Impressions of Wessex:

Light, Perspectives and Landscape

in Six Hardy Novels

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Abstract

My thesis is based on the characteristics of Hardy's pictorial art. I believe that his treatment of landscape, light, and perspectives helps to shape our perceptions of character, mood, and motive. The six Wessex novels that I have selected for discussion on this subject are, *Under the Greenwood Tree, The Woodlanders, The Return of the Native, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Two on a Tower,* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Each of these reveal identifiable artistic techniques and influences that contribute to the visual intensity of the writing.

The quality of the imagery owes much to the nuances of light and shadow, colour and monochrome, mist and radiance. Perspectives are manipulated as carefully as the light effects and include techniques such as the window and door framing, the high and low vantage-points, the foregrounding and downscaling of the human figure, the close-range focus and diffused distance shots.

A wide range of European artists have, implicitly, or explicitly, influenced Hardy throughout the novels – the most discernible being the Dutch School, the Impressionists, Rembrandt, and Turner. His tendency to rely on artists and artistic techniques has provoked much critical debate. The merits and flaws of the aesthetic distancing and the tableaux-like fixity in many of the scenes are recurring areas of contention.

Our appraisal of landscapes, constitutive or metaphorical, is also a topic for debate, especially in our examination of *The Return of the Native.* We observe throughout the narratives contrasting Romantic and anti-Romantic presentations of landscape that point to a creative tension within the writing. The characters' relationship with their environment emerges as a central theme. It becomes apparent that that those who interact

naturally with the landscape are shown to be light-suffused, while those who rebel against it are depicted in shadow.

Our study of the landscapes leads us to question the role of Nature itself. It can appear as being indifferent to mankind or, as an agent, sympathetic or hostile, seeking to advance or undermine the interests of the characters. Hardy's axis is finely poised, so that fleeting glimpses of pastoral scenes in sequestered forests or sunlit valleys become (inevitably) darkened by lurking shadows of decaying and distorted vegetation.

Hardy suggests that the novels should be regarded, first and foremost, as impressions. We are left with illuminated moments - landscapes, enhanced by light and perspectives - a series of memorable impressions.

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Contents

Introduction

Thomas Hardy's visual effects –the varying perspectives, the light and colour emphasis, the landscapes, – can be best summarised by Joan Grundy's term, 'literary pictorialism'.[1] In this thesis, I shall explore the ways in which our perceptions of characters, action, and mood are shaped by such effects.

Given that Hardy intended his novels to be regarded as a series of impressions, it is not surprising that he relies on techniques and influences borrowed from a wide range of artists.[2] Although there is, according to Alastair Smart, a 'profound and far-reaching effect exerted by the whole heritage of European art upon Hardy's thought and sensibility', there is enough evidence to identify more specifically the seminal influences of the Dutch School, Rembrandt, Turner, and the Impressionists.[3] Some critics, such as Lloyd Fernando and J. B. Bullen, believe that the static quality of the scenes and the allusions to artists and paintings are too contrived and therefore detract from the vitality of the characters. Fernando argues that 'His [Hardy's] pictures are less pictures of reality than pictures of pictures' and that 'in place of incident we have tableaux; in place of insight into character we have, quite simply, fine writing.'[4] While Grundy insists that Hardy's art is such that, although we can recognise 'the bloom on the picture', we can still believe it to be real, Bullen opposes her view, saying that the aesthetic distancing is 'a deliberate and anti-naturalistic device'.[5] The numerous, and sometimes cumbersome, references to paintings are justified by other critics, such as Ian Gregor, who sees these

allusions as intended pendulum swings from the dramatic to the contemplative.[6] The strongest defense of these anti-naturalistic devices comes from Hardy himself:

> Art is a disproportioning – (i.e., distorting, throwing out of proportion) – of realities, to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities, which, if merely copied or reported inventorially, might possibly be observed, but would more probably be overlooked. Hence 'realism' is not art. [7]

In order to demonstrate Hardy's strengths, both in the visual rendering of physical landscape, and in the use of such landscape as metaphor, I have selected six of the Wessex novels – *Under the Greenwood Tree, The Woodlanders, The Return of the Native, A Pair of Blue Eyes, Two on a Tower,* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. We shall examine the expansive sweep of Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*, the seascapes in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, the astronomical 'skyscape' in *Two on a Tower*, the enclosed, pastoral, woodland settings of *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *The Woodlanders*, and the pastoral and anti-pastoral contrasts of Talbothays and Flintcomb-Ash respectively, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The opening chapter of *The Return of the Native* and the cosmic expanses in *Two on a Tower* are the two extremes that flank the central area that we will be exploring. The chapters in this thesis follow a sequence that juxtaposes the two 'pastoral' novels at the beginning, before proceeding on to a very different landscape in *The Return of the Native*, followed by two of Hardy's 'second division' novels (*A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Two on a Tower*) with their sea and sky settings. The final chapter on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* demonstrates more fully Hardy's pastoral and anti-pastoral theme.

Whether it is a sequestered, pastoral setting, or a more gaunt and comfortless expanse of heath or field, it is the presence of the human figure, or, at least, the history of human connection, that imbues the landscape with meaning for Hardy:

> The method of Boldini, the painter of "The Morning Walk" in the French Gallery two or three years ago (a young lady beside an ugly blank wall on an ugly highway) – of Hobbema, in his view of a road with formal lopped trees and flat tame scenery – is that of infusing emotion into the baldest external objects either by the presence of a human figure among them, or by mark of some human connection with them.....the beauty of association is entirely superior to the beauty of aspect. [8]

Perhaps the radical transition from the picturesque features of *Under the Greenwood Tree* to the more modern, unromanticised beauty of Egdon, is best understood in the context of Hardy's comparison of Bonington and Turner:

> After looking at the landscape by Bonington in our drawing room (given to Mrs Hardy by T.A.Woolner, R.A., the sculptor) I feel that Nature is played out as a beauty, but not as a Mystery. I don't want to see landscapes, i.e. scenic paintings of them, because I don't want to see the original realities – as optical effects, that is. I want to see the deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imaginings. The 'simply natural' is interesting no longer. The much-decried, mad late-Turner rendering is now necessary to create my interest.[9]

It soon becomes clear that the landscape is never intended to be a mere backdrop. This view is expressed emphatically by D.H.Lawrence when he says, in relation to *The Return of the Native*, that Egdon is the real protagonist of the novel:

> This is a constant revelation in Hardy's novels: that there exists a great background, vital and vivid, which matters more than the people who move upon it. Against the background of dark, passionate Egdon, of the leafy, sappy passion and sentiment of the woodlands, of the unfathomed stars, is drawn the lesser scheme of lives. [10]

There are many instances where the landscape appears to reflect or evoke mood. A Hardy novel often opens with a road and a figure travelling along it (as in the opening

chapters of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Two on a Tower*, and the second chapter of *The Return of the Native*). As we chart the characters' journey, physically and allegorically, the symbolic value of the road becomes evident (the movement appears most systematically in *Tess*). Throughout the novels that we shall be examining, a pattern emerges whereby the characters who willingly interact with their surroundings – for example, Thomasin - are seen to be at harmony with themselves, whereas those, like Eustacia, who rebel against the environment, appear fundamentally discontent. Then, there are those who, with a misguided atavism, return home, only to find that instead of being able to re-integrate, they feel dislocated – at odds with their indigenous environment, and also with the more sophisticated society they have left behind. In a sense, Tess's dislocation is different; a victim both of paternal pretensions to aristocracy, and of circumstance - i.e. Prince's death - she is uprooted from her childhood home and propelled towards her entanglement with Alec. She is, moreover, a victim of her own sense of personal responsibility and this, coupled with her natural passivity, traps her within a final and destructive impasse.

The painterly devices that feature most frequently in the narratives are *staffage* and *doorkijke*, and these have a direct bearing on our evaluation of characters in relation to one another and to their environment. Hardy's adaptation of the downscaling technique – *staffage* – whereby, at the extreme, the human figure is reduced to a speck, is effective in both an artistic and a psychological sense. While, more usually, artists, such as Jacob van Ruisdael, introduce diminished figures to humanise the scene, Hardy takes this device a stage further, and exaggerates the presence of the landscape by comparing it with the diminution of the individual. Thus, we are left with a sense of the insignificance

of human endeavour, in comparison with the continuous and eternal processes of Nature. Sometimes, it is the horizontal sweep as much as the vertical grandeur that can effectively diminish the individual, as in the scenes of Flintcomb-Ash and Egdon.

Hardy's perspectives are often strategic, as when Fitzpiers, riding off to meet his lover, recedes into the distance. Just as the disconsolate Grace watches her husband's form disappearing into the distant horizon, there emerges the figure of Giles. In the onward movement of the novel, the synchronized downscaling of Fitzpiers and the foregrounding of Giles is pivotal in terms of plot and of psychology. Hardy capitalizes on the dramatic moment, and his method of alternating diffused distance shots with zoom lens magnification is strongly cinematic. A striking example of this technique is in the famous Cliff scene in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, in which we see that Knight's perceptions are not only affected spatially by his inverted viewpoint, but also temporally, by his confrontation with the trilobite. A similar phenomenon is experienced in *Two on a Tower*, where the skies overhead are more of an all-encompassing presence than a mere ceiling. These shifts of perspectives have a psychological impact when the individual is perceived thus, within a global view. Coming at Hardy's art from a different angle, W. H. Auden's apposite reference to a 'hawk's vision' highlights the motive and achievement of the *staffage* technique.[11]

Equally effective, is the Dutch School's framing technique, whereby the action of the interior is glimpsed in the light shafting through windows or open doors. Such frames are so characteristic of the Dutch genre painting, that a special word – *doorkijke* - was devised to describe it. This type of framing often implies social distancing. Consequently, we find ourselves basing our appraisal of characters such as Giles Winterbourne (*The*

Woodlanders) and Dick Dewy (*Under the Greenwood Tree*) on the fact that they are seen from lowly standpoints, and often in shadow, gazing up at the windows of women who are elevated, socially or educationally, above them. Hardy's credo, 'To see in half and quarter views the whole picture, to catch from a few bars the whole tune' can be appreciated in the *doorkijke* context.[12] It might also relate to the shift of focus that Penelope Vigar refers to, whereby symbols are used to imply broader meanings.[13] In *Tess*, the gory description of Prince's death is detailed, but the implications for Tess are wider-reaching; and the crumbling of the old church tower in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* symbolizes intrinsic flaws within Knight's idealism and the inevitable fall of Elfride.

Light, like landscape, can be used metaphorically. In addition to the frequent use of monochrome to evoke mood (as in the browns of Egdon Heath or the stubble fields in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, or in the universal white of Flintcomb-Ash), there is also in Hardy an extensive application of a Rembrandt –style *chiaroscuro* (light-dark, as in the treatment of light and shade). Smart believes that Hardy relies on 'Rembrandt's baroque lighting' in *The Return of the Native* to signal 'the littleness of human experience in the midst of vast outer spaces of darkness.'[14] Black shadows add depth and texture to the landscape and the blackness also provides a backdrop for dark, complex characters, such as Eustacia and Wildeve. The shadows compound the ambiguities of identity and motive. Rather than clarity of form, we can discern only shapes or silhouettes – further examples of the illusions that Vigar talks about.[15] The intensity of such black exteriors can contrast with the heightened glow of the interior scenes, such as the tranter's Christmas party in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. There are other, recognisably Dutch, scenes bearing the Vermeer impress, where sudden shafts of light from windows, open doors, or hatchways,

illuminate the dim interiors of parlours, lofts, and towers. We have only to think of Thomasin irradiated with sunbeams as she gathers apples in the dark attic (*The Return of the Native*), or Swithin, the astronomer, suddenly suffused with light from the open hatchway (*Two on a Tower*).

In any discussion of Hardy's light effects, the influence of Turner demands recognition. The Flintcomb-Ash snow scenes could have been inspired by Turner's dynamic vortex of swirl and light, as expressed in such works as *Snowstorm –Steamboat off a Harbour's Mouth*. Dawn at Talbothays has all the liquid light and fragile promise of another of Turner's paintings - *Norham Castle : Sunrise*, and this scene can be considered alongside the spectral, silvery dawning light at Stonehenge. In addition to the characteristic dazzle of light and reflected light, there are also the Turner splashes of livid red adapted by Hardy in his fiery sunrises and sunsets. If these scenes are not sufficiently distinctive to prove the point, then we can turn to Hardy's interpretation of Turner's water-colours, 'each is a landscape *plus* a man's soul... What he paints chiefly is *light as modified by objects*.' [16] (Another diary entry reveals that Hardy's impression of Venice is coloured by Turner's paintings, 'Venice is composed of blue and sunlight.').[17] Hardy's own reaction to light can be delightfully spontaneous and imaginative, as is evident in his comment on a winter scene:

> Heard of an open cart being driven through the freezing rain. The people in it became literally packed in ice; the men's beards and hair were hung with icicles. Getting one of the men into the house was like bringing in a chandelier of lustres.[18]

Only Hardy could take such a pedestrian event and imbue it with radiance.

Light can be used to define the moral strength of the characters. The contented characters who harmonise, consciously or unconsciously, with Nature, such as Thomasin

and Clym, are light-suffused. Those who restlessly rebel against their environment, like Eustacia and Wildeve, are depicted in shadow. Intruders, such as Fitzpiers and Felicity Charmond, neither attract nor respond to natural daylight – rather, the light is manipulated by them artificially. We watch them as they adjust the candlelight to suit their own ends, in an effort to precipitate or retard dawn and dusk.

There are enough examples to prove that Hardy's light emphasis succeeds artistically and metaphorically in each of the narratives discussed in this thesis, but arguably, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* can be singled out as much for its use of light and landscape as for its characters and action. The treatment of light is identifiably Impressionistic – we have only to think of the blue and yellow pollen floating over the Talbothays meadows in connection with artists such as Monet. The combination of heat hazes, radiance, and shifting, sun-flecked shadows, leads Grundy to describe it as 'a mesh of colours and dappled light'; it is for her, 'the most iridescent of all Hardy's novels.'[19]

In addition to the study of light, we shall also examine the use of colour. There are the rich blacks and reds associated with the portraits of Eustacia. The connotations underlying the Promethean sparks of both Eustacia and Fitzpiers will also be considered, as will the elegiac mood evoked by the use of sepia or ashen-grey. It will become clear that the eponymous blue of Elfride's eyes is more than just a colour value, while the fact that Fancy Day inclines towards blue reveals more about her tendency to incline than her preference for colour. Finally, the chapter that examines *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* takes up Tony Tanner's penetrating observations about the red and white motif in the novel.[20]

I have tried, throughout the thesis that follows, to weigh the merits and flaws of Hardy's techniques and practice. The most contentious views in this area are probably

those of T.S.Eliot and D.H.Lawrence, who can be seen as representatives of early twentieth - century responses, in their discussion on the role of landscape in Hardy's writing. There are those (like Eliot) who charge Hardy with emotional self-indulgence, mawkish sentimentality, and purple prose.[21] Eliot believes that landscape, being 'a passive creature' is exploited by Hardy as compensation for underdeveloped characters, while Lawrence discusses the merits of endowing Egdon with what he believes is the most forceful agency in the narrative.[22] Both views, which are examined in the chapter on *The Return of the Native*, can be met, I believe, by attending to scenes of simple tenderness, moments that reveal a large heart behind the small gesture – for example, when Tess, mourning at the grave of her dead infant, leaves her flowers in the little marmalade jar, or when the heart-sick Clym, berating his wife for her faithlessness and for his mother's death, unconsciously steadies her trembling fingers as she fumbles with her ribbons. These can be seen as my initial reaction to Eliot's arguments, but a more detailed defense of Hardy will emerge from our discussion of selected critical responses to individual novels.

It would appear, though, that the main divisions in critical response can be traced back to the divisions within Hardy's own outlook. David Lodge's claim that the pathetic fallacy might be fallacious is based on the ambiguous and alternating presentations of Nature in *Tess* and in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*.[23] Kevin Moore's comments on Hardy's subversion of the Wordsworthian possibilities as expressed in *Tintern Abbey*, derive from the Romantic and anti-Romantic duality of Hardy's vision – an issue that will recur throughout our discussion.[24] (I have selected some of the classic English Romantic poems

as points of reference, in this context, for specific positions on Nature and man-in-Nature).

For my own part, I choose to refer back to Hardy's own view of the novel as a series of impressions or seemings, and with this in mind, I remember the moonlit ripple on the sea, the liquid light of the dawn, the blue and yellow fogs over the meadows. If this means that my response is instinctive and emotional, rather than rational, I can only offer as an apology, Auden's response, 'I cannot write objectively about Thomas Hardy because I was once in love with him.'[25]

Notes

[1] Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 18.
[2] *Hardy: Personal Writings*, ed. by Harold Orel (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 27.
[3] Alastair Smart, 'Pictorial Imagery in the Novels of Thomas Hardy', *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 12 (1961), 262-80 (p. 263).
[4] Lloyd Fernando, 'Thomas Hardy's Rhetoric of Painting', *Review of English Literature*, 6 (1965), 62-73 (pp. 71-72).
[5] Grundy p. 24; J. B. Bullen, *The Expressive Eye* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 48.
[6] Ian Gregor,*The Great Web* (London: Faber and Faber,1974), p. 89
[7] *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Michael Millgate (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 239. (Hereafter referred to as *Life*).
[8] *Life,* pp. 123-124.
[9] *Life*, p. 192.
[10] D.H.Lawrence, 'The Real Tragedy', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper (London: Macmillan,1975), pp. 66-74 (p. 72).
[11] W.H.Auden, 'A Literary Transference', in *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Albert J. Guerard (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 135-143 (p. 139).
[12] Orel, p. 137.
[13] Penelope Vigar, *The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality* (London : The Athlone Press, 1974), p. 40.
[14] Smart, p. 273.
[15] Vigar, p. 32.
[16] *Life*, p. 225.
[17] *Life*, p. 201.
[18] *Life*, p. 163.
[19] Grundy, p. 59.
[20] Tony Tanner, 'Colour and Movement in Tess of the D'Urbervilles', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 190-216 (pp. 192-199).
[21] T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (London: Faber and Faber Limited,1934), p. 54.
[22] Eliot, p. 54; Lawrence, p. 68.
[23] David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 16.
[24] Kevin Z. Moore, *The Descent of the Imagination: Postromantic Culture in the Later Novels of Thomas Hardy* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), p. 4.
[25] W. H. Auden, 'A Literary Transference', in *Hardy*, ed. by Albert J.Guerard (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,1963), pp.135-143 (p. 135).

Chapter One

Under the Greenwood Tree

I

Light and shade are interesting features of Hardy's pictorial art in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Not only does the use of light and shade add a dimension to the narrative, it also appears to act as an indicator of moral and social values. This subject is examined by J. B. Bullen in his study of how 'the pictorial, the perceptual, and the moral impinge closely upon each other'.[1] Shade can play just as active a role as light - paradoxical as it may seem - and we shall look at Hardy's *chiaroscuro* and its implications in the introductory scene.

