

Evolutionary Aesthetics of Human Ethics in Hardy's Tragic Narratives

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By

Rıza Öztürk

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P U B L I S H I N G

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Hardy's psychological insight is the basis for the kind of novels he wrote. Their diversity and multiplicity of interests expressed in them spring from his sensitivity, and humane sympathy for a wide variety of human beings, a compassion which includes all living things.

—Rosemary Sumner

... [the] twin principles of Hardy's melioristic ethics can be derived distinctly from the study of his novels: resignation to the neutral world, and compassion to all creatures. They are both quite affirmative, and absolve him effectively from the charge of pessimism in a way unsuspected by his critics.

—Jugdish Chandra Dave

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PREFACE

Treatment of Hardy's tragic narratives under the objective lens of evolutionary literary theory has led to three basic findings: First, within the scope of the analysis of the five major tragic narratives, representation of Hardy's evolutionary aesthetics of human ethics, in terms of altruistic sympathy and compassion, shows that adapted parental investment in children indicates the reason why women submit to pain and suffering more than the men do. The costly investment of women in maternal behaviour leads to submission in many cases, but in return they gain better fitness for survival and reproduction than men. This is implicitly highlighted as a force of superiority in the tragedies studied, as the male characters often invest in heroic deeds over their children. Second, that which has for many years been identified as pessimism in Hardy's tragic narratives is in fact a surface cognitive layer, under which is an implicit teaching of evolutionary aesthetics of human ethics, which guides to a true fitness of human life. Third, sympathy and particularly compassion are not only human emotions but also adapted cognitive virtues that centre on ethical teaching.

Thus, an integrated model of science and humanities for art and literary analysis is required to address not only those of English language and literature departments, but also those aligned to the idea of integrating the two methods. A scientific and objective view of human life is in opposition to postmodern and structuralist approaches, which have generally been considered as the centre of interest during the latter half of the 20th century.

I hope my effort in developing this book will be an encouragement to second and foreign language teachers and learners worldwide. I have been a foreign speaker of English language since the age of twelve, and during the last twenty-four years have researched and taught, both theoretically and practically, the treatment of English language and literature. Such a long period of experience of the matter in various positions, and particularly at Mustafa Kemal University as the head of the ELT department for thirteen years, has encouraged me and provided me with the chance to develop this book.

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INTRODUCTION

In the world of literary theory and criticism, since the time of the ancient Greek literary scholars, innumerable studies, arguments, discussions and articles have been written and published on the relationship between author, character and reader. Classic, modern and postmodern literary theory have established many manifestos, but heated debate continues nonetheless. In the work at hand, a development of a multidisciplinary evolutionary literary approach is put forward to define the states and functions of three categories—author, character and reader. There is particular focus on the relation between the author and the work in order to illuminate the nature of evolutionary aesthetics of human ethics as represented in Thomas Hardy's major tragic narratives. The expectation is that this will help to come to more scientific, measurable and predictable conclusions, acquired by considering evidence illuminated by empiric and experimental studies recently achieved in science and humanities.

To begin with, Hardy arranges events, settings, character circumstance and interaction, and treatment of various themes and subjects to generate aesthetic human ethics of his own in order to educate the reader. It is clear that the interaction of behaviour and emotion can influence the reader and stir in them some adapted or by-product human emotions, thus raising consciousness of the ideas of the writer, which can, dependent on cross-cultural differences, become vivid in the mind of the reader. Repetition of this procedure can instil whatever the author reflects in their literary product. Thus, such learning can affect the imagination and decision making of the reader and even determine their future in accordance with what is learnt during the process. Furthermore, the emphasis and aesthetic quality of the narration can quicken the education of the reader, no matter whether it is a narrative driven story or poem. Dependent on the force of the aesthetic quality of the literary production, the lesson or pleasure becomes influential in refining the intellect of the reader.

For the circumstance of the reader as well as the writer and the work of art, we must consider different criteria in comparison with that of the human being in general. In testing any aspect of the writer, reader and work of art with that of people living in a different cultural or geographical scenario, the frequency of such tests along with universal empirical evidence has to be considered under the light of the condition in which a

