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W.H. Hudson: the Colonial's Revenge.

A Reading of His Fiction and His Relationship with Charles Darwin.

Introduction

W.H. Hudson (1841-1922) achieved fame late in life as a naturalist and fiction writer. The long period of adaptation to Victorian England for this lonely, reticent, Argentinian born man was ignored by a reading public avid for a kind of nature writing that Hudson accidentally was obliged to represent. However, this ignorance was partly Hudson's personal responsibility for he silenced those dark years of bitterness and frustration from his arrival in England in 1874 to his recognition as a writer. His famous reticence also contributed, while his age's needs (post-industrial revolution England) completed the severance of the brooding Hudson from the apparently pastoral 'poet'. Hudson himself never forgave this late acceptance and the financial security it represented: "When I had not a penny and almost went down on my knees to editors and publishers and literary agents I couldn't even get a civil word...now when I don't want the beastly money and care nothing for fame and am sick and tired of the whole thing, they actually come and beg a book or article from me...". The accepted version of W.H. Hudson rests solely on his later, successful years. From the earliest eulogies to the most recent, this remains the case.[1]

An anonymous reviewer (Virginia Woolf) in the Times Literary Supplement (1918 but Hudson was 77 years old) praised the way Hudson went beyond literary style: "one does not want to recommend it (Far Away and Long Ago) as a book so much as to greet it as a person, and not the clipped and imperfect person of ordinary autobiography, but the whole and complete person whom we meet rarely enough in life or in literature". Ford Madox Ford called Hudson a "healer", compared his natural prose style to the way grass grows, ending:"He shared with Turgenev the quality that makes you unable to find out how he got his effects". Similar praise came from Cunninghame Graham, Conrad, Galsworthy, T.E. Lawrence, up to Borges and P.J. Kavanagh.[2]

A noteworthy example of this ignorance of Hudson's past is Ezra Pound's garrulous review of one of Hudson's most read and best loved books A Shepherd's Life (1910). Ezra Pound seizes on the quality of Hudson's prose by comparing it to Japanese Haiku. He sums up: "Hudson's books are indeed full of interesting things, of interesting 'information', yet it is all information which could, like all information whatsoever, have been made dull in the telling. But the charm is in Hudson's sobriety. I doubt if, apart from...the best of Hardy, there is anything so true to the English countryside as Hudson's picture". Whilst not denying

Pound's high evaluation, it is more the "age" itself that created this Hudson. The shepherd who narrated his life to Hudson was the last in line of a country type made extinct by industrialization. This recording of a disappearance went straight to the urban reader's nostalgia for a pastoral England defined by Edmund Blunden as if it existed: "The perfection of the shire house and the mastiff, of the beanfield, the flower-garden, and the great estate, of the avenue of limes and the beeches that crown the hill, of the village green and the heath that refreshes the immense town, are types of that companionship with Nature which the English have commonly enjoyed". But Hudson's strength is not his "Englishness"; he is no pastoralist. Rather his vision of England (and life) are the result of a deep culture shock, of arriving in England from Argentina at the age of 34 and never returning, of being rejected as an anachronism and deliberately concealing his "alien" or colonial roots. It is to the dark years (1874-1904) that we must return in order to grasp Hudson in all his complexity, not the diluted version of so many biographers. The absence of information (letters, diaries, etc.,) allows an interpretation of his early fiction to be combined with his relationship with Charles Darwin in order to recuperate the essential truth of those years. This attempt to penetrate a deliberately concealed period is part of a more general aim of restoring Hudson's reputation for a generation of readers forgetful of his quality. The limited aim here is to seize Hudson's melancholia and bitterness before they were so successfully merged into his sober style. Further, I believe that this merging contributes to the power of this style (but I have studied this elsewhere). The justification of this study can be elaborated through a metaphor where style is the lid of Pandora's box - which Hudson never dared open - but whose lid (style) shakes with the pressure of what is locked inside.[3]

My proposition is to read Hudson's fiction as veiled confessions of a resent and frustration that puncture the mask of fiction that he tried to wear to conceal his face where conventional narrative devices like plot, narrative consistency, point of view, characterization and so on, can be seen as techniques of refraction. This will be complemented by outlining his attitude to Charles Darwin and evolution. Read like this Hudson becomes another knot in the complex web that binds "colony" to metropolis, a relationship that defines an important element of Latin American culture. By examining certain attitudes I shall be blurring sharp divisions as these attitudes emanate from the writer-in-his-period and cut through his letters, his naturalist's sketches, his poems, his autobiography and his fiction to reveal a more fundamental "plot" than can be schematized. Hudson, born and bred in Argentina, developed a yearning to "return" to the land of his forefathers (his parents were American East Coast puritans who emigrated to Argentina); but this England was an invention created through intense reading, especially poetry as well as being the England of nineteenth century science where Hudson would seek recognition as a naturalist. Once there Hudson was shocked at the crude difference between his dream and actual England (suffering years of anonymity and poverty in London) and longed for a "return" to

Argentina that he knew was impossible for several reasons. The fiction that Hudson wrote during these bitter years of adaptation can be read as his way of taking revenge against those who belittled him as a "colonial" from a distant land (Hudson's own euphemism for Argentina). Húdson was stranded in England with memory and writing.

This plot will be given a brief chronological framework. Hudson was born in Quilmes, near Buenos Aires, in 1841. Far Away and Long Ago vividly portrays this Argentinian childhood. He lived in Argentina for the first 33 years of his life, working on his father's modest estancia, travelling about and collecting specimens as a naturalist, completing his military service, etc. Without any formal education Hudson conceived of becoming a naturalist, a "profession" that combined his passion for observing all wild life (especially birds) with the loneliness and isolation of being a gringo on the pampas. Gilbert White's letters on the natural history of his parish led Hudson to want to emulate this model (Selborne/La Plata), while Darwin revealed to him how to synthesize his experiences. Both pulled him towards England. The differences between White and Darwin, between the amateur and the "scientist", were never resolved in Hudson. Before leaving Argentina Hudson had sent specimens to the Smithsonian and to the London Zoological Society. The latter published his letters; being published in London from Quilmes seemed unbelievable to Hudson. It is interesting to note that facsimiles of letters to the Smithsonian show Hudson's poor grasp of written English (spelling mistakes, dreadful syntax).[4]

In 1874 Hudson left Argentina for England; both parents dead, the family broken up, the estancia sold. He never returned. He died in 1922. From these dates it can be seen that Hudson lived a long life straddling two continents and two cultures. The core of all his attitudes can be traced to the violence of the culture shock implicit in his move from the wild desolate pampas where he was born (before immigration, before the economic boom) and lived until he was 33 years old on an isolated estancia enclosed in an intensely emotional and puritanical family group to his life in hated London, then the undoubted economic/scientific capital of the world. This change is far more than an ocean crossing; it is a leap from "semi-barbarity" to "ultra-civilization". Hudson viewed his early life in Argentina as "a very long time ago, in a distant land" and thought that a thousand years separated him from then.[5]

