



*Thomas Hardy:
Literature and Ethics*

哈代：文学与伦理解读



张成萍 / 著



科学出版社

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北 京

内 容 简 介

本书在比较研究中西方文学伦理批评经典文献的基础上,运用文学伦理批评在理论探索与实践中提炼出的数个不同主题对哈代的7部作品进行了细致深入的解读,阐释了哈代文本中的伦理维度、文学观与维多利亚时期的社会历史背景的动态关系,同时也对维多利亚时期的科学、哲学、文学批评思潮等进行了梳理,对文学批评中的一些经典问题,例如文学体裁与伦理意义、悲剧的定义与创新、小说情节的功能以及形式和内容的统一性等提出了个人见解与感悟。

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前 言

伦理话题在英美文学批评界曾经一度成为禁区，特别是在注重文学形式的批评理论甚为流行的 20 世纪中期至下半叶，文学批评一谈伦理便会被贴上道德说教、为政治做嫁衣的标签。但这绝非正常现象，因此伦理的回归也就理所应当了。20 世纪 80 年代末，英美数位知名文学研究学者及哲学家分别撰写专著和论文，指出伦理在文学解读中不可或缺的重要性，将文学研究同伦理思考紧密联系起来，为文学批评注入了深厚的人文关怀和形而上的思考。这种伦理学与文学的相互交流与融合在 90 年代引发了文学伦理批评的热潮，为伦理批评成为独立的文学批评话语开辟了道路。在中国，聂珍钊教授创立并完善了文学伦理学批评理论，自 2004 年至今得到学界广泛接受并被大量运用于文学批评实践中。目前伦理批评在中西方文学批评流派中均成为一支中坚力量。

东西方文学评论界同时关注伦理批评并非偶然，因为文学与伦理本就息息相关。文学作品必然现实生活中的伦理现象，伦理学各种抽象概念也往往在文学作品中找到具体生动的实例，故而无论是伦理学家还是文学评论学者，抑或普通读者，都无法忽视文学与伦理的密切关系。如刻意回避伦理，就会在很大程度上否认了文学作品的现实意义与力量。

本书在比较研究中西方文学伦理批评经典文献的基础上，运用文学伦理批评在理论探索与实践提炼出的数个不同主题，对哈代的几部作品进行了细致深入的解读，阐释了哈代文本中的伦理维度、文学观与当时的社会及历史背景的动态关系，希望能够为哈代研究提供新的视角与范式。在解读过程中，本书也对维多利亚时期的科学、哲学、文学批评思潮等进行了梳理，对文学批评中的一些经典问题，如文学体裁与伦理意义、悲剧的定义与创新、小说情节的功能及形式和内容的统一性等提出了个人的见解与感悟。

重读哈代是一个冒险的决定，因为作为经典作家，已经有无数前人写出诸多有深度的哈代研究经典著作；也正是因为有这许多的前人铺路，我得以在他们既有成就的基础上继续挖掘哈代作品这座宝藏。每个时代有每个时代的精神风貌及关注的热点，所以每个时代的人重读哈代，都有可能找到新的视角、发现新的亮

点、获得新的启迪。正是基于此考虑，我开始了与哈代数年的神交，在阅读他的作品中去了解他、热爱他。新批评学派认为文学作品创造出来之后便自成一体同作家本人再无关系，读者只需关注作品本身即可，作者是谁无关紧要。然而，在我看来，作者是谁、生于何时、长于何世恰恰是作品会写成现有模样的重要原因。所以研究哈代作品中的伦理观或是伦理现象，一定不能脱离哈代本人及其时代而空谈作品。因此本书中但凡论及哈代及其作品，往往亦会考察维多利亚时期的历史背景与哈代个人的成长和创作经历。