writer writes and the work is read. The three states related to the process of creating and consuming art are cognitively organized behaviours, acting in a conscious manner to fulfil their own purposes. However the universal basic human emotions and behaviour criteria eliminate and ignore cultural and geographic differences so as to acquire limits and measures acceptable everywhere on earth. That is why measuring the circumstance of the writer, artwork or the reader against universal basic human criteria requires a different method than that applied to those who belong to different cultures. Evolutionary literary critics have a ready criteria acquired from empiric and experimental studies performed mainly by evolutionary psychologists. The universal basic human behaviours are not proper measures to be applied to the state of the writer, characters represented in the works and the circumstances of the reader, as the cognitive and emotional states are completely different to those considered for the construction of the criteria of the basic universal framework. Therefore, what is the difference? What are the necessary considerations for evolutionary critics when applying evolutionary psychology measuring criteria? Do they really need a different model and criteria for the consideration of basic human behaviour and emotion for use in literary analysis? The answer is yes—a different model, or at least a literary reconsideration and rearrangement of the evolutionary psychology model of the basic universal human behaviours and emotions is required. A writer, a work of art or a reader is not a common element, or a person who has no intellectual background capacity to cope with literary text, understand, consume and guide them with the information reflected in the mechanism of the artwork construction. These three cases display highly organized cognitive behaviours and emotions.

Thus, the model of the study and interpretation of basic universal human emotions and behaviour throughout this study are purposely reconsidered and rearranged in accordance with the cognitive characteristics of writer, literary text and reader, so as to reach a scientific conclusion regarding different life experience models. The apprehension of life experience models is the force driving the decision making processes of the reader, as well as the writer, and for the major decisions we make in our life. The more influential the consuming and creating processes of artworks, the greater role art plays in the development of our behaviour and emotions and the process of human evolution in general. This link between art and emotion is what brings the force of human evolution to the fore, and consequently its beautifying of life in an artistic manner also makes the point to be considered an evolutionary aesthetic function that influences human psychology and the process of life in general. It is clear

that emotions in literary works are expressed in accord with the writer's view of life through the character, upon whom the responsibility of communicating with a reader lays. Although literary techniques provide essential support in generating emotions, they are ultimately channelled through the character. It is therefore essential that emotion modelling techniques are understood and taken into account if they are to communicate implicitly with the user and maintain cognitive cohesion and contextualisation. The aim of the model is to provide essential knowledge in understanding the relationship between literary text and emotions, from a character and creator perspective. In order to achieve sufficient knowledge in this area, this book investigates Hardy's major tragic narratives.

In line with the model applied in this book, the inseparable functions of mind, body and emotion are the main constituents of an evolutionary literary approach according to the adaptation theory, as pioneered by Joseph Carroll, Brian Boyd, Nancy Easterlin, Jonathan Gottschall and Marcus Nordlund as literary Darwinian, Darwinian literary approach, bio-cultural approach or bio-poetics. Evolutionary literary theory regards works of art as cognitive products of adapted human nature. Artworks are also accepted as documents about human nature and consumed by adapted human needs. This is an oppositional approach to those Foucauldian and Derridean structuralist approaches at the centre of critical attention throughout the second half of the 20th century (see Öztürk 1998a). Popularization of the gene-culture relationship by Richard Dawkins (1976) in *The Selfish Gene*, and E. O. Wilson's empiric studies on socio-biology has attracted scholars of literature. In addition to this, developments in various disciplines ranging from genetics to ecology, evolutionary biology, anthropology, developmental psychology, and cognitive neuroscience has attracted scholars of literature to integrate and assimilate empirical evidence and apply it to the field of literature. In a recent interview, Carroll explains and supports the idea of gene-culture co-evolution to illustrate the base of the evolutionary literary approach as follows:

Let's assume for the sake of argument that literary study manages to get past its own blockages. What then? All the world is before them: large-scale explanatory principles to hash out, a whole taxonomy to found on underlying principles of human nature, whole cultural epochs to analyze from a bio-cultural perspective, multitudes of texts to locate, with all their specific meaning structures and imaginative forms, in these yet-to-be-established bio-cultural contexts. We have before us the macro-world of human evolutionary history and the micro-world of the brain, cultural history to incorporate with human universals; neuroimaging and neurochemical analysis to integrate with tonal and stylistic analysis.

(Carroll 2009)

Carroll regards structuralist literary critical approaches as “blockages,” favouring art as discourse rather than an evolved cognitive product of human nature, as in Roland Barthes’s championing of the ignorance of the author in his famous 1967 study “Death of the Author.” He offers an escape from the narrow, personal structural approaches, considering literature as a “macro-world of human evolutionary history” and a “micro-world of the brain,” represented in “neuroimaging and neurochemical analysis.”