Hudson found it hard to cope with this change; he felt out of tune with his times and suffered a continual sense of uprootedness. His conservatism (both as a writer and as a field naturalist) is the result of this exile, of not belonging, of being a misfit. It forced him to seek alternative values. For example we can understand why Hudson laboured so skilfully to ensure that words stayed stuck to the things described, with a minimum of distortion and literary artifice. His simplicity of style transcends "style" for Hudson deliberately asserted his "ignorance", his role of fool, eccentric. A model was William Cobbett (like Hudson from

another age): "Undoubtedly he talked like that, just as he wrote and as he spoke in public, his style, if style it can be called, being the most simple, direct and colloquial ever written." Hudson sought to be natural because he was born a barbarian.[6]

Hudson's life has a clear fold, even wall, in the centre (the 1874 journey). In Argentina Hudson took copious notes about all that he saw, heard, experienced (when he set out to write the story El ombú in 1902 he pulled out his old notes, found pampa dust still in them); he also corresponded with the U.S.A. and England but he didn't publish his first book until 1885 (The Purple Land that England Lost). All his professional writing life was in England. He survived from this (he had no other income); he called it bread and cheese writing. Because of this economic base he was aware of different levels of quality in his writing. He describes his dual mind: what he calls the "walking in boots" mind that plods along laboriously and the "sparrow-hawk mind" that works swiftly in the dark, in flashes and glimpses (the poet in him). This perception guides us to the centre for much of his work corresponds to the boots (and dustbin). Hudson: "If I could have devised some means of recording them (the hawk-like soarings), if I had had an idea of such a thing, they would have presented a strong contrast to the stodgy stuff I am obliged to put into my books since I started book-writing". Writing books seemed a curse. Only at the very end of his life (the 1916 edition of Green Mansions) did Hudson make any money. In spite of his enormous output (24 volumes in the complete edition), it is hard to classify Hudson as a writer; he spread through many genres, avoiding what he most wanted to be (a poet). More than anything he despised the act of writing as it implied being indoors, alienated from nature. None of the possibilities of written expression satisfied him.[7]

Hudson placed poetry at the top of his artistic hierarchy because man's deepest emotions could only be expressed in verse and music. He dreamed of becoming a poet, published poems and always quoted odd lines from poems to intensify his own perceptions in prose. Yet he deliberately silenced the versifier in himself because the conventions of poetry (metre, rhyme) distorted sincerity; poetry was artifice, words taking on their own value (i.e. non-realistic). Further the poet was a bad naturalist (incipient science in its attempt to be objective, deal with facts, saw subjectivity as evil). If what he sought in poetry was the original and fresh perception, not its rhetorical elaboration, then colloquial prose kept a more natural grip on things. Yet Hudson had little time for novels (or romances as he called them); he never valued his own fiction, least of all Green Mansions, the novel that brought him fame and money (too late). This novel was based, not on his own experiences - he never visited Guiana - but on others' travel books and on his idea of what was most South American (tropical jungle) for European readers hypnotized by the mysteries of Africa. Hudson turned to fiction for a complex of motives, part economic, part didactic (to teach and to punish his reader) and partly because behind the mask of fiction he felt freer to day dream, fantasize, be himself.

This can be confirmed by the label Hudson chose for his fictions: romances. Northrop Frye opposes the romance to the novel and claims that a romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' but psychological archetypes; the mood is elegiac and idyllic not realistic. He shows that the romance deals with "subjective intensity", with individuality and characters idealized by revery. Romances are introverted and personal. All this is obviously applicable to Hudson's fictions.[8]

Hudson, who had set out to become an ornithologist, collecting specimens for Burmeister in Buenos Aires, the Smithsonian and the London Zoological Society, quickly realized that his ambition to establish himself as a scientist had lead to a dead-end. He soon came into friction with the new specialists and the scientific establishments. For Hudson was an autodidact and came to loathe "laboratory" scientists, calling himself anachronistically a field naturalist (like Gilbert White). His enemy became the "closet" naturalist who surveyed the world of wild animals from a London study while Hudson patiently trailed his prey for hours in the rain, observing, taking notes. He had arrived in England just as the amateur naturalist was becoming extinct.

Hudson's rejections of poetry, science and fiction squeezed him out of established categories. This is Hudson's own description of his Nature in Downland: "a small unimportant book, not entertaining enough for those who read for pleasure only, not sufficiently scientific and crammed with facts for readers who thirst after knowledge". This in-between position of exclusion forced Hudson to adopt a "primitive" attitude: "uncivilized as I generally am and wish to be". He discovered painfully that he did not belong. Being a colonial from an ignored continent meant bearing a grudge.[9]

In Far Away and Long Ago (1918) Hudson describes the crippling illness that made him turn to books and reading. Books became associated with convalescence; this is the source of Hudson's bitterness about reading indoors. The "primitive" inside his head revolted against reading in an arm chair; rather "chop wood" than read. To read, to think, to analyze is to become separated and alienated from the continuous creative adapting of survival in nature.[10]

The harsh life of the pampas became the mental land of childhood ("spiritual geography" Hudson calls it) where the child is the primitive before the corruption of books, learning and society. Hudson's strange children's fantasy A Little Boy Lost (1905) narrates this myth of a child's freedom: the boy (orphan) without family or home who wanders the pampas, jungle and sierra alone and survives. Hudson preserved the pampas as a consoling daydream of freedom. Not surprisingly his autobiography ends with his adolescence as if life dries up at that age. In London, Hudson was the caged adult tortured by his inability to return to this "freedom" except through the melancholy act of memory and writing. Hudson knew that there was no second time.[11]

Typically, Hudson was ashamed of his origins; he rarely named Argentina except as that "distant land". His desire to pass for an Englishman is obvious. He admired the American Henry James, not for his fiction, but for his "intense Englishness". If England was the land of his dreams, it took him long, difficult years to be accepted and he had to do this by suppressing his background. The "primitive" inside his head did not allow him to forget his colonial roots - we will see this in his fiction.[12]

Hudson's "primitiveness" asserted itself in another way when Hudson wrote, by avoiding sophisticated literary techniques. Hudson sticks closely to the orality of folktale; we hear his voice not read his style. He describes his The Purple Land as a "plain unvarnished account". He identified with Chaucer, sought to be simple, direct, emotional, sincere.[13]

This strategy - return to what is primal, primitive - must be placed within a broader history of rejection; Hudson participates, in spite of his origins, in the Romantic revolt against industrialism mapped by Raymond Williams; he is linked with all those (Wordsworth, R.L. Stevenson, Gauguin, Rimbaud etc,,) who fled the pollution of the satanic mills. In his rambles around England Hudson deliberately avoided the industrial areas; he kept to those rural areas that reminded him of what he already knew (especially the Downs). As a writer about these unspoilt areas he satisfied a yearning for a rural identity that was fading away. This would account for the sentimentalizing of his work; but his bleak vision of nature was no pastoral.[14]

Hudson grew up in the depopulated pampas, learning about life from a seemingly ruthless and inhuman nature. Wisdom he associated with direct experience; only later (illness) was he seduced into books. This reversal of the traditional concept of education (which moves from books to life) colours all Hudson's later attitudes to culture and isolates him from the mainstream of English intellectual life. He embodies the picaresque myth, the university of the pampas. His deep-grained anti-intellectual stance compensates for not belonging to the Mecca of Science. The best image of Hudson's scorn of books comes from Green Mansions: "I pointed to the pulpy mass on the floor, he turned it over with his foot, and then, bursting into a loud laugh, kicked it out, remarking that he had mistaken the object for some unknown reptile that had crawled in out of the rain." The "object" is, of course, a manuscript.[15]