本书并非只谈及某一个伦理问题，而是每章自成一体。贯穿所有章节的线索便是它们都同伦理问题相关，都是我对哈代作品中的文学视野与伦理视野交织碰撞的点与面的理解与感悟。在阅读哈代不同的作品时最吸引我的伦理问题与现象各有不同，我也就随心而动，把我认为最适合这些作品的伦理解读方式记录下来，呈现给读者。

香港大学英文系的 Douglas Kerr 教授对此书从构思到完稿均提出了无数宝贵的意见与指导，他于我既是明师，亦像慈父；正是他的信任与鼓励让我在学术上不断成长，在此谨献上我最衷心的感谢与敬意。中山大学博雅学院的童庆生教授和四川大学外国语学院的程锡麟教授对此书的出版给予了大力支持；清华大学深圳研究生院的倪士光博士与李向明老师均给予了无私的帮助与鼓励，在此一并致谢。同时感谢科学出版社语言分社的阎莉社长和王瑞媛编辑，在此书出版过程中的严谨、专业与耐心。

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由于水平所限，书中难免有不妥与疏漏之处，恳请读者批评指正。

张成萍

2016年1月20日

Preface

There has been a revival of ethical discourse in Anglo-American literary criticism since the 1980s, practiced by both moral philosophers and literary scholars. This interest in the interactions between literature and ethics was shared by Chinese scholars, and was specified as ethical literary criticism, which prospered in China since 2004. Contemporary ethical criticism in the East and the West contains a broad range of heterogeneous methods and stances; what brings them together is their common concern with the relationship between literature and ethics and the effects of the interaction between the two. This renewed attention to the ethical dimension of literature has helped promote a more candid and confident attitude among literary scholars in discussing ethical issues in literary works.

This book applies ethical criticism to six of Thomas Hardy's novels and a group of poems to explore how themes drawn from recent ethical thinking can illuminate them in a number of powerful ways. My claim is that literary imagination and ethical thinking are closely intertwined in Hardy's works. His realism, his own intellectual complexion and the nature of the situations from which he builds his narratives make ethical criticism particularly apt to his works.

This book approaches Hardy's works from different angles but with the same purpose to discover where Hardy's ethical vision and literary vision interact. After a sketch of the contour of contemporary ethical criticism in both the West and in China, and a brief review of Hardy's ethical visions in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 applies the concept "moral luck" developed by modern moral philosophers Bernard Williams and Thomas Nagel to Hardy's two early novels *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native* and finds that "moral luck" helps understand Hardy's idiosyncratic use of coincidence, and that the

same strategy produces different effects in the two novels because of genre-related differences. Chapter 3 takes a historical and cultural perspective and explores the impact of evolutionary theories, especially Darwinism, on Victorian intellectuals' ethical imagination at large and Hardy's ethical imagination in particular, and proposes that Hardy finds new themes in evolutionary theories and successfully incorporates them into his two great modern tragedies *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Chapter 4 reads the plot of *Jude the Obscure* as a negotiation between fact and value and proposes that an understanding of literary narrative and plot can contribute to the understanding of the is-ought problem in moral philosophy. Chapter 5 deals with the love theme prevalent in Hardy's works. It scrutinises Hardy's ambiguous attitude toward the relationship between art and morality in his last novel *The Well-Beloved* and juxtaposes it with a reading of his elegy sequence "Poems of 1912-13" for his first wife Emma, and proposes that love, art and morality are highly relevant in both works, and that both are vivid portraits of the lover as artist.

Chapter Two is largely based on material drawn from a published journal article "Moral Luck in Thomas Hardy's Fiction." Section 3 of Chapter Three is a revised and extended version of a paper published under the title "Evolution and Ethics in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891)" in *(Dis)Entangling Darwin: Cross-Disciplinary Reflections on the Man and His Legacy*.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Douglas Kerr at School of English, The University of Hong Kong, for his generous support, encouragement and guidance. I have warm memories of all the discussions, comments and advice he gave me whenever I needed them; his utter confidence in me has been my impetus to embarking on the project on Hardy and ethics. He has helped me expand my knowledge and intellectual horizons, which extend far beyond the scope of my Ph.D. study and this book. For me he is not only an outstanding scholar and supervisor but also a great friend, and I can never thank him enough.