In line with Carroll, the model of my analysis of Hardy’s tragic narratives is to underline the link of art to the adapted basic human behaviours and emotions which are linked in turn to the forces of natural, sexual selection. Dennis Dutton (2009) has recently investigated this same thing in *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution*. Thus, my model of examination of Hardy’s tragic narratives underlines the link of art to sexual selection, for I am constructing an overall evolutionary literary approach covering both the structural and thematic features of literary works in general and Hardy’s major tragic narratives in particular. The causality principle must be considered as the backbone of human evolution as well as in creation of art. Hardy pays much attention to this principle, and an examination is required of its illustration in the tragic narratives, for the same manner of treatment both in life and in fiction should be based on the same mechanism. The difference between the existence of causality in art and its actual function in natural evolution carries a possible risk for misinterpretation of the literary pattern. For this reason, the nature of the action both in fiction and factual life has to be considered from the very beginning to illustrate a compact and sound objective treatment of the literary text for scientific considerations in social disciplines and humanities. For an evolutionary explanation of the principle of causality in line with Dawkins’s approach to the theory of evolution, Tooby & Cosmides argue that “[o]rganic evolution has two independent components, which together explain how all of the evolved features of organisms came into being.” Representations of these factors in Hardy’s tragedies are examined in separate parts in the book to illustrate exact evidence of the complete nature of his evolutionary aesthetics. Randomness is treated as chance happening and sometimes as the causality principle, “which by its inconstant and capricious nature cannot build anything organized” (Tooby & Cosmides 2001, 6). It is frequently termed a “blind force” by Hardy. Tooby & Cosmides’ agreement with Dawkins’s thesis about the causality principal is the basis of “natural selection, which drives the incorporation of adaptively functional features

into a species' design over evolutionary time." The causality principal is substituted for the operation of nature.

For the sake of clarity I have developed three chapters in part II of this book, the first of which is for the representation of chance happening, the second for the treatment of nature, and the third to cover parenting, mating and cognition to illuminate the adaptive forces of Hardy's evolutionary aesthetics. An evolutionary reading of the operation of causality is similar to the principle of chance occurrence—the nature of the action of an evolutionary change is dependent on the interaction of various pressures, and that is why the term forces is preferred.

Advances in technology and the growing number of researchers joining the field of evolutionary literature and art aesthetics have given way to developments of various paradigms on theories of mind and emotions, shedding light on the basic universal features and functions of the mind and human emotions. Considering recent empirical evidence of emotion and the body, genetics in particular has encouraged the interpretation of scenes in Thomas Hardy's tragic narratives to discover the represented central evolutionary existence of human basic behaviours and emotions. This book offers an examination and illumination of Hardy's representation of "Evolutionary Aesthetics of Human Ethics," which is possible to define as a result of examining basic human action and its construction in relation to the representation of adapted tragic human emotions. Thus, the first part of the book illuminates the theoretical background while the second focuses on the clarification of the nature of human action, while the third clarifies the source and logic of tragic human emotional behaviour. The aesthetics of Hardy's construction of the basic human actions, along with the scenes of pain and suffering, are examined so as to bring out the essence of the logic and nature of adapted human emotions.

Adapted human aesthetics is arranged for examination as follows: to begin with, Hardy's human ethics can be developed through a Darwinian or evolutionary aesthetic reading of his tragic narratives. After the required background information regarding evolutionary literary criticism, the basic adapted actions of Hardy's tragic narratives are examined to illuminate the evolutionary aesthetic constructions of tragic narratives and the way they are constructed to show when, where, how and why the tragic incidents happen. Since the time of Aristotle, tragedies are defined as pity and fear generating art. Asking the questions of "how" and "why" these tragic scenes are built naturally leads to the central argument of this book, which is simply to apply a scientific approach to the examination of Hardy's representation of adapted human sympathy and compassion. Hardy

encourages the reader to agree with his adapted action and his manner of adapted representation. Where scenes of pain, pity and sadness exist, there automatically emerges, as evolutionary psychology defines the basic universal human emotions: sympathy, compassion, empathy and apathy, while self-identification frequently becomes possible. In the tragic narratives, most of the scenes examined show that sympathy and compassion are the most favoured emotions triggered by altruistic behaviour of the characters and the aesthetic representation of Hardy's art. Hardy's adapted aesthetic of human ethics means he sympathetically favours the tragic characters. Hardy's idea of representing life, based on an adapted aesthetic of human ethics of sympathy and compassion, displays that human nature is evolved both genetically and culturally in accordance with the adapted human universal emotion, among which altruism remains at the centre of human evolution.