Given that the sub-title of the novel is *A Rural Painting of the Dutch School*, there seems to be a conscious effort on Hardy's part to employ the light and shade devices characteristic of the Dutch masters such as Vermeer and de Hooch. Vermeer's techniques in his paintings, such as we see in the famous *The Milkmaid,* are particularly relevant to Hardy's purpose in the narrative, where the sudden intrusion of concentrated light from a high window or an open door will suffuse the scene and intensify the action. This particular composition is a study of mundane activity performed by an anonymous kitchen maid, whose plain features are sublimated by the effect of the light. Both the maid and the task she performs become essentially fused – the moment is suspended in time. The action becomes concentrated - it is almost as if Vermeer is offering us a moral statement about the intrinsic worth of human endeavour. What appears at first glance to be commonplace domestic material – it is after all a study of a maid pouring milk from a jug – turns out to be an illumination.

It is not merely the shift from ideal beauty to natural representation that distinguishes the work of the Dutch school. Rather, it is a compound of nature and imagination. So too may Hardy's art be seen as a mixture of influences and genres, together with a subtle blend of the pastoral and anti-pastoral, Romantic and anti-Romantic impulses. Just as Vermeer dismissed the traditional heroic heights in favour of homelier studies, Hardy selects the Mellstock rustics for his composition. As a personification of the spirit of the community, the choir is considered individually and collectively. Their music is indicative of a natural collective harmony, while the individual personality of each character is seen in direct relation with his own particular craft.

In the tradition of the Dutch School, Hardy adopts the *doorkijke* window-frame technique, cited in the Introduction. His portrait study of Mr. Penny at his work-bench is a fine example (*Spring*, Ch.II pp.53-54). The shoemaker's concentration is intensified by the suffusion of sunlight pouring into the dark interior. (We can appreciate this picture in comparison with Vermeer's *The Milkmaid* or *The Lacemaker*). Outside, the choir, bathed in the light of the setting sun, watch as he works. The window-frame defines the parameters of the shoemaker's world and we note the recessed effect as we, the readers, perceive through the eyes of the spectators the action of the interior, which in turn is created by the artist. This window-frame perspective is also significant in the introduction to Fancy. Irradiated by candle - light, she appears at the window as a secular vision in white and gold. The spectators stand at a distance. Not only are they without, looking in, - they stand below, looking up. Their physical remove implies their social distance. The domestic interiors then, are not only significant in themselves, they function also as a

means of indicating, through Hardy's exercise with perspectives, the established remove or relation between the characters.

Hardy's aesthetic distancing is defended by Joan Grundy, as she believes it to be, for Hardy, 'a part of life as of art'.[2] While acknowledging Hardy's 'literary pictorialism', Grundy affirms that his portraits do not have the fixity of paintings. In this, she is at odds with both Lloyd Fernando and Bullen – the former criticizing the images as being too static, amounting to no more than a pictorially contrived series of tableaux; the latter believing Hardy's conscious pictorialism to be unnatural, 'The consciousness of the picture within the text creates the effect of observing life at one remove, and as such, it is surely a deliberate and anti-naturalistic device.'[3] For critics like Grundy, Hardy's conscious art is sufficiently concealed to refute this charge, and they believe that the scenes are credibly true to life and animated. Shelagh Hunter observes both stasis and movement in the narrative and argues that this 'interlocking of picture and process' lends a distinctive character to the novel.[4]

II

In our introduction to Dick, Hardy's *chiaroscuro* makes a dramatic impact. Against the shadows of the woodland the white stars glitter, throwing into relief the jagged surface of the Mellstock lane: 'the white surface of the lane revealed itself between the dark hedgerows like a ribbon jagged at the edges '(*Winter*, Ch.1 p.7**).** Perceived initially as a black silhouette against the whiteness of the frosted air, Dick's form emerges gradually in the description of his hat, his facial features, his shoulders. Any expectations of an elevated hero have been undermined by Hardy's insistence on

Dick's ordinariness – the adjective 'ordinary' being repeated four times in the one sentence. Immediately, we are made aware that the Dutch School sub-title conferred on the novel is a significant point of reference in social, psychological, and literary terms. It is apparent that Hardy intends to draw from the simple and natural rather then aggrandise his composition to epic proportion. There is no description of Dick beyond his shoulders, yet we can safely assume that he is as much rooted in his native soil as the Greenwood itself. Both Penelope Vigar and John Danby perceive Dick as an emblematic figure; Danby observes ' this instance of age-old Man in general, this moving part of a particular countryside, this ordinary person, one half silhouetted against the night-sky, the other invisible and as it were buried waist-deep in the earth', and Vigar notes the broader implications arising from Hardy's portraiture techniques: 'Suddenly made static against the flux of seasons and generations, they [the rustics] are shown as at once important and negligible, as individuals and as representatives of all men'.[5] Confirmation of Hardy's conscious inclination towards the natural may be noted in the wonderfully ironic allusion to Greek and Etruscan pageantry (*Winter*, Ch.1 p.8). This is surely one of the finest examples of Hardy's reductive irony. To juxtapose the image of the Mellstock Quire with the frieze of a classical chorus is caricature at its most brilliant. Unlike the decorative figures on Keats's Grecian urn, the Mellstock procession is not to become transfixed in art form for all eternity.

In certain scenes, there seems to be a shift from the representational, static quality of the Dutch School to a more elusive, fleeting Impressionism, where everything is seen in terms of light and where background lines are blurred and smudged as in a fine mist, in contrast to the sharp clarity produced by focusing on the subject. As Dick, in the 'Spring'

of his love for Fancy, approaches Geoffrey Day's cottage, the swing between light and shade correlates with alternating perspectives: 'The distant view was darkly shaded with clouds; but the nearer parts of the landscape were whitely illumined by the visible rays of the sun streaming down across the heavy grey shade behind' (*Spring*, Ch.VI p.72). The contrast between the immediate brightness of the foreground against the approaching shadows of the broader landscape is prescient. This is to be a happy visit for Dick but it will later become eclipsed by his rejection as Fancy's suitor and, more significantly, by the inevitable disillusionment that will follow as a natural sequitur to romantic love. As in the description of the tranter's house (Ch.II pp.10-11), Geoffrey Day's cottage and its natural surroundings directly interact to enhance each other: 'and the sun shone obliquely upon the patch of grass in front, which reflected its brightness through the open doorway and up the staircase opposite, lighting up each riser with a shiny green radiance and leaving the top of each step in shade' (*Spring*, Ch.VI p.73).

The light-suffused imagery here can be contrasted with the shadows of the Autumn visit, when Dick approaches Geoffrey Day's cottage to formalise his proposal; the pendulum swing between light and shade is weighted towards the darker rather than the lighter images. The alarm of the roosting birds disturbed from their nests, together with the enveloping dusk, seem prescient:

> The landscape was concave, and at the going down of the sun everything suddenly assumed a uniform robe of shade. The evening advanced from sunset to dusk long before Dick's arrival, and his progress during the latter portion of his walk through the trees was indicated by the flutter of terrified birds that had been roosting over the path. (*Autumn*, Ch II p.116)

Impressions of Fancy alter under Hardy's light effects. When Dick catches sight of her at Budmouth, her portrait is shadow-less: 'An easy bend of neck and graceful set of head;

full and wavy bundles of dark-brown hair; light fall of little feet; pretty devices on the skirt of the dress; clear deep eyes; in short, a bunch of sweets: it was Fancy!' (*Summer*, Ch. I p.93). There is a decidedly Impressionist affinity in the observation of the shimmering lights and vivid colours of the Budmouth sea-scape:

> The scene was the corner of the front street at Budmouth, at which point the angle of the last house in the row cuts perpendicularly a wide expanse of nearly motionless ocean – today shaded in bright tones of green and opal. Dick and Smart had just emerged from the street, and there, against the brilliant sheet of liquid colour, stood Fancy Day; and she turned and recognised him. (*Summer*, Ch. I p.93)

Dick's consciousness perceives Fancy's presence as an agent of light – her vitality corresponding with the natural dynamic of the ocean, her iridescence enhancing its colours so that they become luminous. As Bullen suggests, 'the "green and opal" and the "liquid colour" of the scene derive as much from Dick Dewy's feelings for Fancy Day as from the sunlight falling on the water'.[6] Hardy, as much an admirer of Turner as of the Dutch School, seems to characterise this passage with the Turner stamp. Clearly, the world is perceived by Turner in terms of penetrative liquid light and vibrant colour. As we said at the outset, the heady mix of art and poetry in Turner is much admired by Hardy and Bullen recognises the artist's treatment of light in the landscape in many of the Wessex scenes: 'From Turner, Hardy learned that light could be more than an external influence upon landscape: it could be used as the single most potent force, shaping landscape from within.'[7]

Dick falls in love with Fancy almost at first sight – a fact that is underscored by the dramatic heightening of his senses on her first appearance in the church:

> Ever afterwards the young man could recollect individually each part of the service of that bright Christmas morning, and the minute occurrences

> which took place as its hours slowly drew along; the duties of that day dividing themselves by a complete line from the services of other times. The tunes they that morning essayed remained with him for years, apart from all others; also the text; also the appearances of the layer of dust upon the capitals of the piers; that the holly-bough in the chancel archway was hung a little out of the centre – all the ideas, in short, that creep into the mind when reason is only exercising its lowest activity through the eye. (*Winter*, Ch.VI p.33)

So perceptively does the artist capture the moment here, that the dust on the piers is almost palpable, we can almost run our fingers along it. The holly-bough is off-centre, (a typical device of Hardy's), to denote the disparity between aspiration and endeavour. Here, the irony is poignant, for as Hardy demonstrates throughout the Wessex novels, it is in our imperfections that we find our humanity.

The concept of marriage as an ideal attracts Dick with its possibilities for complete happiness. In his naivety, he is perplexed by the jaded marriages of his parents' generation:

> Dick wondered how it was that when people were married they could be so blind to romance; and was quite certain that if he ever took to wife that dear impossible Fancy, he and she would never be so dreadfully practical and undemonstrative of the Passion as his father and mother were. The most extraordinary thing was that all the fathers and mothers he knew were just as undemonstrative as his own . (*Winter*, Ch. VIII p. 48)

But inevitably Dick's ideal is to be short-lived. Once the nightingale that appears in the concluding scene fulfils his song, Dick will awaken under the same light that dawned for his own father and for his father's contemporaries, such as Mr. Penny:

> " Penny asked me if I'd go snacks with him, and afore I knew what I was about a'most, the thing was done."
> "I've fancied you never knew better in your life; but I mid be mistaken," said Mr. Penny in a murmur. (*Winter*, Ch.V111 p.44)

Truth in the Greenwood is implied rather than stated: here, Mr. Penny's irony receives no reply.

Hardy's support for Dick as the innocent victim of star-struck love is explicit in the following observation:

> Probably, Miss Fancy Day never before or after stood so low in Mr. Dewy's opinion as on that afternoon. In fact, it is just possible that a few more blue dresses on the Yalbury young men's account would have clarified Dick's brain entirely, and made him once more a free man. (*Autumn*, Ch. I p.114)

But the prospect of Dick's individual liberty is to remain an illusion, as we are alerted to the conspiracy between Fancy and Venus that takes place in the appropriately named, Cuckoo Lane. The reconciliation of the lovers will postpone Dick's awakening – he will remain unaware, for a while at least, of Maybold's approach to Fancy, the outcome of which could easily have provoked Dick's eviction from the cuckoo's nest. Of course, it would be a mistake to imagine that Dick as a character is elevated by anything other than a natural compassion for his fellow beings and a dedicated love for Fancy. In his encounter with Maybold, Dick, like Fancy, discerns an opportunity for self-advancement and presses his business card upon the vicar. As we might expect, Hardy's sense of timing and irony here achieves a perfect blend of pathos and comedy. Dick is now the unwitting agent of Maybold's despair, while on the previous day Maybold could just as easily have been the unwitting catalyst in Dick's fall from favour.

With the development of the seasons, Dick experiences the first glimmers of insight: ' "What she loves best in the world," he thought, with an incipient spice of his father's grimness, " is her hair and complexion. What she loves next best, her dresses; what she loves next best, myself, perhaps!" ' (*Autumn*, Ch.I p.113). Fancy's fluidity is

implied by her lack of fixity – she is naturally associated with movement. We catch sight of her in motion – dancing, gliding, floating. Similarly, her thoughts flit, butterfly-style, from one topic to another. Characteristically, she is dancing in our first close up view of her. Her predominant characteristic, we are told, is her flexibility. But it is a movement that is barely perceptible – she glides rather than dances. Yet, slight as this movement may be, it is enough to destabilise her. There is in this effortless movement, an anticipated struggle between flight of fancy and fixity of will.

In a later passage, Hardy's variations of negative phrases undermine each of the attributes listed :

> Her dark eyes – arched by brows of so keen, slender, and soft a curve that they resembled *nothing* so much as two slurs in music – showed primarily a bright sparkle each. This was softened by a frequent thoughtfulness, yet *not* so frequent as to do away, for more than a few minutes at a time, with a certain coquettishness; which in its turn was *never* so decided as to banish honesty. (*Winter*,Ch.VII pp.38-39; my italics)

This affirmative/negative counter-pointing prepares us for Hardy's final observation of Fancy on her wedding day: ' " I wonder," said Fancy, looking into vacancy with those beautiful eyes of hers – too refined and beautiful for a tranter's wife; but, perhaps, *not* too good' (*Conclusion*, Ch.I p.151; my italics). Hardy's ambivalence with regard to Fancy leaves us with an impression rather than a definition. This impression is subject to change depending on Hardy's light effects, so that one moment it is Fancy's coquettishness that is heightened, while at another moment, it is her honesty. The daring feather of Fancy's hat, which causes so much consternation at church, functions as a moral innuendo:

' " Good heavens – disgraceful! Curls and a hat and feather!" said the daughters of the small gentry, who had either only curly hair without a hat and feather, or a hat and feather

without curly hair ' (*Autumn*, Ch.V p.133). Fancy's instinctive waywardness, encapsulated here in the image of her blue feathered hat, is an inherent feature of her personality, just as the feathery smoke is a natural characteristic of her familial home. Elusive as she may appear, Fancy is a powerful force in the Greenwood, one that has the potential to uproot the old values. Her elusive quality combines with her sensuousness in a potent mix: 'Fancy was gliding about the room preparing dinner, her head inclining now to the right, now to the left, and singing the tips and ends of tunes that sprang up in her mind like mushrooms' (*Spring*, Ch.VI p.74). There are contained within this passage clues that alert us to facets of Fancy's character. We know already that she is at ease when she is gliding, and she appears to glide here. It is as if her natural impulse is to rebel against fixity of will. She does indeed incline now to the right, now to the left, just as she will vacillate in her allegiances. Fragments of tunes are recalled, implying a lack of thoroughness. These fragmentary impressions that spring up in her mind are like mushrooms. Mushrooms are to be found in areas that are shaded, uncultivated, and fecund.

In the wild disorder of her luxuriously entwining hair, there is the suggestion of some anarchic factor within herself. It becomes apparent that the intrusion of Fancy and by implication, "fancy", into the natural environment provokes an element of discord in the natural harmony between man and nature. Her spontaneous movements call to mind the vacillations of refracted light in the paintings of the Impressionists. Her unpredictable inclinations suggest a butterfly quality: 'Fancy abstractedly extended her vision to survey a yellow butterfly and a red-and-black butterfly that were flitting along in company, and then became aware that Dick was advancing up the garden' (*Summer*, Ch.III p.103).

Dick, as a representative of stability, enters into her field of vision only when the butterflies have flitted beyond it.

Interestingly, the central action of this important scene takes place in the apple orchard, with Fancy as an Eve figure, in close proximity to the fallen apples at the base of the trees. In her ploy to dilute her own jealousy by inciting jealousy within Dick, she proceeds to "confess" to a fanciful flirtation with Mr. Shiner. Her flightiness is emphasised by another image of butterflies – this time in connection with her debate as to what to wear on the honey-taking expedition:

> "Fancy, men in love don't think so much about how they appear to other women." It is difficult to say whether a tone of playful banter or of gentle reproach prevailed in the speech.
> "Well then, Dick," she said, with good-humoured frankness, "I'll own it. I shouldn't like a stranger to see me dressed badly even though I am in love. 'Tis our nature, I suppose."
> "You perfect woman!"
> "Yes; if you lay the stress on "woman", she murmured, looking at a group of hollyhocks in flower, round which a crowd of butterflies had gathered like female idlers round a bonnet-shop.
> (*Summer*, Ch.IV pp.107-108)

Hardy's analogy here reads as a terse indictment on the nature of woman. The impact is sustained as it is literally the very last evocation of summer before the novel progresses into its Autumn chapters.

Birds – the bullfinch and the nightingale, are introduced in this episode to suggest flirtatiousness or desire, as when Fancy and Shiner try to grasp hold of the bullfinch:

> " He looked at me, and I looked at him, and he said, " Will you let me show you how to catch bullfinches down here by the stream?" And I – wanted to know very much – I did so long to have a bullfinch! I couldn't help that! – and I said, "Yes!" and then he said, " Come here." And I went with him down to the lovely river, and then he said to me, "Look and see how I do it, and then you'll know: I put this birdlime round this twig, and then I go here," he said, "and hide away under a bush… "
> (*Summer*, Ch.III p.104)

As a messenger of love, it is a little bird that tells the witch about Fancy's love for Dick. Fancy herself is referred to as a 'bright little bird' (p.80). References to birds can also be dark, as we see in the owl and bird combat that immediately precedes Dick's rejection. When, in the *Conclusion*, the nightingale hints at Fancy's secret, we perceive the lovebird represents elements within Fancy herself - a compound of desire, elusiveness, and flirtation.

We might believe that Fancy's strategy to enlist the intervention of the witch figure is predictable, in that hers might easily be the kind of love that would naturally lend itself to witchcraft. Her desperate journey to the home of Elizabeth Enderfield is coloured by the pathetic fallacy. Propelled by the force of the storm, Fancy is swept through a landscape that is blasted by the elements, much as she herself is by circumstance. The imagery of the trees writhing in pain 'like miserable men' (p.124) is disturbingly visual. The irregular buffetings of the trees with their entangling branches that jar against each other indicate the internal chaos within Fancy. This is a chaos that in turn engenders further chaos for those who fall in love with her. Even her bonnet-ribbons leap and snap in the storm, subordinating the demure to the demonic. In the very ambiguity of Elizabeth's character - some of her features traditionally witch-like, others not - there is a ready correspondence with Fancy, who remains undefined as a character accommodating opposing attributes of coyness and coquettishness, sincerity and opportunism: ' Fancy was desperate about Dick, and here was a chance – O, such a wicked chance! – of getting help; and what was goodness beside love !' (*Autumn*, Ch.III p.126).