Hudson reversed the usual connotations of the word "civilization". He witnessed the First World War as an outsider, seeing it as a necessary purge of the "loathsome cursed civilization of Europe". He hoped that the war would destroy what he most disliked in England: its caste feeling, its "detestable partisanship", the upper classes. This purge would include hated sedentary life, all forms of needless comforts, domesticity; Hudson lists other bourgeois values like Christmas cards, well-kept lawns, feathered hats, pets, rhododendrons, all "cloying

artificialities" that he never knew on the pampas. Hudson advocated (like Thoreau) austere survival values: shelter, food, self-preservation. Civilization corrupts like a disease. Patagonia represented a "primitive and desolate peace, untouched by man, remote from civilization". Patagonia was the opposite of Clapham Junction.[16]

The Fiction

It is particularily in fiction that Hudson aired his dislike of civilization and its mean achievements. His first published book, The Purple Land that England Lost (the second edition suppressed that England Lost) was written by Hudson during his poorest, most abject days in London, faced with the souring of his dream of "making it" as a naturalist. The novel was his revenge.

Leaving aside the descriptive set pieces where the novel is pretext for observations about nature, curious people, etc. (often the best writing), the novel explores the protagonist's acriollamiento, his becoming South American as Jorge Luis Borges put it. The true Englishman slowly adapts to the Uruguayan countryside, learns to become a savage. As Richard Lamb meanders about Uruguay, observing what is unique to the land, he laments: "I wished that I had been born amongst them and was one of them, not a weary, wandering Englishman overburdened with the arms and armour of civilization". The irony is obvious (Hudson was born amongst them); armour represents the numbed European's atrophied skin, that sensual death that Hudson noticed all round him in London. The White Man's burden was pointless.[17]

At another moment in the novel, following a sudden affective relationship (of the sort that never happened in polite, distancing English society), Lamb again laments: "Could any woman in my own ultra-civilized and excessively proper country inspire me with a feeling like that in so short a time? I fancy not. Oh civilization with your million conventions, soul and body withering prudishness, vain education for the little ones, going to church in best black clothes, unnatural craving for cleanliness, feverish striving after comforts that bring no comfort to the heart, are you a mistake altogether?" Hudson's trick is that he adopts the role of an Englishman becoming conscious of the emptiness of his own culture. This rhetorical sweeping aside of the Victorian way of life is the result of Lamb's friction with primitive (pure, fresh, human) Uruguay. Lamb moans the conquering of nature, progress and technology: all that he offers the "pale mechanician" (the indoor scientist) is "cackling laughter" (life) for joy is missing in civilized society. For Lamb/Hudson civilization had taken the "wrong way". Lamb's image of crowded urban life is that of one vast Clapham Junction "with human creatures moving like trucks and carriages on cast iron, conventional rails". The Newtonian-Darwinian view of the cosmos as a vast clock with iron, mechanical laws created a dehumanized view of man that Hudson, with many others, recoiled from and tried to offer an alternative.[18]

By the end of the novel Lamb has learned to hate the English, especially their jingoism as colonizers. He is glad that England lost its chance of colonizing Uruguay and that it has remained a savage, purple land. I will quote at length:

> "It is not an exclusively British characteristic to regard the people of other nationalities with a certain amount of contempt, but with us, perhaps, the feeling is stronger than with others, or else expressed with less reserve. Let me now at last rid myself of this error, which is harmless and perhaps commendable in those who stay at home, and also very natural, since it is a part of our unreasonable nature to distrust and dislike the things that are far removed and unfamiliar. Let me at last divest myself of these old English spectacles, framed in oak and with lenses of horn, to bury them for ever in this mountain, which for half a century and upwards has looked down on the struggles of a young and feeble people against foreign aggression and domestic foes, and where a few months ago I sang the praises of British civilization, lamenting that it had been planted here and abundantly watered with blood, only to be plucked up again and cast into the sea. After my rambles into the interior, where I carried about in me only a fading remnant of that old time-honoured superstition to prevent the most perfect sympathy between me and the natives I mixed with, I cannot say that I am of that opinion now. I cannot believe that if this country had been conquered and re-colonized by England, and all that is crooked in it made straight according to our notions, my intercourse with the people would have had the wild, delightful flavour I have found in it. And if that distinctive flavour cannot be had along with the material prosperity resulting from Anglo-Saxon energy, I must breathe the wish that this land may never know such prosperity."

It is easy to translate this back into Hudson's revenge against the Victorian English. In spite of all the bloodshed and the violence, Lamb/Hudson feels more <u>authentic</u> in distant Uruguay than drawing-room England. For vitality is lacking, the "healthy play of passions"; the more throats cut in the old Gaucho way the better, Hudson wrote to Cunninghame Graham.[19]

The novel ends with a prayer: "May the blight of our superior civilization never fall on your wild flowers". The irony is obvious; blight/disease/corruption. Wild flowers stand for Christian innocence ("consider the lilies of the field...") which for Hudson is related both to his mother (as we shall see) and his own pre-Darwinian innocence. It stands for a hallowed nature. But Lamb's transformation would not halt the disease of progress. Hudson knew this and hides behind the mask of Lamb to vent his rancour and affirm his South American (primitive/wild) roots. An ironic starting point for this romance about Uruguay

might have been Hudson's irritation with what he read in Darwin's The Voyage of the Beagle: "How different would have been the aspect of this river if English colonists had by good fortune first sailed up the Plata: What noble towns..." One could see the romance as an inversion of Darwin's patriotism. Several further details would support this origin: Darwin's shock at the ignorance and vanity of the criollos who had never seen matches or compasses or knew where London was. He compares the Banda Oriental with Central Africa and cries out: "Who could believe in this age that such atrocities could be committed in a Christian civilized country?" His summing of his impressions of the Argentinians as "sensuality, mockery of all religion, and the grossest corruption" would have inflamed Hudson, himself a despised Argentinian. The inversion is crucial and obvious: all that dismayed Darwin, thrilled Hudson.[20]

This same reversal of civilized and barbarian generates the fiction of Green Mansions (1904), the story of another fugitive from ultra-civilization. The novel opens with an outline of the protagonist Abel's personality. Abel (the shepherd resurrected from his Biblical death) coincides with Hudson's own character: "his manner with women, which pleased them and excited no man's jealousy, his love of little children, of all wild creatures of nature, and of whatsoever was furthest removed from the common material interests and concerns of a purely commercial community. The things which excited other men - politics, sport and the price of crystals - were outside of his thoughts..." To show how flimsy is the mask of narrator, compare this with Hudson on himself in Hampshire Days (1903): "I feel the 'strangeness' only with regard to my fellow-men, especially in towns, where they exist in conditions unnatural to me, but congenial to them...when I look at them, at their pale civilized faces, their clothes, and hear them eagerly talking about things that do not concern me. They are out of my world - the real world. All that they value, and seek and strain after all their lives long, their works and sports and pleasures, are the merest baubles and childish things; and their ideals are all false, and nothing but by-products, or growths, of the artificial life - little funguses cultivated in heated cellars". Hudson was a misfit, at odds with his age, a barbarian if measured against those who felt civilized.[21]