PART I

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!
—“Lucy,” William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

The implication in the final words of Wordsworth’s enigmatic, lyrical but simple poem “Lucy,” “... oh, / The difference to me!”, as well as in Descartes’ famous “I think, therefore I am,” Caesar’s “you too, Brutus?” or Shakespeare’s “To be or not to be” are powerfully stimulative phrases in triggering the interaction between brain design and the basic human behaviours and emotions. In accordance with the theory of Darwinian brain design, the basic human adapted behaviours and emotions “are guided by different functionally specific psychological adaptations ... Darwinian aesthetics has great promise for elucidating the design of the psychological adaptations” involved in human behaviour and emotion (Thornhill 2003, 9). In line with the information processing dynamics of brain design, scientists have observed specific evidence in recent empiric studies. For instance, in the abstract of *Principles of Evolutionary Educational Psychology*, D.C. Geary states that “illustration of the mechanisms of natural selection and their application to human motivational, cognitive and behavioural evolution” (2002, 317), would hopefully help us to detect and learn the state of human nature and the way it organizes different mechanisms to cooperate for the increasing probability of human survival and reproduction. Furthermore, “[t]he principles of natural and sexual selection are being used to guide theoretical and empirical research in the behavioural and social sciences with increasing frequency.” On selection category, Geary argues that “natural selection generally refers to factors, such as illness caused by parasites, that influence survival prospects, sexual selection refers to social factors that influence reproductive prospects” (ibid., 319). It is clear that “[f]emales choose mates on the basis of indicators of physical or genetic health, and these choices often

influence the health of her offspring and thus her lifetime reproductive success” (ibid., 19). Together with this, he expresses that “[t]he motivational disposition must of course, be integrated with emotional, cognitive, and behavioural systems that support attempts to achieve access to and control of essential resources” (ibid., 323). He also believes that “[i]n addition to managing social relationships, humans living in natural contexts have to secure food and other resources from the local ecology. These demands create selection pressures that would have resulted in the evolution of cognitive and brain systems for processing biological and physical information” (ibid., 32).

CHAPTER ONE

EVOLUTIONARY HUMAN AESTHETICS: BEHAVIOUR AND COGNITION

Descartes, Caesar, Shakespeare and Wordsworth's iconic metaphors (for such treatment of metaphor, see Öztürk, 2009) quoted above modify the interrelatedness of the human brain, action and emotion so as to let the human individual maintain successful fitness for existence. In line with the mechanisms of mind, body and emotion, aesthetics is a standard feature of beauty and pleasure which exists in the mind of the individual. Tooby & Cosmides find a rewarding interaction between mind and work of art, arguing that "[t]hese rewarding states of mind seem so natural to us—so obviously the product of the works of art themselves—that their existence seems to require no other explanation" and assert that "these experiences would not be possible unless the mind contained elaborate reward systems that produced them in response to some stimuli and not others." They also consider the ability to tell stories and find them interesting as "the first step, not the last, in the chain of explanation" (2001, 8). Scientists and scholars of evolutionary psychology have attempted to clarify the reasons behind the interaction of storytelling and interest in stories. However, information processing is not precise and consistent for each person. In the minds of those who are well educated and try to appreciate values of life, the standard features of aesthetics naturally exist, as they are adapted traits of human nature. Evolutionary psychologist Paul Ekman (1999) and many others calculate that basic human emotions are adapted defence mechanisms. Thus, while some of the emotions are adapted, dependent on particular conditions, others are by-products and parasitic. Emotions are generated by the human mind in accordance with the internal and external information processed to operate natural and sexual human adaptations.

This book will clarify types of motivational adaptations that help to construct Hardy's ethical philosophy of life. Why and how does Hardy construct them? The evolutionary aesthetic adaptation of his representation leads to the arousal of the adapted human motivations of sympathy and compassion, which builds the central framework of his philosophy of

ethics. Thus, we find evidence of the altruistic emotions of sympathy and compassion, leading to specification of the characteristics of his evolutionary aesthetic criteria of human ethics. Meanwhile, it should be restated that aesthetics is considered as the central feature in the construction of the model throughout of this book.

To begin with, telling and listening are two cognitive human adaptations that are “aesthetically-driven activities” and “not marginal phenomena or elite behavior without significance in ordinary life.” Tooby & Cosmides add that:

[h]umans in all cultures spend a significant amount of time engaged in activities such as listening to or telling fictional stories ... thinking about imaginary worlds, experiencing the imaginary creations of others, and creating public representations designed to communicate fictional experiences to others.