A little bird is responsible for informing the witch of the lovers' impasse, perhaps the very bird that later holds the key to Fancy's secret. This might be construed as an example of Nature's collusion with the darker impulses within us. Having been tutored by Elizabeth in how best to bewitch her father to comply with her will, Fancy, like the storm itself, is now soothed. It is almost as if the witch's instruction acts like a catharsis: 'She then turned her attention to the external world once more. The rain continued as usual, but the wind had abated considerably during the discourse' (*Autumn*, Ch.IV p.127)

But Dick, through all the fluctuations, remains captivated, awe-struck initially by Fancy's first appearance as a vision of gold and white, and later at Budmouth as a dazzle of light - a confusion of colour. Dick will never truly grasp Fancy – she is essentially nebulous and directionless:

> If ever a woman looked a divinity Fancy Day appeared one that morning as she floated down those school steps, in the form of a nebulous collection of colours inclining to blue. With an audacity unparalleled in the whole history of village-schoolmistresses at this date – partly owing, no doubt, to papa's respectable accumulation of cash, which rendered her profession not altogether one of necessity – she had actually donned a hat and feather and lowered her hitherto plainly looped-up hair, which now fell about her shoulders in a profusion of curls. Poor Dick was astonished: he had never seen her look so distractingly beautiful before save on Christmas – eve, when her hair was in the same luxuriant condition of freedom. But his first burst of delighted surprise was followed by less comfortable feelings as soon as his brain recovered its power to think. (*Autumn*, Ch.V p.132)

With her goddess-like appearance and her rebellion against orthodoxy, Fancy is portrayed as a mass of contradictions. Her skilful and mannered performance on the harmonium is more an expression of her vanity than her empathy with the music of the church service:

> So they stood and watched the curls of hair trailing down the back of the successful rival, and the waving of her feather as she swayed her head. After a few timid notes and uncertain touches her playing became markedly correct, and towards the end full and free. But, whether from prejudice or unbiassed judgement, the venerable body of musicians could not help thinking that the simpler notes they had been wont to bring forth were more in keeping with the simplicity of their old church than the crowded chords and interludes it was her pleasure to produce.
> (*Autumn*, Ch.V p.134)

Sensitivity to detail rather than depth seems to be the mainspring of Fancy's motivation. The deeper sympathies require an effort of identification that can be tiresome:

> " And look, there's a nasty patch of something just on your shoulder."
> " Ah, that's japanning; it rubbed off the clamps of poor Jack's coffin when we lowered him from our shoulders upon the bier ! I don't care about that, for 'twas the last deed I could do for him; and 'tis hard if you can't afford a coat for an old friend."
> Fancy put her hand to her mouth for half a minute. Underneath the palm of that little hand there existed for that half-minute a little yawn.
> (*Autumn*, Ch.VI p.135)

It is on the basis of detail that Fancy is led into temptation. Maybold carries an umbrella while Dick does not! Her momentary aberration during Maybold's visit when she inclines towards his proposal rather than Dick's, appears to hinge on this fact : ' " I like Dick, and I love him; but how plain and mean a man looks in the rain, with no umbrella, and wet through!" ' (*Autumn*, Ch.VI p.136). The fact that Dick's instinctive selflessness had prompted him to offer his umbrella to the ladies at the funeral does not mitigate his deficiency in Fancy's view. Maybold's rap at Fancy's door, compared to 'the tapping of a distant woodpecker' (p.136), picks up the thread of the bird motif again. The choice of bird is significant here, as the woodpecker is known to tap only at the hollow bark of rotting wood. The inference is that there is something unwholesome

in Fancy – an inner moral vacuum. Fancy is clearly married to "fancy" itself – she has no vision beyond that: ' " I wonder," said Fancy, looking into vacancy with those beautiful eyes of hers' (*Conclusion*, Ch.I p.151).

III

Central to all the Wessex novels is the close interaction between character and environment. The meticulously detailed description of the tranter's cottage (*Winter*, Ch.II pp.10-11) highlights the interrelation between the characteristics of the house itself and those of its surroundings. From within, the glow of the candle-light radiates out over the surrounding trees and bushes. So integral to the masonry is the creeping ivy, that the doorway evolves with its natural habitat to assume the appearance of an ancient keyhole (*Winter*, Ch. II p 10); so natural an adjunct are the outhouses that it may be thought they were built with the intention of containing the streaming light. With the noise of small creatures scurrying about and the sound of wood being chopped, there is the impression of Nature intruding through every conceivable man-made interstice. This natural harmony can be seen time and time again throughout the narrative:

> ... a thin fleece of snow having fallen since the early part of the evening, those who had no leggings went to the stable and wound wisps of hay round their ankles to keep the insidious flakes from the interior of their boots. (*Winter*, Ch.IV p.20)

Bunches of holly hang from the beams and entangle the hair of those who pass by. Indeed, all the rustics are consciously or subconsciously entangled inextricably with Nature. We are told at the outset that the Greenwood community is in touch with its surroundings to the extent that the locals can identify every voice of every species of tree:

> To dwellers in a wood almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature. At the passing of the breeze the fir-trees sob and moan no less distinctly than they rock; the holly whistles as it battles with itself; the ash

> hisses amid its quiverings; the beech rustles while its flat boughs rise and fall. And winter, which modifies the note of such trees as shed their leaves, does not destroy its individuality. (*Winter*, Ch.1 p.7)

Interestingly though, the characters are not seen to work directly with the land; rather they are portrayed as artisans, working with their own particular crafts rather than with their native soil. So integral is their craft to their lives that their personality is seen as an extension of it.

The prominence of the work ethic in Hardy's pastoral stands in a tradition dating back to Virgil's *Georgics*. Grandfather James, wearing his habitual mason's apron, is literally ingrained with mortar-dust; every conceivable seam is impregnated with the dust, implying that the man himself is indistinguishable from his profession. A further reminder of the *Georgics* can be found in Dick's bee-swarming task which recalls the matriarchal colonisation of the Mellstock society. We see that the women (Fancy, Mrs Dewy, and Mrs Penny) play a strategic role in *Under the Greenwood Tree.* Nowhere is this inter-dependence between the individual and his work more apparent than in the personality of the shoemaker. Mr. Penny's knowledge of his trade is a combination of experience and instinct that determines his perception of the world. We are introduced obliquely to the characters of Geoffrey Day and his daughter Fancy, by means of Mr. Penny's discourse on their respective shoe sizes (*Winter*, Ch.III pp.17-18). Again, Hardy's reductive technique is at work here as he presents his heroine and her father feet-first. Clearly, the Mellstock villagers are rooted in their surroundings; they stand firmly on their own familiar territory and even Fancy, who had formerly left the community to advance her education, returns to what is familiar and secure. Her final confirmation of Dick as her choice can be seen as part of her return.

Such integration contrasts dramatically with a later passage that demonstrates Nature at its most brutal – the self-survival instinct annihilating all hope of a providential benevolence: 'Dick said nothing; and the stillness was disturbed only by some small bird that was being killed by an owl in the adjoining wood, whose cry passed into the silence without mingling with it' (*Autumn*, Ch.II p.122). The mood here is further darkened by the chilling anonymity – the victim is unidentified, the sole reference being 'some small bird'. 'Some' could stand for 'any' in this context, so natural seems the predatory act. There will be no impact – the bird's death cry is too insignificant to even mingle with the silence - let alone disrupt it. Its protest is impotent and the silence itself implies a tacit acceptance of the brutality of Nature. The tenor of this passage is decidedly anti-Wordsworthian and anti-pastoral. The scene is thus prepared for the rejection of Dick's proposal. Geoffrey Day's inventory of his daughter's attributes diminishes Dick's self-esteem to the point where he finally negates himself:

> " Now do ye think after this that you be good enough for her?"
> " No." (*Autumn*, Ch.II p.124)

Dick, like the small bird, has become dangerously inarticulate.

As we become increasingly aware of the light / shade pendulum swing throughout the novel, we sense also a fine balance between faith and fancy, dream and disillusion, romance and reality. This creative tension is a product of a tension within the writer himself. Hardy's nostalgia is tempered with his commitment to realistic representation, this dualism symptomatic of the struggle between his Romantic and post-Romantic influences. Such a dichotomy may well account for apparent incongruities in the pastoral. Dick's formal approach to the father of his "intended" takes place in the pig-sty. It is

almost as if Hardy strategically raises Romantic expectations simply to topple them again. Just when we relax into the pastoral mode, Hardy's reductive irony spikes the prose idyll. In this respect, Hardy's particular brand of pastoral comes close to that of Shakespeare in *As You Like It.* Irony undermines the golden dream, so that the realities of Arden never quite fulfil the expectations of Arcadia.

It would appear that much of the narrative's dynamic derives from the contending Romantic and anti-Romantic scenes and symbols. Nature alternately appears benign or indifferent, if not hostile. Hardy straddles between nostalgia and realism. Keats's axiom that 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know'- will not resolve the disquieting inconclusion of the novel. Fancy's "truth" finds its echo in the natural instincts of the Greenwood articulated by the nightingale's song. We are thus alerted to the struggle between instinct and intention - the birdsong itself inspired within the very heart of the woodland. As an eternal symbol of the romantic imagination, Keats's nightingale is far removed from Hardy's post-romantic little chorister who celebrates natural spontaneous response above all else. That the nightingale is tempted to articulate Fancy's secret suggests that here in Hardy's pastoral, Fancy as a deceiving elf, can not for much longer 'cheat as she is famed to do' (Keats: 'Ode to a Nightingale'). This is the truth that pulsates at the very root of the Greenwood tree itself.

IV

If we conclude that the alternations of light and shade correlate with dreaming and dawning, then we can see that the pastoral balances on a finely poised axis. Those who dream too much are doomed to inevitable enlightenment – those who are too much

awake, forget how to dream. Dreamers have to learn – that is the lesson behind the tale of Sam Lawson's dupery and, more significantly, that is to be Dick's lesson one day, as it was his own father's when he too married in a dream-like state:

> " I think I should have used the eyes that Providence gave me to use afore I paid any ten shillens for a jimcrack wine-barrel; a saint is sinner enough not to be cheated. But 'tis like all your family were, so easy to be deceived."
> " That's as true as gospel of this member," said Reuben.
> Mrs. Dewy began a smile at the answer, then altering her lips and refolding them so that it was not a smile, commenced smoothing little Bessy's hair... (*Winter*, Ch.II p.13)

The tranter's wife offers merely a half-smile in response to her husband's irony regarding his family's naivety. The inference being that she, like Mrs. Penny, (and perhaps Hardy would have us believe, like all women-kind), has exploited this naivety for her own ends.

Innocence in this pastoral is qualified – the light is modified by the shadows of the Greenwood. For if the truth were to be expounded, then paradoxically in the context of the pastoral convention, it would cast shadow by throwing light. Thus we see that Fancy's "truth" will only be alluded to rather than revealed explicitly. The secrets of "fancy" are, after all, characteristic of the human condition – we feel, therefore we are. Significantly, we note that all the fathers and mothers are undemonstrative, according to Dick's view. The generalisation implies that this is a natural sequel to romantic love – in time, it will descend to 'miserable satire'(p.58).

Hardy's nostalgia indicates a sense of loss and a decidedly elegiac note is delicately sustained throughout the narrative. The choir sing of Adam's fall and Fancy, as an Eve-like figure, represents a post-lapsarian mood that will inevitably cast a shadow over the Greenwood. The naivety of the musicians and the innocence of their harmonies are doomed to extinction by the instrument of "fancy". The moon, traditional symbol of

the natural cycles, achieves its fullness and begins to wane again at the conclusion of the novel - 'The moon was just over the full' (*Conclusion*, Ch.II p.159). (The image of an over-ripened moon is repeated in the Trantridge harvest scene in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Depicted there as the worm-eaten gold of a Tuscan saint, the moon anticipates a shift in consciousness from the Romantic to the post-Romantic).

The elegiac note sustained throughout the novel, originates in the inevitable replacement of the choir by the new harmonium. The anticipation of change and loss as experienced by the individual members of the choir is poignant in itself, and beyond that there is the wider inference that this represents only the first of many subsequent changes that will disrupt life in the Greenwood. In his commitment to the work of the choir, William stands for the moral edification to be drawn from the traditional values:

> "As I was saying, if you or I, or any man, was to shake your fist in father's face this way, and say, "William, your life or your music!" he'd say, "My life!" Now that's father's nature all over; and you see, sir, it must hurt the feelings of a man of that kind for him and his bass-viol to be done away wi' neck and crop." *(Spring,* Ch.IV p.67*)*

Further references to changing values can be traced in Hardy's descriptions of the setting sun and the waning moon. It is as the sun is setting that William's shadow assumes Titanic proportions – the implication being that the simple nobility of the rustics will not be recognised in the light of a new era. And again, it is at the setting of the new moon that the tranter's sense of satire awakens fully: ' " I've walked the path once in my life and know the country, naibours; and Dick's a lost man!" The tranter turned a quarter round and smiled a smile of miserable satire at the setting new moon, which happened to catch his eye' (*Spring*, Ch. III p.58).

The allusion to Assyrian or Etruscan art in connection with the motley assortment of rustic characters is humorous enough to undercut any possible sentimentality. At the vicarage, the collective ancient body of minstrels is in fact made up of:

> ...Mr. Penny in full-length portraiture, Mail's face and shoulders above Mr. Penny's head, Spinks's forehead and eyes over Mail's crown, and a fractional part of Bowman's countenance under Spinks's arm – crescent-shaped portions of other heads and faces being visible behind these – the whole dozen and odd eyes bristling with eager inquiry.
> (*Spring*, Chapter IV p.68)

The composition here, reminiscent of Webster's *A Village Choir*, illustrates Michael Millgate's point that even in this restricted setting, the figures are all 'highly individualised' and are strategically positioned within 'the tightly - organised overall structure in terms not so much of plot as of what might in a painting be called composition.'[8]

In this context of loss, the Romantic symbol of the rainbow suffers the same reduction as the nightingale symbol. In *Spring*, Chapter VI, the rainbow appears, rather incongruously, in the imprint left on the wall by the wet brim of Geoffrey Day's hat. The reduction from the Wordsworthian vision of the rainbow ('My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold'), to the indelible wear and tear stain as depicted in this context, is pointedly typical of Hardy's determination to flout the Romantic expectations that he sets up. The tenor of the passage describing Maybold's "existential moment" is anti-Romantic. From his position on the parapet of the bridge, he gazes down at the rapid flux of the river and perceives individual hope adrift in the current of life:

> Mr. Maybold leant over the parapet of the bridge and looked into the river. He saw – without heeding – how the water came rapidly from beneath the arches, glided down a little steep, then spread itself over a pool in which dace, trout, and minnows sported at ease among the long green locks of weed that lay heaving and sinking with their roots towards

> the current. At the end of ten minutes spent leaning thus, he stood erect, drew the letter from his pocket, tore it deliberately into such minute fragments that scarcely two syllables remained in juxtaposition, and sent the whole handful of shreds fluttering into the water. Here he watched them eddy, dart, and turn, as they were carried downwards towards the ocean and gradually disappeared from his view. Finally he moved off, and pursued his way at a rapid pace back again to Mellstock Vicarage.
> (*Autumn*, Ch.VII p.141)

The associative imagery of entangling weeds that heave and sink in contrast to the light, carefree antics of the little fish suggest that Nature is indifferent to man - it makes no moral protest.

Ominous overtones can also be traced in the dark silhouette of the honey-takers. Carrying aloft the matches strapped together in the shape of Latin crosses, the silent procession commences its unholy ritual of setting alight the hives in order to extract the honey. Quite apart from the obviously dark symbolism, Enoch's uncompromisingly materialistic view of life is expressed in terms of shadow:

> " The proper way to take honey, so that the bees be neither starved nor murdered, is not so much an amusing as a puzzling matter," said the keeper steadily.
> " I should like never to take it from them," said Fancy.
> " But 'tis the money," said Enoch musingly. " For without money man is a shadder!" (*Autumn*, Ch II p.117)

Following the roll of the seasons, Hardy advances the narrative to the point of the mid-summer wedding. There is the sense of over-ripening Nature at that midway stage in summer when the blossoms fall to the earth with the weight of their own profusion; when delicate flowers are invaded by the mass of honey-bees; and when each species of bird vies for its own territory. So insistent are the claims of Nature that man cannot ignore them. This is certainly true for Dick whose priority is to swarm his bees, en route to his wedding. The prosaic and the practical mix with Dick's romantic love to a fine blend of

romance and realism. Realism without romance is represented by the discordant grandfather James: ' "Well, bees can't be put off," observed grandfather James. "Marrying a woman is a thing you can do at any moment; but a swarm of bees won't come for the asking" '(*Conclusion*, Ch.I p.151).

The other discordant note arises from Enoch's refusal to participate in the wedding festivities. Both James and Enoch are seen to stand on the periphery of the Mellstock society – the solitary James cannot fully integrate; he is outwith the main action due to his lack of romantic imagination. Interestingly, we note that James is Dick's maternal grandfather.

The ancient Greenwood tree represents generations of human history. The tracings of the love story of Dick and Fancy equate with the patterning traced on one particular leaf. On the broader canvas of Life itself, the individual's story will count for nothing more than a particular moment in time and, (like Danby), we sense that the individual is 'vital, but also deciduous':

> 'Hardy's aim throughout the novel is to put the individual (for whom such heroic claims are sometimes made, and who seems so important to himself) in his 'proper' place. He likes to dwell on the various and endless vistas in which particular man is set. Thus we have seen the Mellstock Quire in the perspective of its own more ancient countryside, and outlined against the same sky that framed Greek and Etruscan. When they arrive inside Dick's home we are to see them as vital parts of the continuing generation of men – vital, but also deciduous.'[9]

A sense of antiquity distinguishes the Greenwood tree – it represents the continuity of Nature in contrast to the transience of human and non-human life:

> Many hundreds of birds had been born amidst the boughs of this single tree; tribes of rabbits and hares had nibbled at its bark from year to year; quaint tufts of fungi had sprung from the cavities of its forks; and countless families of moles and earthworms had crept about its roots. (*Conclusion*, Ch.II p.155)

The antiquity of the tree makes it an appropriate setting for the wedding of Love and "fancy". This choice denotes Hardy's nostalgia for the traditional customs – customs that even Fancy reluctantly concedes to when she is persuaded to continue the traditional procession where the maids walk together with their men. Dick's antique song of the lads and lassies links up with the life-affirming message of the nightingale's song at the wedding. This cyclical movement is indicative of the natural rhythms of life itself - even the sections of the novel relate directly to the changing seasons.

We catch a last glimpse of the newly wedded pair as they ride off to their home under the light of a moon that is already on the point of waning. Change will inevitably tug at the roots of the Greenwood tree, dislodging the old values. The nightingale's song issuing from the shadows of the thicket symbolises change. The theme of harmony is central to the narrative, but, as Norman Page suggests, there is a 'discordant undertone' underlying the nightingale's 'wistful cadence'.[10] The tacit agreement between Fancy and nature to postpone the disillusionment of romantic love can be perceived as nothing more than a temporary entente.

Many of the scenes indicate the kind of vacillation between tableaux and movement that Hunter has in mind when she talks about 'the interlocking of picture and process'.[11] The Dutch interiors, the Etruscan pageantry, the village choir montages - these might be seen as 'pictures', or visual aides, that enhance the story, while the 'process' might refer to the whims, impulses, and ongoing movement of Life itself. In the context of this novel, such interaction between picture and process points us to the fixity / flux oppositions that are beginning to destabilize the Greenwood.