Abel is also alienated from his age. In rejecting civilization, he seeks a purer alternative in savage-life "unadulterated by contact with Europeans". From the example of those naked, lynx-eyed and noiseless (but not idealized) Indians, Abel confesses this ambition: "I tried to imagine myself a simple Guayana savage, with no knowledge of that artificial social state to which I had been born...By an effort of will I emptied myself of my life experience and knowledge..." But here "emptying himself" is really holding on to what is his (Hudson's "savage" roots). And notice how this is an operation of the "imagination" (or fantasy; i.e. that Hudson carries this out in fiction, in his daydreams, but not in practice). Abel journeys into the tropical jungle to learn to become a savage, to peel off the layers of

culture, of armour. By the end of this "romance", after a triumphant duel with the Indian Kwa-Ko, Abel wakes to life. He has learned to adapt to "this law of nature and necessity", alert to his own instincts. His question: "Could a savage born in the forest do more?" defines Hudson's nostalgic ambition and yearned for revenge (make all civilized people re-adapt to "real" life).[22]

This law of necessity is brutal (not pastoral), for Abel realizes that life is perpetual change that only ends in death. However, Abel also learns from his love for Rima how to defy time. After Rima's death (and the death of the possibility of physical union with her) Rima becomes mentalized as a "living memory" usurping (like Hudson's mother after her death) the secret voice of nature inside man. This is life's only consolation for inevitable loss: there is no god, only self-forgiveness, self-absolution (and no happy endings in any of Hudson's fictions). There are no exceptions to this law of nature; there is nothing outside the self; man's precious "culture" is no protection. This is Hudson's myth of self-sufficiency, of man driven back to survival values.

Rima, the bird-girl who so excited the reading public's imagination (Cf. Epstein's sculpture Rima in Hyde Park), is sacrificed and internalized in Abel. Rima is Spanish for rhyme; in the novel she stands for frail, natural harmony, the long-lost original language of the mind that fuses woman's voice, birdsong and music. Poetry (Rima/rhyme) for Hudson was primarily a biological activity, not a cultural one; it was emotional overflow, the sheer pleasure of feeling alive. In this romance Rima is sacrificed to progress, to a civilization deaf to her song, for Rima is the last survivor of a lost race; Rima is the disappearing pRIMitivA, what came first (birdsong, woman/mother's voice, poetry, Spanish) for Hudson too. Rima lives on inside Abel as a memory, a ghost, as anima.[23]

This hoarding of Rima as a memory is complex: part "cherishing" his mother's memory and part Hudson's link with his buried past. This has linguistic roots. Although brought up speaking English, the Hudson family were surrounded by Spanish speakers. This made the Hudson children bilingual. As we mentioned, Hudson's written English was shaky, and although he lost contact with Spanish, the rest of his family stayed on and were assimilated into Argentina (moving from Hudson to Usón); further his sister wrote to him in Spanish. Hudson has described what Spanish (the colonial's suppressed language) meant to him when recalling his favourite Spanish poet, the eighteenth century Meléndez Valdés. Spanish, he argues, is "better suited to the expression of tender sentiments", is "more natural", "less distinct from prose and speech", has an "air of sincerity", is a "natural music"; he calls it "that sublimated emotional language". My underlinings make it obvious why Rima is in Spanish and what she means. Hudson refers to Meléndez Valdés one other time, contrasting natural Spanish poetry with mechanical English poetry. He explains Meléndez Valdés' charm as "due to the beauty of the language they (Spanish poets) wrote in and to the free airy grace of assonants"; free, airy are qualities associated with the birdlike Rima. Meléndez Valdés'

poetry is elf-like, brother to bird, bee and butterfly...but the link between Spanish and Rima is obvious. Rima is the buried presence of his roots; the sadness behind Green Mansions is that Hudson was forced to negate this and bury it secretly as a memory. But it was his lifeline.[24]

We can schematize Green Mansions as a journey: Abel wants to and does lose his civilized armour; he discovers Rima to lose her - in this life there can be no definitive possession - but recuperates her and his real self as a primitive in the psychological sense. To become Rima, a bird-woman, the other (for a man) is to become integrated. According to Hudson, the primitive levels of consciousness are older, deeper, non-scientific and mythical: buried in the jungle of the self.[25]

Hudson labelled (none too originally) his vision of the primitive (not to be confused with the real Pampa Indians that he fought against) inside man as "animism"; a return to an older consciousness that experienced nature as a living, enchanted and communicating entity. But scientific culture and analytic reason had silenced this "musical" or poetic communication. The image of this "secret" dialogue with nature (Hudson talks to nature and interprets this back into human words) is Rima, bird-song. Bird-song was "medicine". Hudson's mother "spoke" to him through her love of wild flowers; a mute undecipherable language.[26]

In Patagonia Hudson experienced the sensation of "savage-thought" (like Abel). In the desert, alone under a clump of trees, Hudson sat and listened to the silence. What we call thinking was a "noisy engine" in his head. In a state of suspense and watchfulness Hudson felt transformed into "someone else", an animal or savage, his ancient self. It was as if he had emerged from a cocoon, transparent, in his "original nakedness". A bird-cry pierced his heart: "we have never heard that cry before" - that first-time sensation of the new-born. Hudson explains:"It is because in our inmost natures, our deepest feelings, we are still one with the savages". The savage (and child) is a metaphor for an illuminatingly fresh response to life. Hudson always struggled to see "the object as a child, emotionally" for emotions have not progressed, only the self-deluding intellect. Emotions are the savages screaming in Victorian Englishmen to be released.[27]

We will end this section with a reading of A Crystal Age (1887), the second book that Hudson published anonymously, in England. As Hudson admitted in a later preface (1906), its seed was a sense of dissatisfaction with the general state of things, but this generalization hides a specific experience that differentiates this utopian romance from those written previously by William Morris, Samuel Butler, Richard Jeffries, etc. For A Crystal Age also deals figuratively with the colonial and revenge.

The story is related in the first person by a Mr. Smith, typical Victorian Londoner, in no way to be identified with

Hudson himself. Smith's first function is ironic; he falls into the "crystal" (read "pure") land to find that his cherished England is totally ignored. Smith is forced to adapt to this green matriarchal world of sexless but fulfilled vegetarian nature worshippers. On this level Hudson is punishing the English arrogance that he so suffered. As we have seen, to re-educate the English was part of his revenge. This is what Hudson says elsewhere about the English: "For it is a fact that the Englishman is endowed with a very great idea of himself, of the absolute rightness of his philosophy of life, his instincts, prepossessions and the peculiar shape and shade of his morality. He is, so to speak, his own standard and measures everybody from China to Peru by it". Hudson could not write "Argentina" because he was quoting ("China...Peru") Dr. Johnson. This "Englishman" is Mr. Smith. In the story Smith has to abandon his tweeds, his boots, his ideas. I quote:"and in my heart I cursed those rusty, thick-soled monstrosities in which my feet were encased". We noted elsewhere that clothes equal respectability equal armour equal sensual atrophy. The cocky Victorian is taught a lesson in sensibility. Slowly Smith learns to curse the very England that he so blindly loved: "Oh, that island, that island! Why can't I forget its miserable customs..."[28]