(2001, 7)

For this reason, the human adapted cognitive behaviour considered is an “[i]nvolvement in fictional, imagined worlds [and] appears to be a cross-culturally universal, species-typical phenomenon” (ibid., 7). Telling is a similar adapted action linked to talking and listening. So why do we talk? Why do we write? Why do we listen? How, when, and where do we talk and listen? Our evolved mind, intention, and attention and all levels of consciousness are influenced by our evolved human emotions. For instance, we talk because we need to satisfy our evolved human needs, and we write and listen for the same purpose. Writing, reading and listening are forces of adaptive behaviours that guide human nature no matter whatever the stimuli is, in all cases gaining abstract or concrete experiences. A sound guidance of the experience provides us with a better chance of survival as well as reproductive advantages. Every living entity is gifted with its own method of expressing themselves in accordance with their own process of evolution, and doing so in very different behaviours. From gesturing, through crying and singing, humankind has evolved a process of speaking. The evolution of oral communicative ability gave way to the evolution of writing and reading skills. Finally, writers developed the skill to express the aesthetics of their life experience. The mechanisms of basic human behaviour are depicted in cognitive documents, thus human aesthetic cognitive life experience is narrated in a variety of literary types, ranging from stories to poetry, drama and the novel. Therefore, human engagement with storytelling and listening and any other aesthetic experiences “are the functional products of adaptations that are designed to produce this engagement.” Furthermore, Tooby & Cosmides consider art

as a “by-product” more than an adaptation. However, they have latterly changed their mind in accordance with recent findings by scientists and evolutionary scholars, and at present consider art as an adaptation that supports human survival and reproduction (*ibid.*, 11). These literary types are the developed and evolved version of very early methods of oral communication by our ancestors. The more they learned the better they expressed their emotions and behaviour. These oral and written documents have become accessible to guide, teach and educate us about not only the basic needs and behaviour of our ancestors but also aesthetically about the details of their emotions, such as love, hate, anger, joy, desire, ambition, etc. The cognitive documents (stories) generally:

revolve around human relationships of every variety; social coalitions of kinship or tribal affinity; issues of status; reciprocal exchange, the complexities sex and child rearing struggles over resources; benevolence and hostility; friendship and nepotism; conformity and independence, moral obligations, altruism, and selfishness ... these issues constitute the major themes and subjects of literature and its oral antecedents. Stories are universally constituted in this way because of the role story telling can play in helping individuals and groups develop and deepen their own grasp of human social and emotional experience.

(Dutton 2009, 118)

Considering diverse human behaviour, it can be said that we have adapted minds which also help us to develop abilities in reading and writing. So, to simplify, we can pose the question “why do we write and read?” We read and write to learn and refine our competences in our adapted traits of thinking, decision making, speaking, listening, envying, playing, resting, learning, teaching, preferring, loving, hating, fearing, agreeing, disagreeing and so on, to enhance our fitness for survival, reproduction and socialisation. Literary and non-literary reading and writing function at different levels in line with the needs of the author and the reader. Particularly, literary text reading and writing require different capacities and life experiences.

First, let us discuss the reason why we write and read, then give an account of the tools and experiences needed to fulfil them, and finally specify the dynamics of writing and reading. Treatment of some of the basic adapted human traits will provide us with the fundamental nature of reading and writing. For instance, “why do we make decisions?”, “why do we like and dislike?”, “why do we play and rest?” and suchlike. These actions and triggered reactions force us to prioritise in accordance with our own natural, sexual, emotional and cognitive life adaptations. Literature

therefore imitates the basic adapted human actions and reactions. The producer and consumer of the literary artefacts are gifted with the same adapted human dispositions, the tone and style of the author and reader fulfilling their cognitive experience of writing and reading reflecting some mutations of by-product, but the basic adapted features are always present. For instance, both reader and author will continue to worry about survival, caring about their fitness of reproduction, mating, parenting, and socialization, however differently they apply the requirements of the adapted human disposition. Timing, setting, qualitative and quantitative particularities are nothing more than by-product behaviour. Change in quality of adapted behaviour does not mean its removal from human life. The aesthetic quality of pleasure may change depending on the expectancy and cognitive experience of the individual, the aesthetic quality of life changing in accordance with their preferences. However, their needs and endeavours in life are determined in accordance with their adapted human traits.