I also thank Prof. Qingsheng Tong at Sun Yat-sen University, and Prof.

Xilin Cheng for their inspiring ideas and suggestions on improving this book, and for their willingness to recommend this book to the press.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations for Hardy's works are used throughout this book. Bibliographical details are given in the Bibliography.

PROSE FICTION

<i>D</i>	<i>The Dynasts</i>
<i>DR</i>	<i>Desperate Remedies</i>
<i>FMC</i>	<i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i>
<i>JO</i>	<i>Jude the Obscure</i>
<i>MC</i>	<i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i>
<i>PBE</i>	<i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i>
<i>PWB</i>	<i>The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved</i>
<i>RN</i>	<i>The Return of the Native</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i>
<i>WL</i>	<i>The Woodlanders</i>
<i>WB</i>	<i>The Well-Beloved</i>

EDITED WORKS

<i>CP</i>	<i>Thomas Hardy: the Complete Poems</i> (ed. James Gibson)
<i>LW</i>	<i>The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy</i> (ed. Michael Millgate and Florence Hardy)
<i>PN</i>	<i>The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy</i> (ed. Richard H. Taylor)
<i>PV</i>	<i>Thomas Hardy's Public Voice</i> (ed. Michael Millgate)

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Introduction

All writers are ethicists. This seems to be an arbitrary assertion and therefore easy to be attacked or dismissed. Nevertheless I still hold my ground. It does not mean that every writer will give a moral preach in his or her writing; it simply means that ethics is everywhere and literature is no exemption. Ethics provides a framework or guideline for us to build up our lives, without which life would become chaotic and confusing. Ethics indicates what way we choose to live, which we believe would be worth living. Although the choices people make may vary in different ages and places, but ethics itself is always there.

Ethics and literature are never two separate concepts. Literature reflects life, directly or indirectly, hence it also reflects ethics that permeates human life. Writers never think of avoiding ethics, no matter what they write to record life, or to escape life, or to create life, or to relieve feelings, or to preach. Their writings naturally include the ethical codes and moral values of their time, and sometimes also of the ages before their times.

Another question from the reader's stance: why would a reader care for ethical questions in literary works? Perhaps because the works raise ethical questions and challenge the reader with ethical dilemmas that she cannot shun; or perhaps because she is challenged with ethical dilemmas by life itself, and wants to find help, guidance, or simply comfort from literature. No matter what reason it is, as soon as the reader starts to concern about ethics and/in literature, she would discover that every writer is an ethicist, and every writing has a shadow of ethics at its back: clear or dim; lengthy or brief.

The reader may discover too that some writings go against the ethical values she has been holding; some are too fastidious and didactic; some are old-fashioned, and some are shocking and scandalous. Yet the ethical codes in every literary work represent not only an individual's, but a group's, and even a generation's choice of how to live. They invariably enlarge our scope and our imagination of what life can be and might be. Some of these we may never experience nor choose to experience; but when we read about them and live them vicariously, we may sense the immense complexity and diversity that is called life. We may put aside our pride and conceit and encounter life with modesty and enthusiasm.

It is with this attitude that I approached Hardy's literary world. I used to imagine him as a wise old seer who has penetrated the truth of life and got the answers to human predicament. So it was natural that I was disappointed: he poses questions, but he does not answer them. Sometimes his attitude is ambiguous, and sometimes self-contradictory. He seems to be always hinting that life is all trouble and misery; yet he depicts it with such vigour and zest that I could not help feeling that he enjoys life in its full malice and cruelty, as much as he embraces life in its minutest beauty and fragility. I find that Hardy the ethicist has his age at the back, supporting him as an evolutionist, a utilitarian, a meliorist, and a pessimist.