The logic of Hudson's vengeance surfaces when we see that Hudson was an inverted Smith, forced to adapt to England from his distant, despised Argentina. Hudson knew about being alien and had been <u>shamed</u> into hiding his colonial/primitive past. In this romance Hudson now shames his enemy, Smith, into a similar "recognition of coarseness". Both Hudson and Smith had to re-learn to eat, to "sing". Notice how Smith reflects on his blunder when asked to lead the singing in the new community (the colonial's terror of putting his foot in it): "But when I remembered my own brutal bull of Bashan performance (cf. Psalms xxii 'fat bulls of Basan'), my face, there in the dark, <u>was on fire with shame</u>: and I cursed the <u>ignorant</u>, <u>presumptuous</u> folly I had been guilty of in roaring out that abominable ballad which now had become as hateful to me as my trousers or boots." My underlinings point out how clearly Hudson speaks through Smith. Hudson's own drama was that he realised too late that it was not worth the painful effort of adapting to industrial England.[29]

The substitution that the romance tries to conceal is complete: for industrial England (evil) read green forest (good) with Hudson re-enacting a melancholic return to his own pampa origins (crystal land). The theme of the novel is a parable about the <u>impossibility</u> of a return to a matriarchal origin - and Smith commits unwitting suicide (we will not comment on the forms that Hudson's own "suicide" took). Hudson, in becoming anglicized (his ambition) lost - forever - his own chance of returning; not only was his mother dead, but Argentina had also changed, modernized. This is close to a tragic dilemma.

The harmonious, ecological relationship that Hudson's utopia incarnated had been destroyed by the enemy (call it progress, Victorian science, Darwin); an enemy that Hudson had, from a

distance in Argentina, admired (like a good colonial). In a strange passage in the romance - an interview between Smith and the Mother (the utopia is based on a hive with one breeding Queen) - we read about the Mother's intolerable grief. Maternity is the wound, the origin and the Mother grieves because her sons (European man) have abused her, their own origins, their own nature. The romance repeats the theme of exclusion from the Mother (which Hudson experienced so intensely at the personal level with his mother's slow death) - in other words, the same theme as Green Mansions only projected into the future - and illustrates the bleak impossibility of resurrecting Her, except in fantasy or memory. Mother is a system of values, mother nature.

In the romance Smith learns a new attitude to nature embodied in the Patriarch's sermon (clearly Hudson's) condemning the blindness of Victorian science:

> "Thus by increasing their riches they were made poorer; and, like one who, forgetting the limits that are set to his faculties, gazes steadfastly on the sun, by seeing much they become afflicted with blindness. But they know not their poverty and blindness, and were not satisfied; but were like ship-wrecked men on a lonely and barren rock in the midst of the sea (England?), who are consumed with thirst, and drink of no sweet spring...Thus did they thirst, and drink again, and were crazed; being inflamed with the desire to learn the secrets of nature, hesitating not to dip their hands in blood, seeking the living tissues of animals for the hidden springs of life. For in their madness they hoped by knowledge to gain absolute dominion over nature..."

If we remove the biblical rhetoric and return the patriarch to Hudson the naturalist we can read a direct criticism of neo-darwinism.[30]

By the end of the romance, Smith's England has become a "repulsive dream" and it is here that Smith and Hudson meet. But there is a further level where Smith and Hudson are one. The romance is also a metaphor of adaptation - how to become the other (English for Hudson, "crystal" for Smith). Here is the colonial's trial or passage where he must "prudently hold his tongue" or be found out. I quote in full:

> "Of course I was surrounded with mysteries, being in the house but not of it, to the manner born; and I had already arrived at the conclusion that these mysteries could only be known to me through reading ...for it seemed rather a dangerous thing to ask questions, since the most innocent interrogatory might be taken as an offence, only to be expiated ...To be reticent, observant, and studious was a

safe plan."

My underlinings make this confession sadly obvious. Hudson's safe plan was so effective that he ended up being "accepted". This was his final, tragic loss; his grabbing hold of memory (of childhood, mother, the pampas...) as his only consolation.[31]

This emotional paradox is revealed in the way that music affects Smith (and stirs up the buried pastin Hudson). All the dead that Smith knew "came back to me, until the whole room seemed filled with a pale, shadowy procession, moving past me to the sound of the mysterious melody. Through all the evening it came back, in a hundred bewildering disguises, filling me with a melancholy infinitely precious, which was yet almost more than my heart could bear". This is the conflictual centre thinly disguised in fiction: Hudson the bewildered exile, torn apart by irreconcilable desires.[32]

At another moment in the romance, Smith is humiliated and can only take his revenge when alone in nature. I quote: "To this sequestered spot I had come to indulge my resentful feelings; for here I could speak out my bitterness aloud, if I felt so minded, where there were no witnesses to hear me...now I was sitting quietly by myself, safe from observation, safe even from that sympathy my bruised spirit could not suffer". With these insights Hudson describes Smith's rancour; the colonial's "bruised spirits". But it is then that Smith hears a message that he intuits from the nature around him and that consoles his bitterness. This solitary act of bitterness reveals itself as a metaphor for the act of writing the romance (itself a solitary act, disguising Hudson's own digested bitterness). This romance - "indulge resentful feelings" - narrates a further metaphor of an "intruder in sacred grounds - a barbarian whose proper place is in the woods" where it is idle to translate the intruder as the alien Hudson, sacred ground as England with its return to the moral superiority of being a barbarian (he who does not speak the right language). In the romance, Smith discovers (to his surprise, not Hudson's) that the English are the "savages" and "squaws" and the crystal-land barbarians the deeply civilized. The romance, for all its techniques of autobiographical refraction - plot, narrator etc., - barely veils Hudson's confused confession. But Hudson was also aware of this: in an inscription to a copy of A Crystal Age he admits that it is a romance in form only, being nothing more than "an expression of weariness at our too complex system of life, and the modernism which sums up variance with not a few of our finer feelings". In the end Hudson found his strength (being a barbarian) from exactly that which had shamed him.[33]

A Reading of Darwin/Death of mother

We will now look at another form of the conflict between colonial and metropolis where the evidence is literal, not disguised in fiction. But the plot is the same and concerns the death of Hudson's mother and his reading of Darwin's The Origin

of Species in the same year (1859). The obvious link between these two events is Hudson's mother's "cherished beliefs" in religion. Hudson's mother was from a strict puritan family, was a Bible reading fundamentalist who possessed the characteristic of silently assuming all guilts and conflicts without "confessing", an extreme reticence that all Hudson's friends found in Hudson. Both mother and son loathed confessing intimacies. Spoken words did not bond mother and son. Instead they communicated through another language. Mother and son "spoke" through their shared passion for wild flowers; a shy, roundabout way of communicating that Hudson claimed built a "secret bond". That this has religious undertones is evident: "Her feeling for them (wild flowers) was little short of adoration. Her religious mind appeared to regard them as little voiceless messengers from the Author of our being and of Nature or as divine symbols of a place and beauty beyond our powers to imagine". The link between wild flowers and Christianity has already been noted. For Hudson "nature" became personified in his mother (and his dead mother in nature, like Rima for Abel), hinting at some other but impossible harmony communicated through "voiceless messengers".[34]