Therefore, why and how does an author write and a reader read? For instance, Hardy generally depicts man's evolutionary struggle in life and his narratives therefore naturally focus on the representation of tragic human existence. With this in mind, a reader may read Hardy's tragic narratives for many different purposes—for the structure, language, narrative theories, themes etc. Together with this, we should keep in mind the cross-cultural differences when we consider taste in aesthetic quality of the reader as cognitive life experiences in line with the quality of mind development. Furthermore, the readers' individual needs can play a role in the appreciation of the structure and content of the narrative. However, the dynamics of this structure are organised according to the author's decision-making regarding beauty and pleasure of aesthetics. This means that interrelatedness of sexual selection priorities with art's "beauty making" or "making special" as termed by Dissanayake (2003), and supported by Dutton, Cosmides & Tooby, and Miller, is what underlines this book's thesis as evolutionary aesthetics of Hardy's human ethics in his tragic narratives. In accord with what Dissanayake poses, we can read the similarity between art aesthetics and sexual selection aesthetics as Hardy's processes of human ethics which simply refer to all forces of life as they are throughout the life span of the individual. Hardy does this with his own authorial manner of constructing aesthetic preferences of the individual in the given eco-cultural environment. That is why it is said that reading Hardy's tragic narratives is a process of consuming pessimism—one possible understanding of Hardy's tragic narratives only, but one that is frequently supported.

In contrast with traditional readings of Hardy's works, this book suggests an evolutionary reading, providing specific evidence and support for optimism rather than pessimism. How is this possible? First, evolutionary reading approaches artworks as adaptations. This means that an effort for fictional cognitive consummation addresses the reader's reciprocal gain, the negative becoming acceptable for the sake of gaining in fitness. Thus, Hardy's evolutionary human ethics operate in accord with the regulation and selection among all probabilities to reach the best, the fittest, a method of attaining the best in life in an objective way. It is agreed that the selective mechanism of evolution and their interaction with one another, and a link with the aesthetic reorganisation of the mechanism and their imitations in a cognitive literary document, are what bring out the quality of the evolutionary aesthetics of human ethics in Hardy's tragic narratives. What I would like to develop is an evolutionary approach to Hardy's tragic narratives to examine and explain the quality and dynamics of his evolutionary representation of human nature.

Evolutionary Human Aesthetics

First, let us concentrate on one behaviour specific to the human species, so as to develop a clearer idea about human adapted behaviour and aesthetics. Decision making behaviour is a simple idea producing process of the human mind. The "yes" and "no" actions and reactions are operated in accordance with our likes and dislikes. Why do we like and dislike? This is a response based on the nature and quality of our beauty and pleasure costs and benefits. If we find an action proper for us, we accept and accomplish it. If not, we reject it, as it may become improper to the criteria of our instinctual and learned experience. Such experiences are the true face of our aesthetic quality of beauty and pleasure. All animal and human decision making mechanisms are bound to the input and output of information into the mind with any one of the basic senses, and as a result of information processing we and all animals do or ignore doing things. Thus, beauty and pleasure preferences are an adapted aesthetic mechanism for all human nature. Educated and well experienced humans have high quality decision-making mechanisms. Age, sex and environmental factors play a role in the development of the information processing mechanism, being an adapted feature of human nature. It can react in a divergent manner of decision-making from very simple to very intellectual preferences of beauty. Those reading a narrative work of fiction apply the same information processing mechanism to the apprehension of beauty and pleasure, providing action and reaction. Tooby & Cosmides liken the

interaction of story and mind to an operation of the mind in processing a dream. They argue “some psychological subsystems reliably react to it as if it were real, while others reliably do not. In particular, fictional worlds engage emotion systems while disengaging action systems” (Cosmides and Tooby 2000, 8). We generally favour certain actions and emotions and in accord with our own evolved emotional and behavioural requirements we disfavour those that we find ill treating or unpleasant. “We feel richly but act not at all, indeed losing awareness of our bodies and non-relevant senses and activities in proportion to how absorbing the fictional input is. A real lion actually lunging at us would evoke terror *and* flight—the emotion program and behavior are linked,” and Tooby & Cosmides provide an example of someone watching a film where a character is threatened by a lion—in this instance, they state, we feel afraid yet remain in our seat. In line with the quality of storytelling, we feel we are provided with a series of life like games among which we test and educate ourselves in a selective manner our mind is capable of operating. “This selectivity in how our mental subsystems respond suggests functional design” (Cosmides and Tooby 2000, 9).