This book is an attempt to apply contemporary ethical criticism to some of Hardy's novels and poems to explore how themes drawn from recent ethical thinking can illuminate them in a number of powerful ways. There has been a revival of ethical discourse in Anglo-American literary criticism since the 1980s, practiced by both moral philosophers and literary scholars. They denied the accusation of being morally rigid or conservative, and argued for a broader intellectual critical practice that scrutinises the interrelation between literature and ethics, but judges the worth of literary work not by whether it promotes moral goodness or not. Their efforts brought in a huge number of writings and publications in the 1990s, and "ethical criticism" as an independent critical approach has been widely accepted since then. It has got further development in

China since 2004, and a critical theory entitled “ethical literary criticism” was established and flourished in the last decade.

Contemporary ethical criticism contains a broad range of heterogeneous methods and stances; what brings them together is their common concern with the relationship between literature and ethics and the effects of the interaction between the two. This renewed attention to the ethical dimension of literature has helped promote a more candid and confident attitude among literary scholars in discussing ethical issues in literary works. After a sketch of the contour of contemporary ethical criticism both in the West and in China and a brief review of Hardy’s ethical visions in Chapter 1, I re-read six of Hardy’s novels and a group of poems in the following four chapters to discover where Hardy’s ethical vision and literary vision interact.

Hardy’s works are highly ethical not because of their clear and deliberate moral purpose—which is what Hardy strongly opposes—but because of the concerns in his writing and the way he treats his writing. Hardy’s primary concern is the human relationship: love, especially love between the two sexes. This of course does not mean that Hardy’s work is only about love; yet it is above all in love that other aspects of human life—the social, cultural and historical—and other human concerns such as money, trade, class, religion, law, and education that work more visibly and intricately to influence his characters. Hardy’s view of love and his view of life are congruous: in fact they inform and influence each other. It is in love that man feels so keenly his lack of potency: that he does not have much control over himself or the beloved, nor does he have control over the circumstance or the result of love. This lack of potency is most directly experienced in love; but one also finds the same impotency in his relation with society and with the world and universe. Hence Lance St. John Butler (1978: 162) asserts that “Hardy’s work is about love and that he achieves an integration of love with the natural world and, beyond that, with a view of the cosmos.”

Such a view of love and of life is undoubtedly pessimistic—at least in a generally accepted sense—hence Hardy was constantly accused by his contemporaries

of being a pessimist or a determinist. In the twentieth century his pessimism is not something to be argued for or against any more—it is simply a fact accepted by critics and common readers. However Hardy was troubled by this title and protested against it several times. In the “Apology” for *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922) Hardy interprets this so-called “pessimism” as “evolutionary meliorism,” which operates through “such ‘questionings’ in the exploration of reality, and is the first step towards the soul’s betterment, and the body’s also” (CP: 557). He had written another “apology” twenty years before:

Jan. 1 [1902]. A Pessimist’s apology. —Pessimism (or rather what is called such) is, in brief, playing the sure game. You cannot lose at it; you may gain. It is the only view of life in which you can never be disappointed. Having reckoned what to do in the worst circumstances, when better arise, as they may, life becomes child’s play. (LW: 333-4)

Hardy’s explanation demonstrates his attitude towards life: prepare for the worst so that one may find oneself end better. Hardy’s work constantly conveys this mixed feeling to the reader: his work often depicts “the worst” in human life, and the reader is prepared to feel both the despair and the hope. I would suggest that this attitude is the key to grasping Hardy’s idiosyncrasy and the “mental attitude” of Hardy as a writer.

This “mental attitude” directly influences Hardy’s literary creation: because to show the worst in life to the reader means that his characters are constantly cornered—in every possible way. To achieve this goal (be it consciously conducted or not) Hardy then develops one of his most frequently used devices, which is also the most complained about: coincidence, untimely chance and luck. Sometimes his coincidences work for the better but most of the time for the worse; their occurrences are always unpredictable and their apparent triviality always disguises their power to trigger the catastrophe or “final overthrow” through a complicated chain of cause and effect.