For Hudson the mother/son relationship differed from all others in its intensity; the one "unchangeable" thing in life. Here then is the "secret" religion that was the lens between Hudson and the world, a mute but deeply moving love for his (dead) mother. Hudson's shocked reading of Charles Darwin did not disturb this relationship for with his mother's death, she became buried inside her son as a vivid memory. This act of internalizing defied painful change and was the source of Hudson's "sacred passion of the past". Hudson's mother melted into his mental world because as a physical presence she would not return from death. Death is absolute - we see here how close Abel's love for Rima is to Hudson's for his mother. Many times Hudson has described what he means by memory. Internalizing an image is his only attempt at forging "permanence"; he creates "shining, fadeless images in my mind, which are my treasures and best possessions". He gives his life its emotional meaning thanks to his "invisible and intangible album" (memory); memory is an "inner magical world", a "secret perennial joy".[35]

From the grief of his mother's death and an understanding into the inevitable temporal movement of evolution, Hudson learned another structuring constant of his work; the irreversibility of time, the inevitability of change. Hudson never returned "home" to the pampas because there was no "home" to return to. He learned this from a gaucho whose widowed mother had died. The gaucho refused to accept her death and prayed daily for her return. He would climb onto a gable and watch the horizon. Hudson concludes the story: "'And she never came, and at last I knew that she was dead and that we were separated for ever - that there is no life after death.' His story pierced me to the heart." Hudson's reaction tells all.[36]

According to Abel in Green Mansions God is "unlistening, unhelpful as the stars" for "there is no intercession". This utter finality points to Hudson's melancholia. Much of his fiction is grounded in the taboo of no return. In the romance Rima will not recover her lost mother and Abel will not live harmoniously with Rima. Given the flow of change there is no stability. The only return to mother/Rima is in the mind, a secret invisible relief. When Abel discovers that Rima has been burned alive, he seeks out the spot in the jungle. I quote: "I looked long at the vast funeral tree...Having resolved to sift and examine the entire heap, I at once set out about my task...At noon the following day I found the skeleton, or, at all events, the larger bones, rendered so fragile by the fierce heat...that they fell to pieces when handled. But I was careful - how careful! - to save these last sacred relics, all that was left of Rima! - kissing each white fragment as I lifted it...I took my treasure home". The language cruelly reveals the obsession: sacred relic, kissing, treasure. Abel's final communication with Rima; a "tender spiritual music...suggesting more than words to the soul." Abel and Hudson share the same veneration for the past.[37]

Hudson's gripping short story El ombú embodies all that I have outlined as Nicandro, old gaucho, narrates his deliberately disjointed history of the cursed house under the ombú tree. The fragmentary quality is in keeping with Hudson's vision: "The memories of that time are few and scattered, like the fragments of tiles and bricks and rusty iron which one may find half-buried among the weeds, where the house once stood. Fragments that once formed part of the building. Certain events, some faces and some voices...". This image of how time fragments seeming solidity (a house) generates the meandering story through powerful anecdotes, like a grotesque surrealist collage (Hudson warned his English reader that he would find the tale "strange and incredible"). We are given intense physical details - barefeet monks with spurs, a game of El Pato during an invasion, English soldiers chucking away their blankets, a general driven mad by bathing in the hot blood of a live bull whose back was split open for a cure...Structuring this flow of anecdotes is Hudson's hopeless vision of happiness on earth. The reader expects some relief, but Hudson is laconically relentless: a grieving mother is written off thus: "But he came not (her son), and she died without seeing him". Nobody returns to a former happiness: Santos Ugarte never resees his farm (and goes mad); Paulo drops dead after a pointless heroic trip back to his family; a mother loses her only son; a novia loses the love of her life. There is a dreadful emotional simplicity about this destruction of happiness and several characters take refuge in madness. Hudson's message: "But into every door sorrow must enter, sorrow and death that comes to all men; and every house must fall at last".[38]

Hudson's own reaction to this numbing pain can be likened to the mad, expectant novia at the end of El ombú: "And every time she catches sight of a flock moving like a red line across the lake she cries out with delight. That is her one happiness -

her life". Hudson's only relief was to look outwards (as a naturalist) and empty himself of personality, culture, history through his eyes and gaze. Gazing as therapy. Beauty for Hudson is always "vanishing", as is happiness; Hudson creates a mental Rima, a divine bird of the imagination who nevertheless remains quite unobtainable, like return to his mother, childhood, home.[39]

The link with Charles Darwin (who passed some of the most exciting years of his life in Argentina) clarifies. The impact of Hudson's reading of The Origin of Species (lent to him by a brother returned from England) on the pampas at the age of eighteen drove an abyss between his mother's simple beliefs and his own. Hudson echoed the many celebrated public debates about Darwinism and its hardening into dogma (concisely described by G.B. Shaw in his preface to Back to Methuselah) as a silent feud with his mother and his mother-in-himself and struggled to heal this rift all his life.[40]

Hudson has twice related the story of this first reading: he stressed how obvious the hypothesis of natural selection seemed, as it confirmed a mass of isolated perceptions that he had noted down in his wanderings about Argentina. More telling is Hudson's resistance to Darwin's amassing of evidence. He confessed that he was "able to resist its teachings for years, solely because I could not endure to part with a philosophy of life, if I may so describe it, which could not logically be held, if Darwin was right, and without which life would not be worth living". This is crucial. This conflict between his philosophy of life and Darwinism knotted itself deep inside Hudson, who carried it with him to England and though it weakened with time, it never faded. I quote: "Insensibly and inevitably I had become an evolutionist, albeit never wholly satisfied with natural selection as the only and sufficient explanation of the change of the forms of life".

We will explore this dissatisfaction. It is not hard to guess what Darwin must have represented to Hudson living in Argentina. It is safe to agree with D.E. Allen's assertion that the publication of the Origin of Species was the scientific event of the century. Because of this impact, Darwin was slowly converted into a myth, a representative of the ideals of Victorian science, a British Institution. This separation of the myth Darwin (Darwinism) from the enigmatic historical person leads back to Hudson who could only see the former. Inevitably Hudson created an enemy. This can be exposed by briefly comparing their similarities. Darwin (like Hudson) worked outside the scientific establishment (he had joined the Beagle as an amateur, he never held a university chair); Darwin was no "closet-naturalist" (especially during his Beagle years). Both were stimulated by reading Gilbert White to become naturalists. Darwin was an equally acute observer, emotionally identified with his observations (J. Huxley); Darwin also wrote well. But this comparison between them as naturalists makes Hudson fade into a footnote. It is ironic to contrast their Patagonian experiences. Hudson's Idle Days in Patagonia records a failure; Hudson had set out to

discover virgin lands, but shot himself accidentally in the leg, though he did achieve his dream of finding a new bird species, cnipolegos hudsoni. Darwin explored Patagonia with all the thrill of being the "first man" in many places. His trail is littered with his own name; new species found, mountains, towns... Hudson could not compete with Darwin's success, he could only misrepresent him, confusing the retiring man Darwin with neo-Darwinism of immutable, mechanical laws and in the process silencing Darwin's own painful scruples. Yet it was due to this misrepresentation, this colonial outsider's resent, that Hudson developed an alternative, more "feminine" view of nature and man's place in it.[41]