In line with the development of the theoretical framework of this analysis, so long as human nature exists, “the topics that have been of long interest to aestheticians” are and will continue to be necessary for art and philosophy. This has stimulated aestheticians and philosophers to focus attention on the issues of aesthetics for many centuries: “... aesthetics in philosophy, is broad and diverse, including such topics as the beauty of ..ideas as well as the beauty of body form, natural landscapes, scents, ideas and so on” (Thornhill 2003, 9). Placing special emphasis on the mechanism of evolution on earth, Thornhill states that “all adaptations are aesthetic adaptations, because all adaptations interact in some way with the environment, external or internal, and prefer certain states to others.” For an appreciation of the evolutionary aesthetics of human ethics in literature, and particularly in Hardy’s tragic narratives, we shall focus upon recent findings which specify that “the Darwinian theory of brain design, whether human or nonhuman, is that of many functionally specific psychological adaptations ... It is the many psychological adaptations that underlie the diversity of aesthetics experiences of interest to aestheticians.” The theory of Darwinian aesthetics asserts that “beauty experiences are unconsciously realized avenues to high fitness in human evolutionary history,” and “ugliness defines just the reverse” (ibid., p.9). Thornhill’s Darwinian definition of aesthetics illuminates the features primarily required for a sound consideration of an evolutionary appreciation of

literature. The following definition acts as a guide for the examinations of the tragic narratives which follow:

The Darwinian theory of human aesthetic value is that beauty is a promise of function in the environments in which humans evolved, i.e., of high likelihood of survival and reproductive success in the environments of human evolutionary history. Ugliness is the promise of low survival and reproductive failure. Human aesthetic value is reproductive a scale of success and failure in human evolutionary history, i.e. over the last few million years.

(ibid., 9–10)

Together with the “taxonomy of the psychological adaptations underlying the diverse experiences of interest to aestheticians,” we shall rely on Thornhill’s “adaptationist program and how it applies to these experiences in general way.” Thornhill defines three levels of aesthetic beauty. The first is considered to be the “academic discipline of aesthetics,” which is a study based on the treatment of the “rhetorical meaning of beauty and ugliness.” He explains that “arts and humanities compete in creating the effect of beauty in human minds; scientific aestheticians use the scientific method to understand how the effect arises and why it exists.” In addition, scientific aesthetics not only considers the treatment and meaning of beauty by humans but also the aesthetic beauty that concerns animals. The beauty of “showy flowers” and “the peacock’s tail” are entities which scientist have studied, and there is evidence supporting the hypothesis that phenotypic features are a functional mechanism in the mating preferences of an organism, resulting in the development of successful survival and reproduction.

In the last few decades, biological aesthetics has become a major research area. A.R. Wallace and Zavahi have carried out empiric studies to demonstrate evidence regarding the idea that “elaborate features can evolve to honestly signal phenotypic quality” (1975, 11). Furthermore, “for extravagant sexual traits such as the peacock’s tail, some biologists ally with Darwin’s and R. Fisher’s formulation about the evolution of beauty and aesthetic preferences.” Linked to this, it is agreed that “mate choice is focused on phenotypic (and often genotypic) quality and sexual advertisement is basically about displaying phenotypic quality.” The peacock’s tail mating strategy, the human mating effort and the nature of both mechanisms reflect similar sexual procedures to realise their survival and reproductive success. In line with Brian Boyd, Joseph Carroll, Denis Dutton and many others, Thornhill agrees that:

The psychology that motivates art production is sexually selected and art is then a signal to potential mates of the artist's general fitness. The scientific study of human sexual attraction and attractiveness is carried out by human sexual selection aestheticians.

(2003, 11).

My interpretation of the evolutionary aesthetics of human ethics represented in Hardy's tragic narratives mainly considers Thornhill and Dutton's philosophy of evolutionary aesthetics and their hypothesis of the relation of sexual selection with aesthetics. Also important is Boyd's reading of Dutton's philosophy of evolutionary aesthetics for his interest and experience as well as experimentations on evolutionary literary theory and practice. Furthermore, this will also lead us to Carroll's paradigmatic guidance throughout the evolutionary examination of Hardy's tragic narratives.

Brian Boyd, in his *Critical Discussion of Art and Selection*, focuses on Denis Dutton's *Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution*, emphasizing that Dutton is "the first philosopher to take a sustained evolutionary approach to the arts" and adding that Dutton "suggests that much in art arises from sexual selection" (2009, 204). On the one hand, Boyd places emphasis on Dutton's linking of art to sexual selection in a manner reminiscent of Thornhill's linking of sexual selection to aesthetics in literature. On the other, Boyd reminds us that Dissanayake is "the first to take a modern evolutionary approach to art, in her *What is Art for?*", and that she "doubts that sexual selection can explain much about art."

Boyd's argument regarding Dutton and other philosophers favouring and disfavouring the link of art with sexual selection:

... vividly demonstrate the link between human emotions and preferences across cultures now and human survival needs thousands of generations ago ... Dutton shows that although recent philosophers of art have not sought to ground art in human nature, that has been an aim of their predecessors from Aristotle to Hume and Kant.