NOTES

[1] J. B. Bullen, *The Expressive Eye* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 12.
[2] Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts* (London: Macmillan, 1979) p. 18.
[3] Lloyd Fernando, 'Thomas Hardy's Rhetoric of Painting', *Review of English Literature*, 6 (1965), pp. 62-73 (p. 68); Bullen, p. 48.
[4] Shelagh Hunter, 'The Implications of Impressionism', in *Thomas Hardy: Three Pastoral Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 194-202 (p. 196).
[5] Penelope Vigar, The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality (London: The Athlone Press, 1974), p.89; John F.Danby,' The Individual and the Universal', in *Thomas Hardy : Three Pastoral Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 89-97 (p. 91).
[6] Bullen, p. 52.
[7] *Life*, p. 225; Bullen, pp. 198-199
[8] Michael Millgate, 'Elements of Several Literary Modes', in *Thomas Hardy : Three Pastoral Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 97-106 (p. 103).
[9] John F. Danby, 'The Individual and the Universal', in *Thomas Hardy: Three Pastoral Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp.89-97 (p. 92).
[10] Norman Page, *Thomas Hardy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 38.
[11] Hunter, p. 196.

Chapter Two

The Woodlanders

I

The gentle pastoral of the *Greenwood* may be regarded as a pre-cursor to the sharper, post-Darwinian realities of the Hintock woodlands. Leaving behind the more static paintings of the Dutch School, Hardy now adopts a style more akin to Impressionism. In her discussion on illusion and reality in the Wessex narratives, Penelope Vigar acknowledges 'the illusive kaleidoscopic quality' that characterises so many of the Hintock scenes.[1] Hardy is attracted to this medium, Vigar thinks, because, in its shifts and refractions of light, definition and truth can appear more elusive: 'it can be seen that Hardy has used in effect the technique of an Impressionist painter. He does not show us the whole of the picture, but subtly indicates or highlights the main points; he isolates, projects or obscures for dramatic effect.'[2]

The uniqueness of the woodland setting is established at the outset. We are told that Little Hintock stands in isolation as a world that exists on its own terms: '...whence, as it reached the verge of an eminence, could be discerned in the dusk, about half a mile to one side, gardens and orchards sunk in a concave, and, as it were, snipped out of the woodland. From this self-contained place rose in stealthy silence tall stems of smoke' (Vol.I, Ch.I p.8). It is a place better suited to imagination rather than reason – a place that has its own individual personality: 'It was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation; where reasoning proceeds on narrow premisses and results in inferences wildly imaginative' (Vol.I, Ch.I p.8). The phrase, 'outside the gates of the world', might at first glance suggest a golden era – long since lost. It might even be

perceived as a dream or an illusion. This impression is immediately qualified by certain indigenous features of the landscape that are disconcerting and that contradict our expectations of the pastoral. The atmosphere is reflected in the 'tomb-like stillness' (Vol.I, Ch.I p.5) and the 'deserted highway [that] expresses solitude' (Vol.I, Ch.1 p.5). Tall stems of smoke rise 'in stealthy silence' (Vol.I, Ch.I p.8). Umbrageous nooks, mounds of dead leaves, pervading decay, are all images that impress upon us the 'incubus of the forlorn' (Vol.I, Ch.I p.5). The landscape is imbued with a sense of history, and the silence and solitude contrast sharply with the colour and verve of the Roman charioteers who, we are told, once caroused along the now deserted highway.

There is the sense that generations who once experienced life in the Hintock woodlands have long since been reduced to dust. The locale is literally ingrained with history. Human life is transitory, a fleeting moment in time compared with the continuity of the natural environment. Giles has a premonition that he will die long before his young saplings will grow into mature trees. Individual glory will, in time, be reduced to dust. It is only the 'old associations' that can preserve the personality of the surroundings. By forgetting those who have departed and their relationship with their environment, we are effectively negating their very existence: 'But Creedle carried about with him on his uneventful rounds these silent testimonials of war, sport, and adventure, and thought nothing of their associations or their stories' (Vol.I, Ch.IV p.26). Creedle's accoutrements bear silent testimonial, silent inasmuch as they now have no personality – Creedle has not kept alive their associations. Associations are important for Hardy, 'old associations' featuring in the opening line of the novel. Usually, it is the native country folk who value these associations – newcomers such as Fitzpiers and Felice Charmond cannot access

these memories. If there is no memory, then there is clearly no emotional investment and consequently, the woodlands will not be properly appreciated.

Hintock itself has grown literally and symbolically from a construct of roots. Just as the trees are embedded there, so too are the locals rooted in their surroundings. Hardy's belief, consistently enforced throughout the Wessex novels, is that those natives who leave their natural home for the sake of education or social advancement, can never quite retrieve their original "self". Clym, in *The Return of the Native*, is of course the most obvious example. In this novel, Grace is never quite the same girl who once harmonized so instinctively with the woodlands of her childhood. Her physical remove from her native terrain distances her from her real "self". The imprint of her nonchalant footstep in the mud is treasured by her doting father as the last vestige of her childhood (Vol.I, Ch.III p.20). Yet it is to be the only "root" that she will ever lay down in the woodlands. Grace's will must be shaped by the stronger will of her father. Having educated herself to fulfill his ambition, Grace appears at odds with herself – attempting to reclaim her rusticity while trapped within her newly-acquired set of values. In his exploration of *The Woodlanders* as 'a critique of Wordsworthian pastoralism', Kevin Moore regards the essential split within Grace as a crucial factor of the tragedy: 'Because her youthful primitivism is weakened by her 'finishing' school education, Grace eventually leaves the woods. With her gone and Giles dead, the woodlands are devoid of the potential to be the scene of romantic regeneration.'[3] Grace's self-division alerts us to conflicts that trouble other characters. The most significant self-division, of course, is the creative split within Hardy himself - his Romantic and anti-Romantic impulses battle it out in the woodland arena.

II

Hardy's characteristic light effects and shifting perspectives contribute to the personality of the landscape. Our first glimpse of the woodlands is at dusk, and our last, in the moonlight. The light effects also play an important role, as Vigar realises, in helping to shape our perceptions of the action and interaction of the characters:

> It is a calculated piece of artistry on Hardy's part that he introduces almost all the major characters of *The Woodlanders* in darkness. Nearly the whole of the action of the first five chapters takes place in obscurity. This establishes the aesthetic milieu for much of the novel and also provides for a series of dramatic and imagistic effects which help to project and later maintain the identity and, indirectly, to reflect the function of each character within the story.[4]

Michael Squires believes that Hardy's light and shadow techniques serve a moral function:

> Throughout the novel these fluctuating passions and shifting allegiances find their scenic equivalent in the frequent changes of light intensity – flaring matches, swinging lanterns, fleeting shadows, moving candles, dying fires, dawn turning to day and day to dusk – thus explaining in part Hardy's unusual concern with light.[5]

The connection Squires makes between the light effects and implications of morality, can be discerned in the Marty / Percomb interlude. We are introduced obliquely to Marty, through the watchful eyes of the barber. Hardy suffuses the girl with a stream of liquid light. The cottage is unusually radiant, distinguished from the others by an aura of 'luminous mist' while the 'flickering brightness irradiates out from the interior. (Vol.I, Ch.I p.9). The light itself has a positive quality, in that the light that surrounds Marty also attracts Nature. Frail moths revive in the rays of light emanating from Marty's cottage, before vanishing again into the absorbing night shadows. There is an interesting

correlation here between Marty, the child of Nature, and the moth. Like the moth, Marty will become revitalised by the light (her love for Giles), a light that is also doomed to extinction. The moth image here contrasts dramatically with the later image of the asphyxiated gnats trapped on top of Fitzpiers's newly painted gate.(Vol.I, Ch.XVI). This supports Squires' theory –a moral distinction is implied here, the child of Nature being life-affirming, and the outsider, death-inducing.

Percomb studies Marty through her window. Characteristically, she is focused on her work, unconscious of the impression she is making on the stranger. There is a glimpse of the social realism that will, Joan Grundy claims, characterise Hardy's art in this and other Wessex novels.[6] The dim interior of Marty's humble cottage is illuminated by the firelight and the glow from the candle. Disconcertingly, the candlestick rests on a table that once served as a coffin-stool. This allusion to death in the midst of youth and activity appears chillingly incongruous. The coffin-stool will serve as an altar for her sacrifice, when her shorn locks are stretched out upon it. In this case, it is an unnatural reaper rather than the ravages of time that will leave the young girl prematurely bereft of her beauty. With this loss there will follow other losses, the loss of Giles and the loss of Marty's sexuality. In a novel that links so inextricably cause and effect, this first and only unnatural act of Marty's life will cause far-reaching repercussions. The barber's scissors reflect the light that shines within Marty's cottage and yet, the reflection offers a very different quality of light – one that is feeble and lustreless. The contrast implies that Marty generates a moral light, while the stranger does not. With only one purpose in mind, the barber's view of the young girl is contracted down to the study of her hair. All the other features of the subject and her setting recede into a hazy blur reminiscent of an

Impressionist painting. There appears to be a cinematic method at work here, as Norman Page points out, with the construction of the scene resembling that of 'a silent film, of image without speech, the thoughtful scrutiny of an unseen observer.'[7]

When, in Chapter III, Mrs Melbury's candlelight casts a thorn-pattern of shade on Marty's face (Vol.I, Ch.III p.17), it would appear that Nature is confirming her as a victim. The reference to thorns may be associated with Christ's crown of thorns. Indeed, the theme of sacrifice weaves its way throughout the text, with reference to Marty, Giles, and even Melbury, although in Melbury's case, his original intention to sacrifice his daughter has a distinct self-centredness about it, as it is intended to act as a panacea for his own unresolved guilt.

Hardy manipulates his light effects to appropriately heighten or reduce the prominence of the character or event. When, in Vol.I, Chapter III, Giles calls at Marty's cottage, her shorn locks are temporarily obscured: 'An armful of gads thrown on the still hot embers caused them to blaze up cheerfully, and bring her diminished head-gear into sudden prominence as a shadow' (Vol.I, Ch. III p.21). Flickers of light from Giles's lantern project grotesque shapes upon the walls and ceiling of Marty's home. This serves as a dramatic backdrop to the shearing that has taken place and it also magnifies its importance. The lantern light device is used again, in the same chapter, when Giles and Marty emerge out of the grey light that precedes dawn. Flickering light projects upwards, almost touching the lofty architrave of the sky overhead. Light stretches the perspective here, so that the whole scene becomes enlarged with Giles and Marty, alone and vulnerable in the mists, appearing as Adam and Eve figures:

> They went out and walked together, the pattern of the air-holes in the top of the lantern being thrown upon the mist overhead, where they appeared

> of giant size, as if reaching the tent-shaped sky. They had no remarks to make to each other, and they uttered none. Hardly anything could be more isolated or more self-contained than the lives of these two walking here in the lonely hour before day, when grey shades, material and mental, are so very grey. (Vol.I, Ch.III pp.21-22)

This particular dawn offers no promise; it is sluggish, and the foggy lanterns emit wan discs of light like 'weary' eyes (Vol.I, Ch.III p.23). Light cannot filter through the opaque wintry whiteness: '... the bleared white visage of a sunless winter day emerged like a dead-born child' (Vol.I, Ch.IV p. 23). There is a sense here of stunted development and the image can be read as a metaphor for Giles himself – the very name 'Winterborne' suggesting something born in Winter. Almost inevitably, Giles's hopes freeze and fail to come to fruition.

Just as the light effects influence our first glimpse of Marty, so too does the light dominate our introduction to Grace and the interior of her family home:

> Pencils of light streamed out of the windows sufficiently to show the white laurustinus flowers, and glance against the polished leaves of laurel. The interior of the rooms could be seen distinctly, warmed up by the fire-flames, which in the parlour were reflected from picture and book-case, and in the kitchen from the utensils and ware. (Vol.I, Ch.VI p.44)

We observe Giles watching the interior from the outside, looking in, towards the firelight. Not only does the firelight suffuse the entire room, but it also extends beyond it through the windows, until it reaches the flowers and plants outside. The concentration of light is sustained and encompasses Grace herself:

> The fire was as before the only light, and it irradiated Grace's face and hands so as to make them look wondrously smooth and fair beside those of the two elders; shining also through the loose hair about her temples as sunlight through a brake. (Vol.I, Ch.VI p.45)

Here the light almost sublimates the girl until she appears as a sort of angelic vision, set apart from the others. Instinctively, Giles associates the image of the light filtering through her hair with a reference borrowed from Nature.

The social distance between Giles and Grace is heightened by Hardy's window perspective. The *doorkijke* device works as effectively here as it does in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Not only are the figures framed thus in their private world, they are also suffused with a warm glow that contrasts with the cold shadows outside. Giles, as the observer, stands back in shadow looking up through the window at Grace. While the physical remove here distinguishes the one from the other, so too does Hardy's treatment of light and shade. As he becomes absorbed into the blackness of the surroundings, Grace becomes extraordinarily illuminated by the light of her candles. Engaged in what appears to be some sort of ritual, she kindles each candle in turn and in so doing she imbues herself with a radiance that he has never before encountered. The candlelight ritual takes place on the eve of Grace's visit to Hintock House, and represents her heart-felt prayer (she places her hand on her heart as she lights the candles) for social advancement. Such an aspiration is of course beyond Giles's comprehension. On leaving the house, he looks up at her once more to watch her as she studies her reflection in the mirror. The perspectives here are interesting, the artist planning his composition so that he is watching us looking at Giles looking at Grace looking at herself. Creator of her own special world of light, she is radiant with the prospect of an influential friendship. But her reflected radiance is to be her downfall on the following day, as she and Felice Charmond appraise their reflections in the mirror at Hintock Hall. Suffused with exultation, Grace is unsuspecting of the jealousy that will be provoked in Felice by the comparison. Giles's

allusion to Moses and the Mount while intended to be ironic, does suggest that the light surrounding Grace resembles a heavenly aura.

By contrast, the light that glows in Marty's eyes has, as we might expect, nothing ethereal about it – it is a natural reflection of the evening sunset:

> She looked towards the western sky, which was now aglow like some vast foundry wherein new worlds were being cast. Across it the bare bough of a tree stretched horizontally, revealing every twig against the evening fire, and showing in dark profile every beck and movement of three pheasants that were settling themselves down on it in a row to roost.
> "It will be fine to-morrow,' said Marty, observing them with the vermilion light of the sun in the pupils of her eyes, 'for they are a-croupied down nearly at the end of the bough. If it were going to be stormy they'd squeeze close to the trunk. The weather is almost all they have to think of, isn't it, Mr. Winterborne ? and so they must be lighter-hearted than we." (Vol.I, Ch.IX p.68)

Marty, the child of Nature, becomes its conduit, reflecting the rising and setting of the sun. She is attuned to the signs of weather changes and to the quirky habits of the birds and animals. To consider Marty apart from her natural environment is to excise her soul from her body. Whereas Grace can isolate herself from the external world around her, Marty and her environment are inextricably linked. This intuitive harmony, shared by Giles, might point to a Wordsworthian vision, such as can be seen in *Tintern Abbey*, but such a view becomes undermined by Giles' tragic death and Marty's mourning.

Designated by social background, if not by Destiny, to remain on the periphery, Giles (Vol.I, Ch.VI p.45) observes the glowing scene from the doorway. He is uncertain whether he could ever fit into the groove that has been carved by generations of Melbury's family: 'Observing these things Winterborne remained dubious by the door, mechanically tracing with his fingers certain timeworn letters carved in the jambs – initials of bygone generations of householders who had lived and died there'. The worn

indentations indicating a long history of established families, inhibit Giles's approach. When he withdraws from Melbury's home, his hopes regarding Grace are levelled out by a momentary vision of Marty's spartan existence and stoical endeavour. It is almost as if the two young women, if fused together, would make a satisfactory whole – Grace's social grace and beauty conjoined with Marty's natural modesty. Humbled by the stature of Melbury's home and the social status of the family, Giles is struck by the diminutive scale of Marty's cottage with its one chimney so effectively effaced by the vast expanse of sky.

Both Giles and Fitzpiers suffer exclusion – the former distanced by social class, while Fitpiers, with his rumoured alchemy and mystique, is regarded throughout the narrative as an outsider. While the natural xenophobia of the woodlanders might account for their instinctive mistrust of Percomb, Fitzpiers, and Felicity Charmond, Giles himself often appears dislocated. Our awareness of exclusion is emphasised as much by Hardy's light and shadow interplay as by his perspectives. There are contrasting perceptions of Giles; we watch him engaging easily in a symbiotic relationship with his environment – but Grace's dismissive glance can instantly reduce him to a speck or shadow.

Light plays an important role in Grace's first awareness of Fitzpiers. One insistent pinpoint of light is intermittently shaded but never eclipsed by the distant row of trees on top of the neighbouring hill. The impact of the light on the impressionable young girl resting in bed is further intensified by its sudden change of colour, with violet, blue, and vermilion tints appearing as a supernatural phenomenon, set against the dark, silent shadows of the landscape. These extraordinary colour changes imply the protean qualities of Fitzpiers:

> Almost every diurnal and nocturnal effect in that woodland place had hitherto been the direct result of the regular terrestrial roll which produced the season's changes, but here was something disassociated from these normal sequences, and foreign to local knowledge.
> (Vol.I, Ch.VI pp.47-48)

Grace imagines Fitzpiers to be exotic, encircled by an aura of magical light, the experimental glints of alchemy mixing with the warm sensual golds of tropical sunlight. But in the uncompromising daylight of the winter landscape, the high summits of Grace's Romanticism are levelled out, just as the soft contours of the woods now expose an unyielding angularity. Realism is introduced in place of Grace's romantic notions – a change which is reflected in the '...sudden lapse from the ornate to the primitive on Nature's canvas' (Vol.I, Ch.VII p.51).

It would appear that shadow, as well as light, can work metaphorically. In Vol.I, Chapter XI, shadow is applied to Giles, relegating him to the role of an undefined presence, ineffectual and indistinct: 'It was one morning later on, while these things were agitating his mind, that something darkened the window just as they finished breakfast. Looking up they saw Giles' (Vol.I, Ch.XI p.82). This scene occurs in the wake of Melbury's rejection of Giles as a prospective son-in-law. Giles is now not even a man - he is reduced to something that darkens. Again, in Vol.I, Chapter XIII, Giles's contours melt into insignificance when Grace rejects his appeal. In reaction to her rejection, his very existence becomes negated:

> Her coldness had been kindly meant. If it was to be done, she had said to herself, it should be begun at once. While she stood out of observation Giles seemed to recognise her meaning; with a sudden start he worked on, climbing higher into the sky, and cutting himself off more and more from all intercourse with the sublunary world. At last he had worked himself so high up the elm, and the mist had so thickened, that he could only just be

> discerned as a dark grey spot on the light grey zenith... (Vol.I, Ch.XIII p.93)

While, at the cider harvest, Giles is perceived positively, so much in tune with Nature that he almost appears as an extension of his apple-tree - here, the inarticulate Giles is scaled down negatively in the diminishing light until he appears to be no more than an organic extension of the elm: 'He made no reply, but sat back upon a bough, placed his elbow in a fork, and rested his head upon his hand. Thus he remained till the fog and the night had completely enclosed him from her view' (Vol.I, Ch.XIII p.94). Had Giles seized the moment, had he actively emerged from the fog of inarticulateness to reaffirm his claim upon her heart, then Grace would possibly have viewed him with deserved clarity. Instead, Giles, like Angel (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: Ch.XX1V p.151), allows his opportunity to pass him by and silently recedes into a grey and nebulous region indicative of Giles' own indeterminacy. (Of course, Giles is portrayed here more sympathetically than Angel, whose reserve appears to derive from sexlessness rather than a sense of unworthiness)

In the morning following Giles' rejection, the light remains opaque, literally and symbolically hampering Giles's vision in the confrontation with Felice's carriage. This encounter is to play a fateful role in his future dealings with the lady. Sparks fly up from the carriage wheels threatening to ignite mounds of dead leaves. In contrast to the density of the fog, the carriage lamps beam out like two giant eyes, reminding us of the two eyes of Percomb's gold sovereigns.