Darwin was an ambiguous figure for Hudson: he represented the man of science that Hudson wanted to become, being the magnet that pulled him to England to rival Darwin (J. Frederick). He was also the destroyer of his "philosophy of life". This ambiguity surfaces in an insolent letter (Alicia Jurado's expression) that Hudson wrote to Sclater that was read aloud at the Zoological Society and published in its proceedings (24th March, 1870) before Hudson left for England. In the letter Hudson cites Darwin's "erroneous" description of a woodpecker adapted to a treeless habitat; he blames this on Darwin's hasty passage across the pampas (in Darwin's Journal) whereas he was a native. Hudson toys with the possibility that Darwin "purposively wrested the truth in order to prove his theory" but rejects this. Instead he uses Darwin's example against Darwin: "this bird affords an argument against the truth of Mr. Darwin's hypothesis." For this carpintero does inhabit trees; Hudson sees one on an ombú outside his window as he is writing the letter. He concludes with a repudiation of natural selection: "But, in truth, natural selection has done absolutely nothing for our woodpecker". This our is the Argentinian claiming superior territorial knowledge over the intruder, Darwin.[42]

On November 1st Darwin deigned to answer this criticism from an unknown naturalist in La Plata. According to his son and editor, Francis Darwin, he had decided not to enter into discussions with his critics, but here "departed from his rule". In the note Darwin describes how well he was acquainted with the woodpecker in Uruguay; he supports this by citing Azara and Molina and claims that a slight modification had taken place in the bird's habits. Darwin did not invent anything; in fact he refers to Hudson's limited view (La Plata only) and admits that his only mistake was to write "never" climbs trees. He denies "inaccuracy" and rejects even a hint that he might have twisted the truth to suit his theory (clearly a sore spot for Darwin). Darwin ends with a dignified reproval: "I should be loath to think that there are many naturalists who, without any evidence, would accuse a fellow-worker of telling a deliberate falsehood to prove his thesis."[43]

However, Hudson's overhasty attack denied him the future possibility of becoming a "fellow-worker" (Haymaker claims that Darwin's son refused to meet Hudson); Hudson had not abided by

the gentlemanly rules of the scientific game. Yet in the sixth edition of The Origin of Species, Darwin emends his text to include Hudson's objection about the pampas woodpecker. He calls Hudson an "excellent observer" but adds: "Mr. Hudson is a strong disbeliever in evolution...", touching on Hudson's sore spot. All this before Hudson left Buenos Aires.[44]

All through Hudson's subsequent published works (1885-1922) there is a quibbling with Darwin. This attitude is exaggerated by the irony of distance (spatial, temporal), the time-clash between Hudson's Gilbert Whitian notion of the accurate observing amateur and the rise of the professional laboratory scientist; a further wedge splitting him from his dream of emulating Darwin (see D.E. Allen, Loren Eiseley). This further contributed to Hudson's resent, to classing himself as an outsider, painfully marginalized; as he said about his Nature in Downland: "not scientific enough...".[45]

The rhetoric of Hudson's involvement with Darwinism conditions his perceptions of the natural world with a phrase such as "It is hard for a good Darwinian to believe that..." implying that he is a "bad" one who with a concrete exception demolishes a theory. Hudson's answer to Darwinism (a hypothesis) was experience. But this was rarely a relief as Darwin was usually right: "We have it all in Darwin".[46]

Most of Hudson's criticism of Darwin falls into two groups. He criticizes Darwin's assumption of instinctive fear in animals (of man, predators) as "utterly erroneous". Against the theory, his experience:"My own observations point to a contrary conclusion, and I may say that I have had unrivalled opportunities for studying the habits of young birds..." Hudson's telling adjective (who rivals who?) cannot stand as scientific argument, as Darwin could have claimed the same. Referring to monkeys, Hudson argues that Darwin confused instinctive fear with learned fear. For Hudson fear is environmentally learned, not genetically coded. He accuses Darwin of employing the "slightest evidence", of skimming over "unfathomable questions"; Darwin's optimistic "laying it down", leads to "false inferences". Hudson negates the science that can "explain it all".[47]

Secondly Hudson belittles Darwin's idea of Sexual Selection (H.J. Massingham deemed Hudson's views as "very damaging"). The origin of music and song cannot be traced to female competition for mating with a male. Hudson finds music not only functional but also expressive of certain emotions; its origins are "mysterious". Darwin's assertion is "ridiculous". He charges Darwin with the type of argument that Darwin had used against Hudson ("strong disbeliever..."): "He was devoted to his theory of Natural Selection..." with the hint that devotion is blindness. Natural Selection cannot "explain" music for song is often gratuitous, without purpose; just intense elation, outburst of mad joy. Here Hudson offers more than his own experience; an embryonic ecological vision: "How unfair the argument is (Darwin's) based on these carefully selected cases gathered from all regions

of the globe, and often not properly reported, is seen when we turn from the book to nature and closely consider the habits and actions of all species inhabiting any one district". Against the utilitarian view of evolution (presupposing purpose, the teleological Victorian scientific dream), Hudson offers something more deeply satisfying because less mechanistic. Here he sides with A.R. Wallace: the humming bird's colours are not the result of sexual selection, but superabundant vitality. The link with Wallace is revealing: Wallace reviewed Hudson's The Naturalist in La Plata, called it a "masterpiece". But the final comment on Hudson's quibbles is chronological; Hudson was writing years after Darwin's death.[48]

Another example of Hudson's attitude to Darwin emerges in an exchange of letters with his friend and first biographer, Morley Roberts. The dates of these letters (1920) point to the heyday of neo-darwinism so vividly described by G.B. Shaw in his long preface to Back to Methuselah (1921). Like Shaw, Hudson also turned to Samuel Butler as pioneer of an alternative to this dogma or new "church". Butler was by nature independent and heretical; he had also experienced life in the colonies (New Zealand) and been awoken by his first reading of Darwin. Like Hudson, Butler valued himself as the 'shrewd' amateur attacking the gullible establishment. Both were outsiders. Hudson wrote: "Minimize what Butler did as much as you like, it was he and not Herbert Spencer or anyone else who smashed the Darwin idol and finally compelled the angels of science to creep cautiously...". In 1920 Hudson echoed Bishop Wilberforce's identical words of the famous Oxford debate with T.H. Huxley ("smash the Darwin idol") of sixty years before (1860). Hudson rejoiced in Butler's "acute reasoning" and "splendid independence". Butler, in his controversy with Darwin (examined in detail by Nora Barlow) spoke for Hudson's frustrations, for the amateur and autodidact who still at 79 felt rejected by Darwin and the English hierarchies that he represented.[49]

To seek out the blind spots, the minor flaws was Hudson's response to a theory that divided him painfully. It is not a generous attitude and reveals as much about Hudson's anger as about natural selection. Hudson had no alternative theory; just pinpricks, details. For example: "Darwin's conjecture that the extreme violence of the pampero...prevented trees from growing, is now proved to have been ill-founded, since the introduction of eucalyptus...". Note the irony behind this example: "Darwin in earlier years appears not to have possessed the power of reading men with that miraculous intelligence always distinguishing his researches concerning other and lower orders of beings". Or, again mocking Darwin's views on the gauchos: "Darwin, writing in praise of the gaucho in his voyage, says that if a gaucho cuts your throat he does it like a gentleman: even as a small boy I knew better...". I knew better: this condenses Hudson's frustrations.[50]