Hardy’s contemporary readers feel uneasy about this because when accumulated, coincidence and luck become not merely coincidence but fate. This

is one demonstration of Hardy's idiosyncrasy to depict the unpredictable, untimely chance and luck and its effect on his characters. In Chapter 2 "Moral Luck in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*" I associate this idiosyncrasy of Hardy with the concept of "moral luck" in contemporary ethical theory, and take a close look at four cases of moral luck in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native* to find how they produce different effects in the two novels and invite different ethical response from the reader due to genre differences. I propose that Hardy's exploration of the problem of "moral luck" in effect confronts the reader with fundamental ethical questions and the difficulty of moral judgment. Embracing both versions of ethical experience in the two novels will help the reader understand the nature of moral luck and moral judgment better.

While Hardy situates himself as a "meliorist," the adjective he uses to modify it is, interestingly but not surprisingly, "evolutionary." In his works we can see how evolutionary theories (not only Darwin's but also the more popularly accepted Lamarckian and Spenserian evolutionary theory) are represented and how the philosophical, epistemological and ethical indications of these ideas are incorporated by Hardy's idiosyncratic mind and help to mold his artistic representation. Evolutionary theories seem to have confirmed Hardy in his view of life and enabled him to integrate an indifferent and infinite cosmos into his Wessex where human beings strive for love and struggle between their social and natural existence, trying to figure out the meaning of life against a vast universe. There was many debates in the late nineteenth century on the relation (or contradiction) between human evolution and ethics. Chapter 3 "Evolution and Ethics in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*" reviews how the discussions, disputes and controversies over evolutionary theories influence the Victorians' ethical imagination at large and Hardy's literary creation in particular to speculate on the relations between mankind and nature and between the individual and society, and on the nature of morality.

Both *The Mayor* and *Tess* are about one individual caught in his or her past, and one human being caught between natural evolution and social evolution.

Both are Hardy's critique of rigid Victorian moral conventions and social institutions and at the same time a critique of the idea of social evolution. Hardy's critique is ethical: it challenges the notion of progress in social evolutionary theory, pointing to its inadequacy to nourish a healthy and fulfilling human relationship. This progress, when juxtaposed to nature and the cosmos, proves to be only an illusion. By depicting nature as amoral and indifferent to the human pursuit of happiness, by showing men and women entangled in their struggle between natural and social existence, *The Mayor* and *Tess* reveal Hardy's perception of modern tragedy.

Like many other Victorian intellectuals, Hardy was drawn to Comte's positivism and prized "altruism" and "loving-kindness" as a possibility to alleviate human suffering, hence he wrote in 1890:

Altruism, or The Golden Rule, or whatever "Love your Neighbour as Yourself" may be called, will ultimately be brought about I think by the pain we see in others reacting on ourselves, as if we and they were a part of one body. Mankind, in fact, may be, and possibly will be, viewed as members of one corporeal frame. (LW: 235)

Yet this note is not a conviction but a proposal that mankind may be—and perhaps ought to be—viewed as members of one corporeal frame; human suffering may be—and perhaps ought to be—alleviated by a general recognition of such suffering. Yet the reality is that human beings do suffer and are still suffering. How big is the gap between "is" and "ought"?

Whether the gap between empirical fact and moral proposition can be bridged (the "is-ought" problem) has been a locus of debate and dispute in moral philosophy since David Hume raised it in *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1740). Hume's scepticism later found strong support from Darwin's theory of the evolution of human morality, nevertheless modern moral philosophers have tried to bridge the gap: Geoffrey Galt Harpham argues that the split between fact and value can be bridged through human choice; and that in the realm of narrative the boundary between "is" and "ought" is