As we can see in Chapter XV, Giles eventually perceives the impact of consequential losses in a light that flickers rather than in a dawn of revelation:

> As he turned the light flickered on the whitewashed rough-cast of the front, and he saw words written thereon in charcoal, which he read as follows:
>
> "Oh, Giles, you've lost your dwelling place,
> And therefore, Giles, you'll lose your Grace."
> (Vol.I, Ch.XV p.107)

This flickering light recalls the magic lantern image in Vol.I, Chapter XIII, which coincides with Giles's anticipation of his eviction:

> The sense that the paths he was pacing, the cabbage-plots, the apple-trees, his dwelling, cider-cellar, wring-house, stables, weathercock, were all slipping away over his head and beneath his feet as if they were painted on a magic lantern-slide, was curious.
> (Vol.I, Ch.XIII p.90)

In contrast, the light dawns fully on Grace's immediate grasp of Giles's changed circumstances: 'The morning sun was shining flat upon its white surface, and the words which still remained, were immediately visible to her' (Vol.I, Ch.XV p.108).

Again, we observe the shifting light effect with its connotations of loss and instability in the tree-shearing session, when Giles catches sight of South through the bedroom window as he sits by the flickering firelight, watching the operation. The flicker of the flames suggests the flicker of a fading pulse.

Light is the key reference in Fitzpiers's perception of Grace. Quoting from Shelley, Fitzpiers rhapsodises on the radiance of his beloved, (Vol.I, Ch.XVI p.114):

> She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
> A power, that from its objects scarcely drew
> One impulse of her being – in her lightness
> Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew,
> Which wanders through the waste air's pathless blue,
> To nourish some far desert: she did seem
> Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
> Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
> Which walks, when tempests sleep, the wave of life's dark stream.
> (*The Revolt of Islam*: canto II, stanza 23)

Contrasting with the blackness of the night sky, the descriptions of ethereal light assume even greater significance. In his discourse on the subjectivity of love, Fitzpiers chooses the rainbow motif, another variation of light, to suggest inspiration (Vol.I, Ch.XVI). In this instance, the rainbow image is far removed from Wordsworth's rainbow of joyful inspiration ('My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold'). Fitzpiers's arc chooses its subject arbitrarily. For Moore, this rainbow signals 'a passing sensationalism rather than a steady joy.'[8] As if in response to his rhapsody, Fitzpiers catches a glimpse of Grace suffused by light as she draws the white curtains at her bedroom window. While Grace appears to attract light, Fitzpiers is depicted as a dark figure, and at times, almost appearing to border on the Satanic. His darkness is alleviated by glitter, rather than by pure light. Those who sell their soul to him will also suffer darkness; it is interesting to note that Grammer Oliver, having pledged her brain to the doctor after her death, projects coal-black shadows upon Grace's whitened wall.

It is appropriately in the glow of kindled ashes that Fitzpiers openly expresses his love for Grace (Vol.II, Ch.III p.141). The allusions to ashes, dead leaves, and prostrate trees, all suggest connotations of death. The expression of love between Grace and Fitzpiers is illuminated by a light that is false and pallid - a prescience of a sickly marriage. In his quest for scientific knowledge, he is seen to dabble with the unnatural – he is associated with the sparks of alchemy. Like his Promethean archetype, he ignites the dead leaves, thereby creating an unnatural conflagration. The blaze of light from the fire intensifies the darkening shadows of the surrounding woods. His woodland fire sets the arena for another scene of dysfunctional love – that of the two roosting birds who, in the midst of a desperate quarrel, tumble into the fire and singe their wings. We can see the

birds as a symbol for doomed love. At odds with each other and uncoordinated, they predictably fall from their nest and, wounded, vanish from the woodlands forever.

In the Midsummer Eve love matching, the alternating light and shade effects seem to directly influence the judgement and subsequent action of the protagonists: 'Grace and her stepmother paused by a holly-tree; and at a little distance stood Fitzpiers under the shade of a young oak, intently observing Grace, who was in the full rays of the moon'(Vol.II, Ch.IV p.146). At this decisive moment, the "victim" characters are shaded: 'Marty and Grammer, who had drawn up on the dark side of the same holly which sheltered Mrs and Miss Melbury on its bright side' (Vol.II, Ch.IV p.146).

We can see that Grace is invariably suffused with bright light – the light of the sun, or the moon, or candlelight. In this scene, she reflects the moonlight and is thus set apart from the others: 'At the moment of their advance they looked back, and discerned the figure of Miss Melbury who, alone of all the observers, stood in the full face of the moonlight' (Vol.II, Ch.IV p.146). She appears in the moonlight as a fluorescent figure dressed in white. Fitzpiers rushes out from the shadows to clasp her in a spontaneous embrace. Disengaging herself, she glides away, with the moon blanching her hot blush. These shifts between light and shade influence our response to character and motive. As a symbol of desire, Suke tantalises Fitzpiers as she dodges among the trees. Vacillating refractions of light make her appear all the more elusive. Just as the moonlight imbues Grace with an ethereal glow, so does it deal sympathetically with Suke, disguising her blemishes. Clarity of light is compromised by soft veils of mist that soften the horizon of the hay-field, so that Fitzpiers and Suke appear isolated in a separate, self-contained world. Similarly, having quarrelled with Fitzpiers over the wedding ceremony, Grace's

vision of him as he leaves her father's house is filmy and shadowy- it is as if he defies definition.

At times, the light effects are manipulated consciously by the characters themselves. We have already witnessed Grace creating her own world of candlelight, and Fitzpiers creating his protean sparks and Promethean fires. We also observe Felice Charmond adjusting the light so that it will project her best features: 'by the light of the shaded lamp he saw a woman of full round figure reclining upon a couch in such a position as not to disturb a pile of magnificent hair on the crown of her head' (Vol.II, Ch.X p.187). Felice controls time in her own self-contained world at Hintock House, postponing dawn and precipitating dusk according to her mood. Fitzpiers, like Felice, is depicted in artificially produced light or mists of uncertainty.

The artificial light associated with Fitzpiers and Felice is counterpointed with the natural light that Grace absorbs and emits in the Impressionist images of Vol.II, Chapter VIII: 'Just about here the trees were large and wide apart, and there was no undergrowth, so that she could be seen to some distance; a sylph-like greenish-white creature, as toned by the sunlight and leafage' (Vol.II, Ch.VIII p.169).

Fitzpiers' sparks appear as an unnatural phenomenon outwith the diurnal roll, whereas Grace's light is recognisable and is influenced by her natural surroundings: 'But she looked so lovely in the green world about her; her pink cheeks, her simple light dress, and the delicate flexibility of her movements acquired such rarity from their wild-wood setting that his eyes kindled as he drew near' (Vol.II, Ch.VIII p.169).
Here, more than at any other moment in the narrative, Grace seems to be totally integrated with her woodland setting; she assumes the fresh sunlit colours of the trees and

is enhanced by them. It almost seems as if she has created the green world about her. Fitzpiers draws near, his eyes smouldering with the strategy of a predator.

Fitzpiers' world is far removed from the natural world of Giles. In the latter, strong primary colours reflect the harvest of the cider-apples. The blue air is potent with the sweet pervading smell of the apples. The autumnal sunlight is bright and yellow and suggests warmth and ripeness. And central to the harvest picture is Giles himself, complete with apple pips and core and rind:

> He looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as corn-flowers, his sleeves and leggings dyed with fruit-stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, his hat sprinkled with pips, and everywhere about him that atmosphere of cider which at its first return each season has such an indescribable fascination for those who have been born and bred among the orchards. (Vol.II, Ch.XII pp.205-206)

The harvest recalls to Grace's memory flashes of harvests from her childhood, and names of various species of apple flit before her. But Grace's vision lacks immediacy – she is now clearly at a remove from her woodland childhood. This distance is implied by the *doorkijke* window perspective. As she catches sight of Giles through her hotel window, he becomes the catalyst for her recall. There is a Chekhovian "if only" poignancy in the sense of opportunities lost. The window perspective suggests poignancy again when, in a reversal of vantage-points, we see Giles looking at the young bride through the window of Fitzpiers's home. Typically, Giles is relegated to the gloom of the night and watches the central action from his shadowed, peripheral standpoint.

In Vol.II, Chapter XI, passion is perceived in terms of light. Although the surroundings have been endowed with a subtle light since the re-acquaintance between Felice and Fitzpiers, we note that when their passion for each other develops, so too do

the surrounding colours assume a greater intensity. Fitzpiers's decision to decline the offer of the Budmouth practice is clearly symbolised by the reds of the evening sun that reflect the fire within him: 'His motive was fantastic, glowing, shapeless as the fiery scenery about the western sky' (Vol.II, Ch.XI p.196). The sun is literally setting on any hope of matrimonial happiness as the eager Grace rushes out to meet her husband. In the darkening sky, the folding star appears lost and vulnerable in its solitude. The intensity of the sunset that corresponds with his passion for Felice fades with the dawning of his entrapment; he perceives daybreak to be drained of colour and warmth, signalling a world without passion. We might think of Fitzpiers as an Icarus figure who believes that his wings have been clipped by society; the pallid tones of a world without Felice appear death-like to him. There also appears to be an intended symbolism in Vol.III, Chapter III – the whiteness of Felice's fence contrasts with the black shadows of the night, and Fitzpiers' lantern projects light onto the blood spilt on the white railings. As in Vol.I, Chapter XV, the flickers of light reveal images of death or disorder.

The cinematic quality observed by Norman Page in the Percomb / Marty scene can be identified again when Grace watches her erring husband riding off to yet another rendezvous with his lover. As we noted in our Introduction, Hardy's perspectives and light effects are crucial to our apprehension of mood and motive. Just at the point when Fitzpiers diminishes, to become a mere speck on the brow of the hill, up rises Giles, as if from the earth itself. As Grace and Giles approach each other, the beauty of the woodland becomes heightened by an iridescent light in such a way to suggest the connections that Grundy observes 'between emotion, experience and colour': [9]

> They had risen so far over the crest of the hill that the whole west sky was revealed. Between the broken clouds they could see far into the

> recesses of heaven, the eye journeying on under a species of golden arcades, and past fiery obstructions, fancied cairns, logan-stones, stalactites and stalagmites of topaz. Deeper than this their gaze passed thin flakes of incandescence, till it plunged into a bottomless medium of soft green light. (Vol.II, Ch.XII p.206)

In this passage, Grundy recognises the conventional composition methods of the artist and she points out the foreground of 'broken clouds' followed by the 'golden arcades' perspectives, the middle distance of 'fiery obstructions', and the final imagined vanishing-point of the 'bottomless medium of soft green fire'.[10] The incandescence of the light in this scene is very different from the cold tones of the twilight marking Fitzpiers's departure. Just as the twilight appears anaemic at his departure, so does the dawn light appear unnaturally feverish on his return: 'The vale was wrapped in a dim atmosphere of unnaturalness and the east was like a livid curtain edged with pink' (Vol.II, Ch.XIII p.211).

In the poignant bittersweet interchange between Grace and Giles, inVol.III, Chapter V, the creative tension between past and present is expressed in terms of light and shade: 'The gloomy atmosphere of the past, and the still gloomy horizon of the present, had been for the interval forgotten. Now the whole environment came back; the due balance of shade among the light was restored' (Vol.III, Ch.V p.282). The light and shade equilibrium is threatened by Fitzpiers's appeal for a reconciliation, perceived by Grace as 'a cowl of blackness over the Melbury house-hold' (Vol.III, Ch.VII p.296).

Clarity of judgement can be shown in terms of light and shade. Throughout the narrative, Melbury's insight is impaired, his vision reduced by a light that is either failing or vacillating: 'The twilight of the room prevented her father seeing the despondent

misery of her face' (Vol.III, Ch.VII p.297).Melbury's hopes for his daughter's happiness pale into insubstantial spectres under a light that is pallid and sickly:

> It was a rimy evening when he set out to look for Giles. The woods seemed to be in a cold sweat; beads of perspiration hung from every bare twig; the sky had no colour, and the trees rose before him as haggard grey phantoms whose days of insubstantiality were passed. (Vol.II, Ch.XV p.223)

During his visit to Hintock Hall, where he has set forth to argue for his daughter's happiness, Melbury sits deep in thought. In his bewilderment, he realises that his perceptions and judgement have been falsely grounded. His occasional connections with the material facts of the current situation are symbolised by discernible pictures depicted on stained - glass windows:

> Melbury sat with his hands resting on the familiar knobbed thorn walking-stick, whose growing he had seen before he enjoyed its use. The scene to him was not the material environment of his person, but a tragic vision that travelled with him like an envelope. Through this vision the incidents of the moment but gleamed confusedly here and there, as an outer landscape through the high-coloured scenes of a stained window. (Vol.II, Ch.XVI p.229)

Again, when the Melbury household prepares for Fitzpiers's proposal to Grace, we note that motes of dust obstruct the stream of sunlight. This can be seen as a symbol of Melbury's imperfect vision. Setting out to reclaim Giles as successor to Fitzpiers, he observes the absence of colour in the sky; the woods appear insubstantial in their monochromatic greyness. His judgement is never made in the full light of day. It is in the faint moonlight that he confirms his decision to make amends to Giles for past wrongs (Vol.I, Ch.III p.18). The vision of those who inhabit Hintock House is also flawed, as we can see in the fact that the House is eyeless and shuttered.

Symbolically, the narrative begins and concludes in the failing light of dusk. The sun is setting on Grace's marriage, South is confronted by blankness and death as the sun goes down, Marty delivers her eulogy to lost love in the moonlight – these scenes can all be interpreted metaphorically. Our perceptions are thus shaped by 'the metaphors of light' that Vigar says are 'often used by Hardy to describe a character's state of mind'.[11] Vigar goes on to catalogue examples:

> Mr Melbury, confused with the intricacies of divorce proceedings, is said to be 'blind to these subtleties, which he had formerly beheld as in a noontide light' (Ch.xxxix); Mrs Charmond's heart reveals on her face 'as by a lightening gleam' her love for Fitzpiers (Ch.xxxiii); Grace and Giles, forgetting 'the gloomy atmosphere of the past and the still gloomy horizon of the present', come back to their senses and 'the due balance of shade among the light' is restored. (Ch.xxxviii)[12]

III

Throughout the novel, Romantic possibilities are interwoven with tough realism. Whilst we are made aware at the outset of the history of the surroundings, we are also told that there has been a gradual diminishing of its former grandeur: 'Little Hintock had at some time or other been of greater importance than now' (Vol.I, Ch.IV p.24). It is significant that the portraits of kings and queens depicted on Giles's playing cards are now faded and stained. There is a nostalgia here that recalls the diminished grandeur of the D'Urbervilles' ancestral line. With such diminishing, comes a sense of loss. It would appear that love and beauty, and self-fulfilment through Nature, are now subordinated by the new values of modern man. Ambition, movement, money, and fashionable philosophies, are the new influences in Hintock. The invasion of the old by the new does not apply only in the geographical sense. Fitzpiers appears to pursue science without conscience, deftly turning his world on its head. At times he may be seen as a Faustian

figure, exercising no restraint in his thirst for knowledge. He is even prepared to offer people cash in exchange for their brains, so that after their death he can pursue his experiments. Clearly, Little Hintock is too little for him - he strains against its topographical and moral parameters. Forever on the move, Fitzpiers epitomises the deracination of modern man. Strangers to the Hintock woodlands are depicted as intruders who will inevitably disrupt the tranquillity of the local inhabitants. Percomb, Fitzpiers, and Felice Charmond, are all instrumental in their own individual ways, creating ripples of discontent that will ultimately lead to tragedy. Our first glimpse of Hintock is through the eyes of a stranger. As a stranger – 'he did not belong to the country proper' (Vol.I, Ch.I p.5) – Percomb is understandably lost. Indeed, he may be said to be lost in another sense, for it is he who persuades Marty to sell her beautiful hair: 'On this one bright gift of Time to the particular victim of his now before us the newcomer's eyes were fixed' (Vol.I, Ch.II p.11).

Marty's allusions to the Devil and Faustus indicate the prevailing xenophobia of the woodland community (Vol.I,Ch.II p.13). In this case, Marty's references seem apposite. The barber intrudes upon the woodland garden with Satanic stealth, arriving there in darkness, with a pre-meditated plan to tempt the soul of the innocent Marty with the offer of gold sovereigns. By placing the gold coins in the frame of her looking-glass, he ensures that the girl's reflection will be associated with temptation. The sovereigns gaze back at her cynically, like a 'pair of jaundiced eyes on the watch for an opportunity' (Vol.I, Ch.III p.16). It is clear at the outset, that the intrusion of commerce will corrupt the woodlands.

With Percomb's visit, Marty appears trapped in a hiatus between the inner glare and the outer darkness. It would appear that in this instance Nature emulates man. Rather than reassurance, Nature offers instead indications of egotism and ruthless greed:

> A lingering wind brought to her ear the creaking sound of two overcrowded branches in the neighbouring wood, which were rubbing each other into wounds, and other vocalized sorrows of the trees, together with the screech of owls, and the fluttering tumble of some awkward woodpigeon ill-balanced on its roosting bough. (Vol.I, Ch.III p.16)

Here, Hardy subverts the Wordsworthian hope of *Tintern Abbey* that Nature will never desert those who love her. Human disharmony is matched by the harsh self-survival struggles of nature. There is an elegiac tenor throughout the narrative. The sense of regret extends to the impression that beauty and art are regarded now without appreciation or even understanding:

> ...the churches, the abbey, and other medieval buildings on this clear bright morning having the linear distinctness of architectural drawings, as if the original dream and vision of the conceiving master-mason were for a brief hour flashed down through the centuries to an unappreciative age. Giles saw their eloquent look on this day of transparency, but could not construe it. (Vol.I, Ch.V p.35)

The nostalgia of the narrative depicts the faded hues of a 'melancholy romanticism' (Vol.II, Ch.VII p.162), and, when we see through Grace's eyes, the cattle continuously licking the Norman carvings of Sherton Castle, we conclude with her that there is a degrading lack of tending.