(ibid., 204–5)

Boyd expresses that "[f]or Dutton the natural context for explaining the cross-cultural accessibility of the arts is evolutionary and not definitional." To make it clear, Boyd argues that "[i]n evolutionary biology an adaptation is a physical or behavioural feature of a species that has been shaped by natural selection because ... it offers advantages in terms of survival and reproduction" (ibid., 207). It can be inferred that the factors that contribute to the benefit of survival and reproduction are of great importance for evolution. In support of Dutton's view of art as a functional

feature in sexual selection, Boyd places emphasis on Dutton's references to various evolutionary literary critics citing:

three proposed adaptive benefits of fiction: as surrogate experience without the costs and risks of real-world activities: as a means of memorably imparting factual information: and as a mode of refining social cognition. He introduces and assimilates here proposals advanced by John Tooby and Leda Cosmides and Pascal Boyer, who stress the decoupled nature of fictional experience, Michelle Scalise Sugiyama, who stresses fiction as a means of imparting ecological information, especially in hunter-gatherer societies, and E. O. Wilson and Joseph Carroll.

(*ibid.*, 208)

In the treatment of any theme in accordance with the aesthetic competence and performance of the narrator, the story becomes a text that triggers emotions and may influence the decision making of the reader, and consequently guides them for better or worse in the process of survival and reproduction. The generation of fresh and unfamiliar models of human life experience is always an attractive feature for readers. The discovery of practical and enhancing possibilities in life offers potential pleasure for those with the capacity to read and understand them. Such works:

expand our sense of human possibility, in the character, in the writer who creates them, in the audience who engage with characters, writers and one another. We feel proud that we belong to a species in which a few can use what we all share to pose and solve problems unimaginably richer than the rest of us could foresee.

(Boyd 2009, 218)

For further clarification about the relation of human behaviour and literature as a fictional cognition, we can refer to Currie's suggestion of looking back to very early human life to specify the natural relatedness of aesthetics with sexual selection as a fitness indicator. He argues that "[i]f aestheticised hand axes are reliable signals, what do they signal? There is a range of possibilities here: the best known takes us from natural to sexual selection." In line mainly with Dutton's hypothesis of sexual selection and aesthetic relation, Currie expresses aesthetic beauty and pleasure as the basic "forces shaping reproductive advantage by conferring a certain degree of attractiveness as a mate." Furthermore, he points out that:

Axe construction requires significant spatial skills to produce a symmetrical object; skill at resource location; and time, which in turn implies general efficiency and security in social matters. Kohn and Mithen suggest that

symmetrical, aesthetically wrought axe production was a means of reliably advertising these qualities to prospective mates. Supposing these creatures already possessed a tendency to like their conspecifics better if they did or made likable things, one mechanism to increase the attractions of the maker is to ensure that the products themselves are pleasing. None of this assumes that our ancestors *saw* hand axes as signs of fitness; all that is required is that they admire the handaxes in ways which enhance the maker's chance of reproducing.

(2009, 15)

In this context, admiration may be considered a signal of beauty and pleasure of evolutionary human aesthetics. Tooby & Cosmides, Thornhill, Dutton, Carroll and Boyd agree that sexual attractiveness has a direct link in the interpretation of evolutionary aesthetics as, all organisms as well as humans:

ought to be motivated to make choices, take actions, or invite experiences and interactions that change things in an adaptive direction. We expect that humans have evolved motivational systems (or systems of aesthetic preference) that are designed to find rewarding the kinds of actions and experiences that would have been adaptive for our ancestors.

(Tooby & Cosmides 2001, 13)

Motivational theories of adaptation generally support the nature of universal human behaviours such as “having sex, nurturing cooperation, aggressive defense, feeding your infant, winning social approval, or selecting a habitat to live in” in accord with their survival and reproductive benefit. Furthermore, Tooby & Cosmides draw attention to the link between art and aesthetics and argue that “[i]t is also important to distinguish “beautiful” as something attention inviting, from “beautiful” as the psychological registration of high value” (ibid., 18). They argue “this sense of beauty refers to the cognitive coregistration of deep valuation with the perceptual representation of the object of the valuation.” Together with this, the authorities in question overemphasise that the deep or high value of beauty “remains a distinguishable psychological phenomenon from the beautiful as something attention inviting.” This “attention inviting,” deep or high value of beauty becomes the central factor that generates aesthetic features which interact rewardingly with the operational system of the mind.