Hudson's misrepresenting of Darwin leads us on to Hudson's

strength: not as a theorist, but as a writer. When he complains that Darwin is deaf to birdsong(and all natural melodies) he implies that he is alive to this music. Hudson's writing will still be read, not as scientific, nor as social document but as a surprising concordance between word and thing that raises Hudson out of his petty prejudices and makes him a poet-naturalist (like Thoreau). Hudson appreciated that creative overflow in nature (colour, song, fertility, exceptions...). The beautiful songster from Argentina, the calandria, was compared by Darwin to a sedge warbler (not a nightingale, not a blackbird). Darwin's unconscious condescension hurt Hudson: "Darwin's few words were especially remembered and rankled most in my mind". What better word than rankle to describe relations between colony and metropolis?[51]

The reading and assimilating of Darwin had become the watershed in Hudson's naturalist's ambitions. There were "pre-Darwinian" days and his own post-Darwinian ones. Hudson could not escape this revaluation of origins and its mechanism: "Thus I came out of the contest a loser...". This contest was both personal and cultural. The result was a complete and shattering revision of man's place in the natural order. From the benign eighteenth century views of natural government, the cosmos as well-ordered clock (L. Eiseley), came a sombre view of nature's historicity. Man frighteningly saw himself as impermanent, a speck in a process that defies rational understanding. Hudson often indulged in what we could call Darwinian fantasies, a dream of the barbarian origins so "smoothly suppressed" in Victorian England. Hudson called it "the whole ancient dreadful tragedy of man on earth". It is not accidental that these fantasies often occurred at Land's End - the finger of England pointing out to sea (the origins) and towards the Americas ("barbarie"). Here Hudson evoked "this dreadful unintelligible and unintelligent power that made us"; he personified this terrible aspect of nature as "all-powerful and everlasting, creator and slayer of all things that live, of all beauty and sweetness and compassion" (could he be thinking of the death of his mother?). It was part of Hudson's revenge that he enjoyed reminding his readers how close - on an evolutionary time-scale - they still were to savages. It is this proximity with the animal that animated Hudson.[52]

Nature, Hudson's solace and medicine, became the stage for this drama. Hudson, like so many others, was forced to devise his own protection against this bleak vision of man. As a proto-scientist he had no alternative but to exaggerate what was unique to himself: his anachronistic origins, his Argentinian roots, memory. The conversion of Darwin's theory into that optimistic Victorian myth of progress, the belief in man as the justification of the evolutionary struggle, was not available to Hudson. He saw that technology destroyed exactly that which granted him momentary relief - wild, untamed nature (South America). Hudson: "We have had to learn, not without reluctance and a secret bitterness, that even our best and highest qualities have their small beginnings in these lower beings...". His search for something "higher" in the mind (Rima) allowed him to evade the

"intolerable insult" implied in Darwin's theory of man's origins. By the end of his life, Hudson (the 'loser") realised that Darwin had become accepted, another dogma ("no longer an offence"). If first he rebuked Darwinism for its novelty, he later denigrated it for its dogmatism. Hudson felt closer to the "truth", closer to the crude, savage origins and thus more in touch with the life-force permeating matter. He embodied a "vision of a savage prehistoric land of which we are truer natives than we can ever be of this smooth sophisticated England" (isn't this Argentina?). His aversion led him to a "truer" view of the inter-locked, ecological world. He defines his credo:"To know the creature, undivested of life or liberty or of anything belonging to it, it must be seen with an atmosphere, in the midst of the nature in which it harmoniously moves and has its being, and the image it casts on the observer's retina and mind must be identical with its image in the eye and mind of the other wild creatures that share the earth with it." This Hudson always knew as a boy; Darwinism did not teach him this, it reminded him of it. This we could call a defence of ecology: " We are bound as much as ever to facts; we seek them more and more diligently, knowing that to break from them is to be carried away by vain imaginations. All the same, facts in themselves are nothing to us: they are important only in their relations to other facts and things - to all things, and the essence of things, material and spiritual." This antidote to factual, objective science turns on relationships that include the observer. By refuting Darwin, Hudson affirmed the sincerity of his own experiences. By separating himself from 'indoor" scientists, he affirmed a more emotional view of science. The laboratory quality of nineteenth century science induced in Hudson a claustrophobia; he preferred the outdoor or South American variant. Hudson was not a loser; he held on to his view of a maternal nature; or rather he held on to both views, the conflict generating his energy.[53]

We have outlined an impossible conflict (between Hudson's mother and Darwin) that tore Hudson apart. His deep melancholy is the expression of this cultural/historical trap. But only spasmodically does it surface out of his privacy into his texts. Usually it must be read behind the fiction, between the lines. I will list some examples; once in a letter he admitted "with a pang" to a brother in Argentina that he had taken the wrong turning in life by leaving for England but that it was too late to go back on this decision; to a sister in Argentina he wrote that he felt sick with desire to return 'home". Hudson suffered a vertigo of despair when he smelled a familiar flower: "I grow sick with longing, an exile and stranger in a strange land". This strange land is England, land of his desires. He feels suffocated, cries out: " Let me go back to the place I came from." The sensation that he is lost summarizes this emotion: "to know for one brief moment that he was lost forever", but note the 'brief"; to dwell on this separation was intolerable "because a whole ocean and the impassable ocean separated me from my people". When Hudson thinks of Argentina he feels a twinge, melancholia is a sharp pinch. This he suffers when writing about spiders: "It made me miserable to think that I had left, thousands

of miles away, a world of spiders exceeding in size, variety of shape and beauty and richness of colouring those I found here - surpassing them, too, in the marvellousness of their habits and that ferocity of disposition which is without a parallel in nature. I wished I could drop this burden of years so as to go back to them, to spend half a lifetime in finding out some of their fascinating secrets. Finally, I envied those who in future years will grow up in that green continent, with this passion in their hearts, and have the happiness which I had missed". Hudson is not really writing about spiders, but elaborating his own myth: South America as vital, marvellous, fresh, rich, wild...all that was absent in his self-imposed exile. It is through emotion that Hudson betrays this myth. Hard as he tries to "shut my mind resolutely against a thought", he undergoes a "monstrous betrayal", a "deep melancholy", an "intolerable sadness" and only when he sees through the futility of his dream of "making it" in England does he discover who he really is, but too late. All his insights into nature, culture, Darwinism, himself, reveal a radical "impermanence": "our maker and mother mocks at our efforts - at our philosophical refuges, and sweeps them away with a wave of emotion". Watching a parrot, Hudson admits this: "I wish I could be where he is living his wild life; that I could have again a swarm of parrots, angry at my presence, hovering above my head and deafening me with their outrageous screams. But I cannot go to those beautiful distant places - I must be content with an image and a memory of things seen and heard...". The block "I cannot" is that Hudson had no wish to heal the division between mother and Darwin, between England and Argentina. It is congruent that Hudson once envisaged death as a return to the pampas, that "illimitable wilderness".[54]

Hudson can only return to his "broken" home through tantalic memory's vivid images. He admits: "I am glad that I shall never revisit them (the lagoons of the pampas), that I shall finish my life thousands of miles removed from them, cherishing to the end in my heart the image of a beauty which has vanished from earth". To internalize an image - "in my heart" - is Hudson's only salvation (and this is art); in his mind's eye he holds on to his mother, Rima, childhood. Hudson preserved his Argentinian childhood roots through life's meanderings as a bitter ecstasy. To Morley Roberts he confessed: "Perhaps I may say that my life ended when I left South America".[55]

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23. On Rima, see J. Alcorn footnote 8.

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