Instability is also implied by movement or change. The physical severing of the early familial and geographical bonds will inevitably lead to an inner disharmony and deracination. Disaffection and disharmony characterise the modern consciousness – and contribute to Angel's perception of 'the ache of modernism' (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: Ch.XIX, p.124). Beauty as we once knew it is now doomed by unrecognition. In his

discourse on the plight of the Romantic imagination in Wessex, Moore observes the reduction from Keats's nightingale (symbol of the Romantic imagination in 'Ode to a Nightingale') to the anonymous, ineffectual choristers of the woodlands:[13]

> The coming night gradually obscured the smoke of the chimneys, but the position of the wood-environed community could still be distinguished by a few faint lights, winking more or less ineffectually through the leafless boughs and the undiscernible songsters they bore, in the form of balls of feathers, at roost among them. (Vol.I, Ch.I p.8)

There are moments in the woodlands that suggest absence of colour and these may be interpreted as an absence of the Romantic imagination. Enshrouded by the clinging whiteness, the misty woodlands are drained of colour. Significantly, all that meets John South's gaze after the tree is felled is 'the vacant patch of sky' (Vol.I, Ch.XIV p.102). This revelation might remind us of the poet's experience in Wordsworth's poem, 'Nutting', in that the sudden vacancy recalls the shock or 'the sense of pain' on being confronted by the vacancy of 'the intruding sky' above the 'mutilated bower'. The exaggerated whiteness reflected in South's eyes is a whiteness that will gradually enshroud him in death. South, like Giles, cannot articulate his emotions – it is almost as if Hardy is claiming that inexpression is death. Moore perceives in South's 'neurotic fancy' a subversion of the 'Wordsworthian imagination'.[14] Symbolically, South dies as the sun goes down – the Romantic imagination being long past its zenith.

A Romantic view of Nature as benign is challenged by Hardy, by drawing on Wordsworth's image of 'The Small Celandine', to stress the inevitable vulnerability of age to suffering:

> Melbury perhaps was an unlucky man in having within him the sentiment which could indulge in this foolish fondness about the imprint of a daughter's footstep. Nature does not carry on her government with a view to such feelings; and when advancing years render the opened hearts of

> those who possess them less dexterous than formerly in shutting against the blast, they must suffer "buffeting at will by rain and storm" no less than little celandines. (Vol.I, Ch.III p.20)

We have been prepared by the Preface for an unsentimental approach:

> Not boskiest bow'r,
> When hearts are ill affin'd,
> Hath tree of pow'r
> To shelter from the wind!

and throughout the novel, Hardy's Romantic and anti-Romantic impulses are locked in contention; what appears on the surface to resemble the pastoral convention becomes subverted by an anti-Romantic view of the natural world. Squires observes a consistent counterpointing of 'the anti-pastoral pattern of disharmony and intrusion' with 'the pastoral pattern of happiness, tranquillity, harmony with nature, and spiritual love'.[15] The following passage is one of the more explicit examples of Hardy's anti-pastoralism:

> Owls that had been catching mice in the outhouses, rabbits that had been eating the winter-greens in the gardens, and stoats that had been sucking the blood of the rabbits, discerning that their human neighbours were on the move, discreetly withdrew from publicity, and were seen and heard no more till nightfall. (Vol.I, Ch.IV p.23)

Nature's hierarchy is firmly established here with the owls swooping down on the mice, the rabbits feeding on the winter vegetables, the stoats preying on the rabbits. The reference to 'human neighbours' parodies the assumption of man's superiority, for we, like non-human Nature, are included in the natural cycle. The pattern will commence all over again when the animals come out to forage at nightfall. Night brings forth other predators, as we see in the interlude between Fitzpiers and Suke. According to Moore, the Romantic imagination has slipped from its exalted height, so that in place of Keats's nightingale, we witness the sarcastic cawing of the night-hawk.[16] This, we are told, is the

only accompaniment to their love-making: 'the time of nightingales being now past' (Vol.II, Ch.IV p.150).

Territorial combat is as persistent amongst the vegetation as it is among animals and humans in the woodlands:

> Firewood was the one thing abundant in Little Hintock; and a blaze of gad-ends made the outhouse gay with its light, which vied with that of the day as yet. In the hollow shades of the roof could be seen pale dangling arms of ivy which had crept through the joints of the tiles and were groping in vain for some support, their leaves being dwarfed and sickly for want of sunlight; others were pushing in with such force at the eves as to lift from their supports the shelves that were fixed there.
> (Vol.I, Ch.IV p.25)

Nature, as presented in this passage, is seen to be an intrusive personality, intent on invading all man-made interstices in its relentless thirst for sunlight. Eccentricities of shape and form spring up from the sylvan landscape. Outwith the norm, and grotesque, these features are almost Gothic-like in that they rebel against formal line and structure. Combined with Hardy's deliberate humanisation of the trees, the images prompt dark revelations about Nature and mankind. The post-Darwinian view punctures the gentle pastoral mode:

> On older trees still than these huge lobes of fungi grew like lungs. Here, as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling. (Vol.I, Ch.VII p.52)

The grotesqueries of Nature as depicted here seem to correlate with the perversions of man. Cankerous trees and deformed leaves can relate to individual abnormalities. Indeed, the reference to 'depraved crowds of a city slum' reads as a collective indictment on society itself – the crowds being an aggregate of countless individual depravities.

Far removed from the Wordsworthian promise of a redemptive harmonising with Nature, such as is experienced in *Tintern Abbey*, Hardy's focus here is directed towards cacophony rather than harmony: 'They dived amid beeches under which nothing grew, the younger boughs still retaining their hectic leaves, that rustled in the breeze with a sound almost metallic, like the sheet-iron foliage of the fabled Jarnvid wood' (Vol.I, Ch.VII p.52). The register of the passage with its references to metal and sheet-iron suggests an atmosphere that is as cold and unyielding as the minerals themselves. We are discomfited by the image of stunted beech trees that paradoxically bear signs of renewal with their animated leaves. Where a Romantic imagination would expect soft rustling, there is instead a harsh metallic resonance. The woodland pastoral appears nothing more than an illusion – a metamorphosis has taken place and we have landed in the dark depths of an unsympathetic forest. The impression of chaos continues with the clashing movement of the uncoordinated wood pigeons: 'every wood-pigeon rose from its perch with a continued clash, dashing its wings against the branches with well-nigh force enough to break every quill' (Vol.I, Ch.VII p.52).

The bird motif, a favourite with Hardy both in his poetry and in his prose, recurs throughout the text. We saw, in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, that the nightingale and its secret are pivotal to the fine balance between Romanticism and realism; in this novel, the birds are passive victims of Nature's dark design.

Hardy's close study of the varying forms and patterns of the natural environment recalls an architectural precision, with close attention to line and form. Distortions of form result in individuality. Just as the Gothic gargoyles add individual expression to the formal structure of a building, so do the corkscrew monstrosities of the vegetation

challenge our expectations. These Gothic characteristics can relate to the wayward eccentricities of the individual. For Hardy, the unnatural imposed upon the natural is aesthetically and morally grotesque:

> ...various monstrosities of vegetation, the chief being corkscrew shapes in black and white thorn, brought to that pattern by the slow torture of an encircling woodbine during their growth, as the Chinese have been said to mould human beings into grotesque toys by continued compression in infancy. (Vol.I, Ch.VII p.53)

Equally anti-Romantic is the following passage, where the hollowness at the very centre of the oak-tree can be interpreted as a metaphor for Grace's hollow marriage:

> They halted beneath a half-dead oak, hollow, and disfigured with white tumours, its roots spreading out like claws grasping the ground. A chilly wind circled round them, upon whose currents the seeds of a neighbouring lime-tree, supported parachute-wise by the wing attached, flew out of the boughs downward like fledglings from their nest. The vale was wrapped in a dim atmosphere of unnaturalness, and the east was like a livid curtain edged with pink. There was no sign nor sound of Fitzpiers.
> (Vol.II, Ch.XIII p.211)

The oak has degenerated into something only half-alive and disfigured. Its ancient roots do not suggest stability, rather they seem to tear at the earth. A chill wind dislodges the seeds of the neighbouring tree and they fall like fledglings from their nest. This analogy suggests the theme of displacement. Grace herself is in danger of being ousted from her nest, with her marriage half-dead and hollow at the centre. Its future development seems stunted. The territorial impulse of the spreading roots could relate to Felice's desire to appropriate Fitzpiers, while he is quite literally pursuing felicity. This scene offers no clarity of light; instead, the atmosphere is dim. The only colour - that of the sunset- appears livid and unnatural. The flaws and central hollowness at the heart of the oak reflect the absence of heart at the centre of the woodlands. The pastoral idyll is consequently undermined.

The anti-Romantic mood of this passage contrasts strikingly with the mood of Vol.I, Chapter VIII, in which there the natural empathy between Giles and his woodland is emphasised:

> He had a marvellous power of making trees grow. Although he would seem to shovel in the earth quite carelessly there was a sort of sympathy between himself and the fir, oak, or beech that he was operating on; so that the roots took hold of the soil in a few days. When, on the other hand, any of the journeymen planted, although they seemed to go through an identically similar process, one quarter of the trees would die away during the ensuing August. (Vol.I, Ch.VIII p.63)

Clearly, Giles's intuitive knowledge of his surroundings, together with his constancy, contribute to his special rapport with his native soil. The mutual respect that the tree-planter and the trees have for each other is shared by Marty who participates in the process: 'Marty, who turned her hand to anything, was usually the one who performed the part of keeping the trees in a perpendicular position whilst he threw in the mould' (Vol.I, Ch.VIII p.63). Marty's commitment, both to the native soil and to Giles, have become one and the same; her hands and Giles's gentle fingers are almost indistinguishable as they work together with the same purpose and rhythm:

> Winterborne's fingers were endowed with a gentle conjuror's touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth. He put most of the roots towards the south-west; for, he said, in forty years' time, when some great gale is blowing from that quarter, the trees will require the strongest holdfast on that side to stand against it and not fall.
>
> "How they sigh directly we put 'em upright, though while they are lying down they don't sigh at all," said Marty.
>
> "Do they?" said Giles. "I've never noticed it."
>
> She erected one of the young pines into its hole, and held up her finger; the soft musical breathing instantly set in which was not to cease night or day till the grown tree should be felled – probably long after the two planters had been felled themselves.
>
> "It seems to me," the girl continued, "as if they sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest – just as we be." (Vol.I, Ch.VIII p.64)

IV

That Nature is intended to be a protagonist can hardly be questioned – for example, Hardy explicitly states his perception of night as a personality (Vol.I,Ch.III p.16). Vigar is impressed by Hardy's emphasis on night as a 'palpable presence' – 'a wide, living phenomenon' which, with its exaggerated dark shapes and smells and sounds, becomes 'the perfect artistic milieu for a novel that depends so much on the need to distinguish reality from falsity'.[17] Her observation is borne out in the description in Vol.I, Chapter III: 'Night, that strange personality which within walls brings ominous introspectiveness and self-distrust, but under the open sky banishes such subjective anxieties as too trivial for thought' (Vol.I, Ch.III p.16). We recall that when the unsympathetic features of the night conspire with the cynicism of the sovereigns' jaundiced eyes, to tempt Marty, nothing can illuminate the black void of her misery: 'The night in all its fulness met her flatly on the threshold, like the very brink of an absolute void, or the ante-mundane Ginning-Gap believed in by her Teuton forefathers' (Vol.I, Ch.III p.16).

The close connection between man and Nature, is described by Squires as a 'moral vision': ' the novel's moral vision, its ethic of man and nature fusing harmoniously, each dependent on the other and linked together by an unwritten language'.[18] And there is truth in this account if we compare the unwritten language here with the rustics' intuitive comprehension of the 'language' of the trees in *Under the Greenwood Tree.* The natural habitat influences the woodlanders as a living presence, invading every corner of their cottages as insistently as it intrudes upon the individual consciousness. At times there can occur a seamless fusion between the character and his

environment as is so often the case with Giles, who resembles Diggory Venn (*The Return of the Native*), in that they both absorb the tints of the landscape and appear as extensions of their surroundings. So attuned are the locals to their environment that they rely on the shifts of light over the landscape as an index of time. For those characters rooted in Hintock and interacting with their environment, the impulses of Nature are seen to influence their lives both consciously and sub-consciously:

> Winterborne, seeing that Melbury had not arrived, stepped back again outside the door; and the conversation interrupted by his momentary presence flowed anew, reaching his ears as an accompaniment to the regular dripping of the fog from the plantation boughs around. (Vol.I, Ch.IV p.26)

The regular drip of the fog is subliminal, a sub-conscious reminder of Nature's living presence – as persistent as a pulse-beat. This regularity is repeated in the 'click, click, click' of Marty's pattens that serve as a steady metronome for her purposeful march. Contrasting with these positive rhythms that sub-consciously motivate Giles and Marty, are the life-negating endorsements that debilitate Felice: ' "I think sometimes that I was born to live and do nothing, nothing, nothing ... " ' (Vol.I, Ch.VIII p.59). A parallel can be drawn here between Felice and Eustacia (*The Return of the Native*), in that both women are antagonistic to their environment. Giles and Marty, on the other hand, are attuned instinctively to Nature and absorb and reflect the rhythms of their natural surroundings.

At times, Giles's fusion with Nature is almost seamless: 'he was standing somewhat apart, holding the tree like an ensign' (Vol.I, Ch.V p.36). He is linked inextricably with images of apple-trees and harvest symbols: 'Winterborne, being fixed to the spot by his apple-tree, could not advance to meet her' (Vol.I, Ch.V p.37). Literally

and symbolically fixed to the spot by his tree, Giles is rooted physically, psychologically, and emotionally, in the woodlands. There is no possibility that he can advance to meet Grace, given the fact that educationally and socially she has long since outstripped him. Yet, we note that Grace is still attached to the woodlands. Variations of tree species and leaf colours are as familiar to Grace as the characteristics of her familial home. Melbury is also naturally integrated with his environment – 'It seemed as if the squirrels and birds knew him' (Vol.I, Ch.VII p.52).

With regard to the local characters and their associations with the area, the woodlanders are reliable archivists. The environment can only be properly appreciated as a main focus of interest by the natives:

> To people at home there these changeful tricks had their interests; the strange mistakes that some of the more sanguine trees had made in budding before their month, to be incontinently glued up by frozen thawings now; the similar sanguine errors of impulsive birds in framing nests that were swamped by snow-water, and other such incidents, prevented any sense of wearisomeness in the minds of the natives. (Vol.II, Ch.I p.126)

There are significant moments, as in the axing of the old oak tree in Chapter III, when Nature appears to indict man: 'If a fine product of vegetable nature could ever be said to look ridiculous it was the case now, when the oak stood naked-legged, and as if ashamed, till the axeman came and cut a ring round it' (Vol.II, Ch.III p.136). The oak's shame implies a moral judgement on those who exploit Nature for their own ends. The barkers attack the tree like locusts, hacking at the tall, noble branches that have towered over the woodlands for as long as they can remember. Similarly, Nature appears as an allegory for human failings. The cuckoo's cry jars on Grace's nerves – she fears an association with the bird that thrives on ousting others from their rightful nests. Nature can often be a

victim of man's carelessness. Grace and Melbury unwittingly deface the landscape as they ride home in their carriage: 'they drove on out of the grove, their wheels silently crushing delicate-patterned mosses, hyacinths, primroses, lord-and-ladies, and other strange and common plants, and cracking up little sticks that lay across the track' (Vol.II, Ch.III p.140).

Giles suffers the same scant attention:

> At a gate, which opened down the incline, a man leant on his arms regarding this fair promise so intently that he did not observe their passing.
> "That was Giles," said Melbury, when they had gone by.
> "Was it? Poor Giles," said she. (Vol.II, Ch.III p.140)

The roll of the seasons into summer reflects the developing intimacy between Grace and Fitzpiers; their feelings for each other run in parallel with the burgeoning landscape, that swells and vibrates with suppressed energies:

> Spring weather came on rather suddenly, the unsealing of buds that had long been swollen accomplishing itself in the space of one warm night. The rush of sap in the veins of the trees could almost be heard. The flowers of late April took up a position unseen, and looked as if they had been blooming a long while, though there had been no trace of them the day before yesterday... (Vol.II, Ch.III p.135)

The positive energy in this scene contrasts with the impression of decaying vegetation that reflects the rank passion of Felice and Fitzpiers:

> The morning had been windy, and little showers had sowed themselves like grain against the walls and window-panes of the Hintock cottages. He went on foot across the wilder recesses of the park, where slimy streams of fresh moisture, exuding from decayed holes caused by old amputations, ran down the bark of the oaks and elms, the rind below being coated with a lichenous wash as green as emerald. (Vol.II, Ch.XI pp.196-197)

The excessive moisture suggests a supersaturation of the senses. The natural elements, defiantly unrestrained, hurl themselves against the window - panes of Hintock House – intruding thus upon the urbanite consciousness of Felice, who has attempted to block out

Nature and to re-invent night and day on her own terms. Wrinkled and deformed both by natural degeneration and also by man ('old amputations'), the landscape appears unconsoling. It jars upon the nerves of those who remain disassociated from the countryside. This disharmony is summarised by 'the scrape of snails creeping up the window glass' (Vol.II, Ch.XI p.197).

There is a strategic positioning, Grundy says, in the counterpointing of lush orchards and vivid sunsets with diseased and decaying landscape.[19] The unsympathetic vision in the above passage contrasts with the life-affirming impressions of the harvest such as described in the following passage:

> ...orchards, lustrous with the reds of apple-crops, berries, and foliage, the whole intensified by the gilding of the declining sun. The earth this year had been prodigally bountiful, and now was the supreme moment of her bounty. In the poorest spots the hedges were bowed with haws and blackberries; acorns cracked underfoot. And the burst husks of chestnuts lay exposing their auburn contents as if arranged by anxious sellers in a fruit-market. (Vol.II, Ch.XII p.204)

Similarly, there are those scenes of bountiful harvests and vibrant colours that act as the mainspring for Grace's return to Giles. Giles is deeply integrated with his environment, at times literally absorbing it: 'Fragments of apple-rind had alighted upon the brim of his hat - probably from the bursting of a bag – while brown pips of the same fruit were sticking among the down upon his fine round arms, and in his beard' (Vol.II, Ch.IX p.175). In Giles, as in Nature, there is the promise of fruitfulness. But Grace's experience of betrayal casts a shadow over her spontaneous appreciation of the scene: 'she wondered if there were one world in the universe where the fruit had no worm, and marriage no sorrow' (Vol.II, Ch.XII p.204). The impression of Giles rising up out of the earth and smeared with the sap of the boughs, is loaded with phallic connotations. The

anthropological presentation of Giles with his apple tree implies, as Douglas Brown observes, a sensuality that suggests something more than the picturesque.[20] As 'Autumn's very brother' (Vol.II, Ch.XII p.205), Giles epitomises the harvest; he can thus offer the fallen Grace a recuperative fall, or lapse, back to a Nature that is shown to have redemptive qualities. Paradoxically, through this fall, Grace will retrieve her real "self". Nature becomes an agent of liberation, and Grace's heart leaps up like a released bough. Primitivism and passion become synonymous. Nature, in this image, acts as a catalyst for Grace's self-discovery.

Yet, Nature's independent will, 'Nature does not carry on her government with a view to such feelings' (Vol.I, Ch.III p.20), can imply indifference. Hardy's ambivalence regarding the morality of Nature can best be summarised by Autumn. The season that heralds the rich beauty of the cider harvest is also the one that precedes the ravages of winter. There is an unmistakable tone of regret in the descriptions of shrunken leaves that hang like faded rags. In their final frenzied activity before the ravages of an insidious winter frost, the golden leaves fall in multitudes to the ground. There, they turn to red and curl up to await their inevitable degeneration:

> Autumn drew shiveringly to its end. One day something seemed to be gone from the gardens; the tenderer leaves of vegetables had shrunk under the first smart frost, and hung like faded linen rags; the forest leaves which had been descending at leisure, descended in haste and in multitudes, and all the golden colours that had hung overhead were now crowded together in a degraded mass underfoot, where the fallen myriads got redder and hornier, and curled themselves up to rot. (Vol.II, Ch.XIV p.216)

The undefined 'something' that has gone from the gardens has also vanished irretrievably from Little Hintock. With the fall of the leaves there will come other falls.

