political concepts and thus became extremely unpopular.

Charles Darwin, having a close observation in the variations and similarities of different species during the voyage of the Beagle, was able to provide a more satisfactory explanation to evolution than that provided by Erasmus Darwin. His published works include:

- i. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection of the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859)
- ii. *On the various Contrivances by Which British and Foreign Orchids Are Fertilized by Insects* (1862)
- iii. *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (1868; rev. ed. 1875)
- iv. *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871)
- v. *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872)



His works were major influence on the life and earth sciences and on modern thought in general. As stated in the *Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2001*, Darwin's theory was first announced in 1858 in a paper presented at the same time by Alfred Russell Wallace, a young naturalist who had formulated a theory of natural selection (survival of the fittest).

Darwin was not the first to propose the theory of evolution (refer to Appendix G), but was the first to discover and document the processes that had caused evolution to occur. While Darwin is working on his theory, a friend of his, Alfred Russell Wallace (1823-1913) was working on similar problems in the East Indies. He then presented an abstract of his own study together with the Wallace paper before the Linnaean Society of London. Later, the theory of the origin of species by natural selection appeared in print in the journal of the society in 1858.

According to Ronald Carter in *The Routledge History of Literature in English*, Darwin postponed the publication of his scientific work for almost thirty years after foreseeing the potential "effect of his doctrine of 'natural selection' on religious beliefs and moral attitudes of the Victorians" (278). Its effect on the Victorians mentality was so extreme that, never before produced by any single publication of the nineteenth century, has ever produced the same reaction. In this book, "Darwin showed the determining factors of chance and necessity in the 'survival of the fittest'" (279). Darwin's idea that all animals and humans are not





created by God but have evolved from one species to adapt to the changing environment has completely challenged the “higher values of religion and morality which, for centuries, society had done so much to create and affirm” (279).

Both the Darwinian theory and the Victorian morality make up the uniqueness of Hardy’s marriage plot novels even though their contrasting principle regarding the issue of sexuality; biological determiners in Darwin’s theory do not influence the Victorian religious values. As Hardy has adopted Darwinistic elements to his characters, they are able to act based on their instinct although most of the time they cross over the religion line. This is found in all of his novels where the act of adultery fulfils the character’s sexual desire as opposed to marriage. Hardy’s main characters; Fitzpiers, Alec, Sue and Jude seek for intimate relationships outside of marriage to fulfil their sexual needs.

Hardy attended Darwin’s funeral as he thought highly of Darwin and began to read his work at an early age. Carter claimed that the famous book by Darwin, which was believed to be the gospel of so many in Hardy’s youth, did not contain any philosophical speculation, but was a strict work of science. In addition, in 1959, the book *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill<sup>2</sup> was thought to have had a profound effect on the young Hardy. Mill’s campaign for women’s rights, for the rights of colonial people, and the freedom of speech in the English language, all