With the untimely loss of Giles, the suffering of Marty, and the final abandonment by Grace, it appears that, in this context, Wordsworth's faith, as expressed in *Tintern Abbey*, has been undermined - Nature *will* betray the heart that loves her.

Notes

[1] Penelope Vigar, *The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality* (London: The Athlone Press, 1974) p. 25.
[2] Vigar, p. 25.
[3] Kevin Z. Moore, *The Descent of the Imagination: Postromantic Culture in the Later Novels of Thomas Hardy* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), pp. 21-24.
[4] Vigar, p. 28.
[5] Michael Squires, 'Arcadian Innocents', in *Thomas Hardy : Three Pastoral Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 180-194 (p. 187).
[6] Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.35.
[7] Norman Page, *Thomas Hardy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 75.
[8] Moore, pp. 144-145.
[9] Grundy, p. 52.
[10] Grundy, p. 20.
[11] Vigar, p. 32.
[12] Vigar, p. 32.
[13] Moore, p. 80.
[14] Moore, p. 5.
[15] Squires, p. 189.
[16] Moore, p. 80.
[17] Vigar, p. 32.
[18] Squires, p. 182.
[19] Grundy, p. 57.
[20] Douglas Brown, 'Transience Intimated in Dramatic Forms', in *Thomas Hardy: Three Pastoral Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp.157-180 (p.166).

Chapter Three

The Return of the Native

I

In the context of our discussion, *The Return of the Native* represents a tonal shift from the mellow glow of the Dutch genre painting that characterises *Under the Greenwood Tree*, and the Impressionist sun-shadow dappling of *The Woodlanders*. In this novel, Hardy's canvas is more muted. Its perspectives are reduced, with the bleak level horizontals of heath and sky scarcely interrupted by human activity. This chapter will focus on Hardy as landscapist, with specific reference to his presentation of landscape, in terms of light effects, and perspectives.

As we have noted in the Introduction, Nature's function in Wessex is not just to provide a backdrop to the action. Characters continuously interact consciously and subconsciously with their environment; we learn that the rustics can discern the individual articulations of each species of tree in the Greenwood; we watch the steady drip of the woodland boughs register on Giles' sub-conscience as a subliminal pulse-beat. In *The Return of the Native*, Nature's role is not only active, it is central. The heath is portrayed as a personality and we are left in no doubt as to the extent of its influence on its inhabitants.

Critics are drawn to Egdon as an arena for discussion on such contentious issues as Hardy's 'emotionalism' and his treatment of landscape. Most would agree that Egdon should be interpreted as a metaphor – a view endorsed by Dorothy Van Ghent, who can discern in the landscape, 'the loneliness of human motive', as well as 'the inertia of unconscious life', and 'the mystery of the enfolding darkness'.[1] Similarly, Daniel

Schwarz recognises in the external backdrop a reflection of 'mankind's common internal chaos'.[2] Both the physical and the moral landscapes strike Albert Guerard as being 'peculiarly modern'. He claims that 'The love of the macabre coincidence and grotesque mischance, the cruel imaginings and manipulations; all the bad luck and all the mis-matched destinies, the darkness of the physical and moral landscapes, the awareness of dwindling energies, and the sense of man's appalling limitations – all these are peculiarly modern.'[3]

Contention arises when the heath is identified as an active agent in the drama. On the one hand, some, like George Wing, refute the possibility of Egdon as protagonist, 'A heath cannot be a player', whereas others, such as Lawrence, celebrate Hardy's inventiveness: 'What is the great tragic power in the book? It is Egdon Heath.'.[4] Perceiving the heath to be more than just 'stupendous theatre', Lawrence goes on to argue that it is actively engaged in 'its own incomprehensible drama, untouched.'[5] To regard landscape as a central force, as key protagonist, there must be a shift of perspective and, as Lawrence concludes, this unorthodox viewpoint can be somewhat discomforting, because, when set against the unfathomable force of Egdon, man appears diminished. This kind of reductive effect urges Lawrence to remark that 'the small lives are spilled and wasted', and he concludes: 'Out of the body of this crude earth are born Eustacia, Wildeve, Mistress Yeobright, Clym, and all the others. They are one year's accidental crop.'[6]

Eliot is at odds with Lawrence. As shown in the Introduction, the polarity between the two critics stems from Hardy's unusual treatment of landscape. For Eliot,

landscape is ' a passive creature' manipulated by Hardy as a means of compensating for uninteresting, undeveloped characters:

> In consequence of his self-absorption, he makes a great deal of landscape; for landscape is a passive creature which lends itself to an author's mood. Landscape is fitted too for the purposes of an author who is interested not at all in men's minds, but only in their emotions. It is only, indeed, in their emotional paroxysms that most of Hardy's characters come alive. This extreme emotionalism seems to me a symptom of decadence.[7]

Eliot's charge is challenged by Jean Brooks' appreciation of the positive value that stems from this very emotionalism: 'Far from robbing the characters of their human individuality, as Eliot claims, heightened emotion stresses both their basic humanness and the resistance of the unique personality to the habit of despair.'[8] What she says in general terms can be applied to *The Return of the Native*. I would agree with Brooks that it is the emotions in Wessex that are likely to leave the most memorable impress: 'the intense emotion of Hardy's characters and Hardy's personal voice affirm the response of living passion to the human predicament'.[9] Even a preliminary look at Lawrence and Eliot, as shown in the Introduction, suggests that the mainspring for their debate is the acceptance or rejection of the 'disproportioning' that Hardy applies in his Art.[10] I think it is becoming more and more apparent that my own position is anti-Eliot; what he finds objectionably disproportionate in terms of landscape or emotion, I, (like Lawrence), find imaginative.

Egdon's characteristics are presented in the form of a portrait. Rather than a portrait of orthodox beauty, we are presented with a new aesthetic that Hardy believes to be more representative of the modern age. We now face a radical re-evaluation of beauty – a gaunt, spare, level, altogether more northern, quality of beauty that runs counter to the picturesque beauty of Heidelberg or Baden. Alastair Smart charts Hardy's excursion into

this modern territory: 'Hardy is here questioning an accepted ideal of beauty, especially as it is applied to landscape and landscape-painting – the convention, that is, of the Picturesque'.[11] The relationship between Clym's 'modern' features and the ancient heath is noted by J.B.Bullen: 'Clym's appearance is closely identified with the northerness of the heath', and, 'He is further linked to the heath in the appeal that his face makes to the modern sensibility'. He interprets Hardy's perception of 'modern' beauty:

> Just as the 'vineyard and myrtle-gardens of South Europe' may have satisfied 'our race when it was young' (*RN* 5), but now men turn to the 'chastened sublimity' of places like Egdon, so Clym's face is similarly 'haggard' and unconventionally beautiful.[12]

Egdon relates to Clym's 'typical countenance of the future' in that both portraits are unidealised, and, because they are etched with unflattering, expressive lines, they call to mind the style of Durer and Rembrandt. Landscape colours are subdued to neutral earth tones, so that the tonal monochromes of the heath satirize 'human vanity in clothes' (Bk1Ch.I p.12). With the verticals of waterfalls and mountains scaled down to flat plains, the 'modern' landscape is not immediately appreciated for its beauty. Instead, it is valued for its endurance, and also of course, for its 'beauty of association', which matters so much more to Hardy than its 'beauty of aspect':

> This accords with my feeling about, say, Heidelberg and Baden *versus* Scheveningen – as I wrote at the beginning of 'The Return of the Native' – that the beauty of association is entirely superior to the beauty of aspect, and a beloved relative's old battered tankard to the finest Greek vase. Paradoxically put, it is to see the beauty in ugliness.[13]

The heath with its defects is an example of what Hardy refers to as an 'hitherto unperceived beauty', which he aims to 'irradiate into art' with 'the light that never was'.[14]

The heath appears both proactive and reactive - alternately a conduit and an agent. There are specific and unique qualities pertaining to the landscape, apart from its unique

and indigenous shades of colour. Even its own language, 'The muttered articulations of the wind in the hollows were as complaints and petitions from the "souls of mighty worth" suspended therein' (Bk1Ch.III p.20), could be the more resonant, minor chords of the *Greenwood* language. Not to familiarize oneself with these facets of the landscape is, we are warned, as dangerously myopic as marrying a foreigner without first learning his language. (Bk1 Ch.VII p.73). Egdon's temporal and spatial perspectives hint at a force that is mysterious and untamable:

> The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half-an-hour to eve; it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread. (Bk 1 Ch.I p.9)

There is an "other world" atmosphere surrounding the heath-land. Phantom souls stir restlessly across a dark and wild expanse of unknowable and uncultivated territory. If the setting for *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is 'the region of dream and mystery' (Preface), then, Egdon, a place of exile, is a nightmarish vision, in which 'flight and disaster' are anticipated (Bk1Ch.I p.11). We can assume from this that Hardy is striving towards the cosmic perspectives that are more fully explored in *Two on a Tower.*

We are told that Egdon's history precedes the Roman vicinal footpaths, and Celtic and Druidical burial mounds characterise the area. Claiming ancient permanency, Egdon appears as ballast, stable and unchanged, whereas mankind is adrift and in flux: 'The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained' (Bk1Ch.I p.12). The gravitas of the sentence hinges on the word 'yet', which implies the uniqueness of the place. Man, despite his laborious efforts, leaves little more than a fingerprint on the geological surface. The natives are conscious of the disparity between the eternal quality of their environment, and the ephemeral nature of their own

lives: 'She [Mrs Yeobright] remembered that this bustle of ants had been in progress for years at the same spot – doubtless those of the old times were the ancestors of these which walked there now' (Bk4 Ch.VI p.282). The fleetingness of human and non-human life-span, repeated in the cycle of generations, is highlighted by the historical and geological overview.

Uninfluenced by human activity or endeavor, Egdon remains constant, whereas society, with its changing values, appears unstable. In a later chapter, Hardy turns to synecdochy to emphasise this sense of instability:

> It was one of those nights when cracks in the walls of old churches widen, when ancient stains on the ceilings of decayed manor-houses are renewed and enlarged from the size of a man's hand to an area of many feet.
> (Bk5 Ch.VIII p.349)

In the statement, 'There had been no obliteration because there had been no tending' (Bk1 Ch.III p.20), there is an unmistakable irony – the implication being that man's endeavours will inevitably amount to nothing and that Nature fares better untended. The heath defies cultivation and we learn that Wildeve's Patch has frustrated many ambitious cultivators.

There are many instances in the Wessex novels where Hardy appears to use Nature to indict man. In Egdon, as elsewhere in Wessex, certain species of indigenous wildlife have been victimised by man. (We note that the cream-coloured courser has suffered the fate of the white hart in The Chase; these two examples can be read as metaphors for innocence). Another incident in which Nature is abused by man is Wildeve's use of the moth to alert Eustacia of his presence. The scene works well metaphorically, in that those drawn to Eustacia's light are inevitably doomed. Perhaps the most haunting incident where Nature appears as a tacit, moral agent is in the

memorable gambling scene. The docile, passive heathcroppers become silent witnesses: 'The incongruity between the men's deeds and their environment was striking' (Bk3 Ch.VIII p.229), and we are made aware of the quiet dignity of the horses that wonder 'what mankind and candle-light could have to do in these haunts at this untoward hour' (Bk3 Ch.VIII p.230). Glowworms fall victim, serving no other purpose than to provide light for the players. (Interestingly, thirteen glowworms are used in this way; the number might almost stand as a symbol of religious martyrdom, reminding us of the number present at the Last Supper). Nature, reflecting human excess, appears to be a determining factor in the prologue to Mrs Yeobright's death (Bk 4 Ch.VIII p.296). There is surely an intended religious motif in the garden imagery, where the profusion of fallen apples that attracts gorging insects becomes a postlapsarian symbol of human decadence. We are told quite pointedly that Rathe-ripe (or perhaps in this context, *wrath-ripe*) is the only apple that thrives in the garden.

In contrast to this uncomfortably human image of debauchery, Nature also inspires Mrs Yeobright's last visions of a lost innocence. The memory of her original home with its shepherd's thyme is charged with the same poignancy as the vision of the silver-winged heron which appears: 'Up in the zenith where he was seemed a free and happy place, away from all contact with the earthly ball to which she was pinioned' (Bk4 Ch.VI p.282). The allusion to the shepherd's thyme of her childhood home is reminiscent of another idealised, remembered image borrowed from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'I know a bank whereon the wild thyme grows' (act 2, scene 1, 251). Dance and delight have lulled Titania to sleep, while here, Nature more insidiously lulls Mrs Yeobright into unconsciousness. The snake reference in the quoted passage can be seen as a parallel to

the adder that is caught and killed in the attempt to save the dying woman. The evocation of the heron as a symbol of freedom and innocence, unfettered by man, re-enforces the image of the herons that mourn and whine like a Greek chorus, in the gambling scene. It could be argued from such illustrations that, in this novel, Hardy intends Nature to act as his primary Greek chorus, whereas in the other Wessex novels it tends to be more obviously the rustics who, with their mix of naivete and intuitive wit, offer commentary on the characters, motivation, and fate. (In this novel, as in *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the rustics function as a collective voice, while also emerging as distinct personalities in their own right).

Through Hardy's evoking of the pathetic fallacy, Nature is frequently used to reflect or predict the action. There is an explicit example of this device in the description of the fateful night when Eustacia and Wildeve drown in the river at Weir's Hatch: 'Never was harmony more perfect than between the chaos of her [Eustacia's] mind and the chaos of the world without' (Bk5 Ch.VII p.345). The inimical features of the storm anticipate the human tragedy: 'The gloom of the night was funereal; all nature seemed clothed in crape' (Bk5 Ch.VII 345). Nature's sympathies can only be interpreted through individual perception, as we see in the contrasting responses of Eustacia and Thomasin : 'Individual drops stuck into her [Eustacia] like the arrows of Saint Sebastian', whereas Thomasin observes only 'prosy rain' (Bk5 Ch.VIII pp.354-355). If Egdon seems to invite alchemy in its 'black fraternisation' (Bk1Ch.I p.10) between air and land, it can also be a palliative for the widowed Thomasin, who responds to the comforts of each successive season. Thomasin, consistently depicted as a child of Nature, is associated with bird imagery: 'All similes and allegories

concerning her began and ended with birds' (Bk3Ch.VI p.209). Typically, Hardy employs bird similes as symbols of innocence, and here we see Thomasin likened to kestrels, herons, kingfishers, and swallows. Her story concludes with her marriage to Venn in the Spring – the season of new hope and regeneration.

Alternative dark presentations of Nature are so disturbingly visual in their raw imagery that they verge on the Gothic:

> The thorn bushes which arose in his path from time to time were less satisfactory, for they whistled gloomily, and had a ghastly habit after dark of putting on the shapes of jumping madmen, sprawling giants, and hideous cripples. (Bk1 Ch.VIII p.74)

The distorted features of the vegetation here are imaged in terms of human deviation and neuroses. Elsewhere, depictions of decaying vegetation are seen as the diseased organs of some awesome animal: 'twisted furze-roots, tufts of rushes, or oozing lumps of fleshy fungi, which at this season lay scattered about the heath like the rotting liver and lungs of some colossal animal' (Bk5 Ch.VII p.345).

Young trees are wounded by the brute force of the natural elements with the same devastation that we might expect from scenes of battle, and the register of the language is suitably bellicose:

> The wet young beeches were undergoing amputations, bruises, cripplings, and harsh lacerations from which the wasting sap would bleed for many a day to come, and which would leave scars visible till the day of their burning. Each stem was wrenched at the root, where it moved like a bone in its socket, and at every onset of the gale convulsive sounds came from the branches, as if pain were felt. In a neighbouring brake a finch was trying to sing; but the wind blew under his feathers till they stood on end, twisted round his little tail, and made him give up his song.
> (Bk3 Ch.VI p.207)

Hardy resorts again to bird imagery here, this time with the introduction of the little finch as a valiant and pathetic chronicler (there is a resemblance here to *The Darkling Thrush* chronicler of a lost innocence).

Egdon, however, is stimulated by the force of the natural elements and we see that while the young forest suffers, the level heathland mockingly defies, and occasionally even provokes, the unleashed fury of the storm:

> Yet a few yards to Yeobright's left, on the open heath, how ineffectively gnashed the storm! Those gusts which tore the trees merely waved the furze and heather in a light caress. Egdon was made for such times as these. (Bk3 Ch.VI p.207)

It would seem from this, that we must, however reluctantly, confront, if not share, Hardy's vision of 'a nonchalant universe':

> I do not expect much notice will be taken of these poems [*Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses*]: they mortify the human sense of self-importance by showing or suggesting, that human beings are of no matter or appreciable value in this nonchalant universe.[15]

Hardy's meaning is ambiguous – we might question whether 'nonchalant' implies a universe that is uncaring and unaware, rather than hostile. In this context, we can turn again to the heron's flight (Bk2 Ch.V) which, for Penelope Vigar, is symbolic: 'The complete freedom and unconcern of the natural world is epitomised by Hardy's almost visionary description of the heron.'[16]

II

The pictorialism in Hardy's writing, as defined in the Introduction to this thesis, is a mix of light, perspective, and composition, substantiated by frequent allusions to relevant artists. Light in Wessex frequently functions as a metaphor and the recurring contrasts of radiance and shadow in *The Return of the Native* persuade Vigar to regard

them as 'metaphors of light'.[17] She claims that: 'It is partially through his [Hardy's] use of lighting emphasis that he gives pseudo-symbolic identities to his characters, weaves their lives together, creates suspense and an appropriate atmosphere, and orders his narrative.'[18] Vigar's general comments can be developed in the context of this novel: 'daylight neighbours become in the dark scarlet and black demons, or figures from an ancient frieze, or pagan gods and goddesses.'[19] Interesting too, is Bullen's observation on the way in which the light effects are used as a medium: 'Hardy rarely permits us to see *through* the eyes of a character; instead, he uses sunlight, darkness, firelight, or lamplight as emblems of states of consciousness or moral enlightenment.'[20]

We become aware of a broad range of light effects throughout the narrative – from *chiaroscuro* to sepia. The sepia effect is achieved by the muted, antique brown toning of the environment. The opening scene takes place at twilight, with light vacillating between pure light, opaque white, and shadow. Even the name Mistover hints at the opaque quality of Egdon's light. We are told that the heath, that 'dark sweep of country' (Bk1Ch.I p.11), relates more closely to night than to day and this would account for a sense of prevailing obscurity. The Rembrandt-like *chiaroscuro*, created by the shadows and silhouettes that slant forward upon the darkening heath, is spiked occasionally by sudden streaks of red. We might want to refer here, as we did in the Introduction, to Smart's theory regarding the relevance of Rembrandt's influence to Hardy's purpose: 'very probably, Rembrandt's baroque lighting attracted Hardy not only on account of its inherent poetry, but also because it suggests the littleness of human experience in the midst of vast outer spaces of darkness'. [21] Occasionally, flashes of red and orange make an impact. Flares of firelight flash across the whiteness of the

sand - this whiteness offset by the darkness of the shadowy heath - and the dramatic, Durer-like imagery of dazzling lights and 'sooty shades' (Bk1Ch.III p.21) is strongly visual. When the long footpath intrudes upon the dark heath, it appears as starkly white as 'the parting-line on a head of raven hair' (Bk1Ch.II p.13) - the whiteness contrasting with the 'black fraternisation between air and land' (Bk1Ch.I p.4), and the first figure who eventually intrudes upon the scene is the white-headed captain with his silver walking cane.

Hardy exploits the dramatic contrast between black and white, as when Wildeve and Eustacia walk back together over the dark heath:

> The moon had now waxed bright and silvery, but the swarthy heath was proof against such illumination, and there was to be observed the striking scene of a dark rayless tract of country under an atmosphere charged from its zenith to its extremities with whitest light. To an eye above them their two faces would have appeared amid the expanse like two pearls on a table of ebony. (Bk4Ch.III p.259)

The choice of pearls and ebony as similes reflects the exotic element in the characters, whose driving passion and ambition dislocates them from the landscape. Another instance where the black and white contrast is dramatic is in the description of Mrs Yeobright's white face offset by the darkness of the heath: 'Her face, encompassed by the blackness of the receding heath, showed whitely, and without half-lights, like a cameo' (Bk1Ch.III p.35). It is worth noting that the white is uncompromisingly white – it is not toned down to half measures. This image epitomises Mrs Yeobright, the curate's daughter, in her uncompromising view of life. So arresting are the black and white characteristics of Eustacia's appearance that Venn's lingering impression is of ' a beauty, with a white face and a mane as black as night' (Bk4Ch.III 262). Depths of blackness are associated with Eustacia - the unique quality of her black eyes and hair

presents a challenge to Nature - we are told that her luxuriant tones of her black tresses are unmatchable (Bk1 Ch.VII p.68). She has an aura evoked by mist, shadow, and sparks, and thus appears as the antithesis of Clym, whose bright nature shines out of him like a ray (Bk2Ch.VI p.138). The path to Eustacia's home is shadowed as Clym becomes increasingly captivated by her. When Clym's gaze extends beyond his domestic boundaries, in the direction of Eustacia, 'long dark prongs' of shadow (Bk3 Ch.III p.186) are projected from his house, over the little white fence, and across the wild heath-land. As evening descends, Eustacia's elongated shadow advances in front of Clym and it could be said that to follow thus in Eustacia's shadow, is Clym's destiny.

While many of the scenes are in themselves arresting, the light effects can further heighten our interest. The eclipse of the moon (Bk3 Ch.IV) is a case in point. As Clym sets off in the direction of Blackbarrow, to watch the eclipse, he climbs out of the valley to stand in the full flood of moonlight. The 'white flints and glistening quartz sand' (Bk3 Ch.IV p.193) catch the moonlight and the refraction of light radiates out over the shadowed hollows of the heath. Again, there is the typical vacillation between black and white, light and shadow. While waiting for Eustacia, Clym lies down upon the barrow, with diminutive reflections of the moon appearing in his eyes. Eventually, Eustacia appears in shadow, and her entrance is naturally synchronized in time with the eclipse. Eustacia's final departure, in death, is also described in terms of an eclipse. This scene is typical of the freeze-framing that Fernando and Bullen find objectionably contrived, and that others choose to admire as innovative cinematography. I would argue, along with Grundy, that such devices enhance mood, atmosphere, and emotion, so that, rather than being distanced, we become drawn in even closer.

The light effects contribute to the sensual mood of the village dance scene (Bk4 Ch.III), in which Eustacia meets up again with Wildeve. Her craving for passion places her in the same class of nineteenth - century tragic heroines as Hedda Gabler and Emma Bovary, all of who suffer from a distinctively Romantic yearning. It is this passion that is the mainspring for Eustacia's action, propelling her towards the gyrating dancers. The misty white muslins of the floating dancers are absorbed by and reflected in the atmosphere. So dream-like is the quality of the veiled white light that it combines with the moonlight to work as a narcotic on the consciousness. This light alludes to sexuality: 'There is a certain degree and tone of light which tends to disturb the equilibrium of the senses, and to promote dangerously the tenderer moods'(Bk4 Ch.III p.256). Eustacia recognises her sexual arousal in terms of light, perceiving it as the entry into 'a brilliant chamber after a night walk in the wood' (Bk4 Ch.III p.257). This analogy recalls Clym's description of the brilliant Gallery of Apollo. (Bk3 Ch.IV). The dream dance scene (Bk2 Ch.III) in which Eustacia is dazzled by the radiance of Clym's silver armour is translated into the material image of the village dance. In the Dream - (the capital "D" elevates it) - the iridescent arch of rainbows that forms a canopy over Eustacia and Clym appears as a Wordsworthian, romantic symbol, (as in, 'My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold'), whereas in the village dance with Wildeve, the mood is decidedly pagan. In their gyrations, the dancers signify a celebration of the life forces, the natural primal impulses, which are heightened rather than sublimated by the quality of the light.

The relationship between Eustacia and Clym, by contrast, is low-toned from the start. It is prophetic that they talk of love at the spot where she had once kindled the fire to attract Wildeve. All that remains of that relationship is a trace of ashes, a prediction

that the developing love between Clym and Eustacia will inevitably become extinguished. The absence of fire implied by the anaemic, ashen toning here is further emphasised by the description of the pool that appears like the white of an eye without the pupil. These two images indicate unfulfilment and absence of animation, with the grey/white monochromes applied to evoke an elegiac atmosphere. (Hardy uses the same technique in the poem, 'Neutral Tones').

Clym and Eustacia are never viewed together in full sunlight. Even at the height of their romance, as a betrothed couple (Bk3 Ch.V), they walk in the valley with the setting sun elongating their 'thin spectral shadows' (Bk3 Ch.V p.204). The quality of the light appears unnatural, with oppressive green skies and copper-coloured clouds, and a purple haze spreads like gauze over the sun, through which the direct light is filtered. Mist and vapours create an impression of nebulous backdrops and shadowed or insubstantial figures. Flying gnats dart about the atmosphere like sparks of firelight. There is a general lack of clarity, an impression of fading light, as if we are viewing the scenes through a delicate veil of tissue. A self-preserving instinct motivates the doomed lovers to envelope themselves in a hermetic veil of mist, to shield them from potential discord: ' They were enclosed in a sort of luminous mist, which hid from them surroundings of any inharmonious colour, and gave to all things the character of light' (Bk4 Ch.I p.235). In this passage we see that light is an active agent, functioning as a selective, though not necessarily moral, filter.

It could be argued that the fundamental, and ultimately fatal, differences between Clym and Eustacia can be understood in terms of light. When she asks him for a description of Paris, he gives an account of the Gallery of Apollo (Bk3 Ch.IV) – an

account that is heightened by light effects. Characteristically, the quality of the light that captivates Eustacia's imagination is not natural daylight, but rather, the reflection of dazzling jewels. Aware that he must dazzle her in order to win her hand, Clym accentuates the clarity of this light, referring to its bristling rays and to the iridescent gold and silver of the jewels that establish 'a perfect network of light which quite dazzles the eye' (Bk3 Ch.IV p.196). Clym's motive is underpinned here by the word 'network', with its possible connotations of entrapment. Likewise, Eustacia manipulates light effects to lure Clym, by remarking that in the eclipse of the moon, his face appears golden. Golden light, for Clym, would be perceived in spiritual, rather than material, terms, appropriate to an aspiring religious educator of the Egdon eremites. Both characters, driven by the same motive, engage in a strategic manipulation of the light.

Paradoxically, it is at the moment when Clym's vision first falters that he gains insight – the incident being recorded as 'the first blinding halo' (Bk3 Ch.IV p.199). Hardy's irony is strong here, with 'halo' establishing a religious register and the oxymoron of the 'blinding halo' implying that Clym is blinded by his revelation. The onset of his diminished vision is attributed directly to love and beauty and, 'he began to perceive what a strait he was in' (Bk3 Ch.IV p.199). There are to be further, more serious repercussions, leading Lawrence to conclude that it is this 'blindness' that precipitates the tragedy:

> A little of the static surface he could see, and map out. Then he thought his map was the thing itself. How blind he was, how utterly blind to the tremendous movement carrying and producing the surface. He did not know that the greater part of every life is underground, like roots in the dark in contact with the beyond.[22]

As Clym's myopia develops, his compensatory awareness of colour and light increases correspondingly. Hardy's zoom lens technique is powerfully effective in Clym's contracted world. From this contraction there comes greater intensity. Clym appears almost as an Adam figure, apostrophizing in his microscopic world of vibrant colours, as if he is encountering the wonders of Nature for the very first time (Bk4 Ch.II p.247). So heightened are Clym's senses, that he responds appreciatively to the hum and movement of the tiny winged creatures that fly within the close range of his vision. The art-form of the narrative here is strongly cinematic, supporting Grundy's belief that 'Hardy's cinematic mode is at once prophetic and in step with the art of his own day.'[23] Colour is accentuated to maximise the impact:

> Litters of young rabbits came out from their forms to sun themselves upon hillocks, the hot beams blazing through the delicate tissue of each thin-fleshed ear, and firing it to a blood-red transparency in which the veins could be seen (Bk4 Ch.II p.247)

The description of 'Tribes of emerald-green grasshoppers' appears apposite here, in this study of the 'native' - the narrator possibly signalling us to the atavism implicit in 'tribes' (Bk4 Ch.II p.247).

As first mentioned in our preliminary discussion on the nuances of light in Wessex, the characters who identify closely with their environment are associated with light, whereas others appear as dark figures superimposed upon darker backdrops. We are first introduced to Wildeve with a back view of his silhouette. He appears in shadow, offset against the firelight and introduced with the same silhouette technique as Dick Dewy. Wildeve's silhoutte never crystallises in full view; instead, it appears behind an opaque screen, the opacity implying dubious motives: 'Wildeve had at present the rayless

outline of the sun through smoked glass' (Bk2Ch.VI p.146). Taking Bullen's claim that, in Hardy's art 'the pictorial, the perceptual, and the moral impinge closely upon each other', we can discern a moral statement in the fact that Clym and Thomasin absorb or reflect or project light- while Eustacia and Wildeve, essentially split personalities at odds with their environment, are portrayed in shadow, or in unnatural light, such as opaque white or inflammable red.[24] The red associated with Venn, by contrast, originates from the dye used in his profession. In this sense, it is applied – it is not an essential part of his personality, as it is with Eustacia. As far as the Egdon natives are concerned, Venn's redness seems to identify him as, at worst, a demonic character, and at best, an elusive pagan spirit. In reality though, Venn can shed his colour like a chameleon. The natural pastel tones he assumes are the soft blues and greens of sky and grass. By identifying in this way with the natural colours of the environment, Venn will attract Thomasin, the child of Nature.

For Clym, light is meaningful as a source of spiritual inspiration. At the conclusion of the narrative, we see him preaching to the Egdon rustics in the soft afternoon light of early summer. On a more pragmatic level, light promises Clym a resolution to the problem of his impaired vision, for it is the strong gleam of the furze-cutter's iron tool that reveals the possibility of a new profession (Bk4Ch.II p.245). As furze-cutter, Clym, like Venn, becomes indistinguishable from his craft. It is almost as if he loses his individuality and is reduced to 'a brown spot in the midst of an expanse of olive-green gorse, and nothing more' (Bk4Ch.II p.247). In Venn's case, however, the profession of the reddle-man is consciously integrated into his personality, whereas Clym willingly sacrifices his personality to his labour. We never see Venn undergoing the kind

of scale-shifting diminution that Clym suffers. (The furze-cutting scenes achieve the same purpose as the Flintcomb Ash landscapes in which Tess and the other field-workers appear marginalised and minute, reduced by their labour to anonymity and appearing merely as dots in the landscape).

If Venn, as reddle-man, is associated with the colour red, then Thomasin is associated with light. She is represented as a medium for light and there are many instances when she appears almost transparent, with the light flowing through her: 'An ingenuous transparent life was disclosed: it was as if the flow of her existence could be seen passing within' (Bk1Ch.IV p.41). We are told that, in marked contrast to the depths of blackness in Eustacia's eyes, the light shines necessarily in Thomasin's eyes, even when they are closed (Bk1 Ch.IV p.41). Her kinship with light is an unconscious one, whereas Eustacia, 'Queen of Night', consciously contrives situations where non-natural light, such as firelight, is used to maximise her features. The black and white, shadow and light contrasts that feature so markedly in the narrative widen the split between Thomasin's contended domesticity and the untameable wildness within Eustacia. The approach to Thomasin's home is marked by a row of white palings that are offset in the dusk 'as white lace on velvet' (Bk2 Ch.I p.111). There is clearly a demarcation between the wildness of Eustacia and the regimented civilisation of Thomasin. Yet, just as the fence is scaled down to appear ornamental, so is Thomasin herself a small-scale figure in comparison to the magnitude of Eustacia's disproportionate desires and demands.

Even in the most remote and shadowy corner, sunlight seeks out Thomasin, so that she becomes suffused with light: 'and from this hole the sun shone in a bright yellow patch upon the figure of the maiden as she knelt and plunged her naked arms into the soft

brown fern' (Bk2Ch.II p.112). (Such are the moments when, according to Grundy, Hardy 'goes Dutch').[25] So pervasively does the sun project its rays upon her hair and 'transparent tissues' that the light 'seemed to shine through her'(Bk2 Ch.II p.112). When Thomasin and her aunt search the heath for hollies, the scene is constructed entirely in terms of light:

> The open hills were airy and clear, and the remote atmosphere appeared, as it often appears on a fine winter day, in distinct planes of illumination, independently toned, the rays which lit the nearer tracts of landscape streaming visibly across those further off: a stratum of ensaffroned light was imposed on a stratum of deep blue, and behind these lay the remoter scenes wrapped in frigid grey. (Bk2 Ch.II p.113)

The artistic strategy here is instrumental in shaping our perceptions. As in most of the scenes featuring Thomasin, there is the impression of unrestricted light and space. It is significant that the warm saffron tones are close to the young girl, while the cold greys stretch far into the horizon. The light airiness that stretches out before her converts to oppressive shadow when the focus is on Eustacia and we watch the blackness extending under her influence, (we remember that she first appears on Blackbarrow), so that even her young servant, Charley, appears shadowed also - an indistinguishable spot on the dark horizon, 'like a fly on a negro' (Bk2 Ch.IV p.127). These examples of Hardy's light and perspective techniques uphold Vigar's general appraisal of the motive behind the art: 'The organisation and highlighting of his picture of reality is not simply interesting from an artistic point of view; it also has a direct bearing on the way in which we interpret that picture.'[26]

Thomasin's entrances are characteristically signalled by light: 'At the remote end was a door which, just as he was about to open it for himself, was opened by somebody within, and light streamed forth. The person was Thomasin, with a candle'(Bk2 Ch.VI

p.142). We can see that the only occasions when she does not appear in direct light is when she is shadowed by Wildeve:

> The shadowy form seen by Venn to part from Wildeve in the porch, and quickly withdraw into the house, was Thomasin's. On entering she threw down a cloak which had been carelessly wrapped round her, and came forward to the light. (Bk2 Ch.VIII p.155)

Wildeve is perceived as a dark figure casting shadows over Thomasin and Clym, and our first glimpse of Thomasin is in the dark interior of Venn's cart, hiding in the shadow of her abortive elopement. When she does marry, she appears happy at first, in harmony with herself and her environment: 'The oblique band of sunlight which followed her through the door became the young wife well. It illuminated her as her presence illuminated the heath' (Bk3 Ch.VI p.209). The association between Thomasin and light is indicative of her symbiotic relationship with Nature – the light naturally enhances her features, just as she naturally enhances the landscape. The likelihood of fulfilment in Thomasin's second marriage is also presented in terms of light. The soft quality of the light, with its pastel Spring-like colours, anticipates her future happiness. The fresh green of the grass in the 'Green Place by the Roman Road' - scene of the young couple's courtship - appears to be strategically introduced, with its conjunction of pastoral and ancient. This green is different from the 'vivid green' of Clym's 'nest', with its anti-pastoral glare (Bk3 Ch.VI p.202).

Just as light is perceived as a positive quality, darkness is associated with the negative: 'There she [Eustacia] stood still, around her stretching the vast night atmosphere, whose incomplete darkness in comparison with the total darkness of the heath below it might have represented a venial beside a mortal sin' (Bk1 Ch.VI p.55). It is evident throughout that the heath's darkness is ominous and carries implications graver

than the diurnal darkening of the skies. Those characters identified with darkness or shadow are seen, by association, to have dark impulses. Flickers of light splinter through the black shadows of the heath. The light intrigues Wildeve, drawing his attention to the hovel in which Mrs Yeobright lies dying. His query, "What light is that on the hill?"(Bk4 Ch.VIII p.295) could almost be interpreted as a Bunyanesque reference - Hardy's ironic inversion of the Evangelical light that attracts Christian. In this case, the revelatory light points to damnation rather than salvation. Many of the narrative's biblical connotations are associated with light and darkness – the chapter heading (Bk5 Ch.I) 'Wherefore is Light given to him that is in Misery?' is one example. Light in the sense of revelation is employed ironically as a symbol in the heading of the following chapter (Ch.II) 'A lurid Light breaks in upon a darkened Understanding'.

In the events leading up to the deaths of Wildeve and Eustacia, the light effects are dramatic. The swollen, mud-coloured clouds drag themselves along a leaden and oppressive sky. We catch a glimpse of Eustacia in an aura of light in an image that is fleeting and illusory:

> The door was ajar, and a riband of bright firelight fell over the ground without. As Eustacia crossed the fire-beams she appeared for an instant as distinct as a figure in a phantasmagoria – a creature of light surrounded by an area of darkness: the moment passed, and she was absorbed in night again. (Bk5 Ch.VII p.342)

(The reference to 'riband' works beautifully with its associative feminine imagery, and it succeeds in a different sense when we think of the other scarlet ribbon attached to the effigy (Bk5 Ch.VII p.360)).

Light is applied strategically again in Clym's encounter with Wildeve and we see Clym standing in full light, with the light even more pronounced as it is reflected again in

the glistening rain. Typically, Wildeve stands behind the light, thus obliging Clym to deduce his identity. The intensity of the storm is partly impressed upon us by the emphasis on the lighting. Reflections in the weir-pool are distorted by the current (Bk5Ch.IX) until they resemble a splintered mirror. The deep blackness of the water is relieved only by 'the white clots of foam' (Bk5 Ch.IX p.363). The stark whiteness of the waves is exceeded by the unsurpassable whiteness of Eustacia's complexion, which only death can eclipse: 'Pallor did not include all the quality of her complexion, which seemed more than whiteness; it was almost light' (Bk5 Ch.IX p.367). The final black and white contrast associated with Eustacia emphasises the effect of her pallor accentuated by the black forest of her hair.

With the death of Eustacia, the light drains from Clym and he appears as a Lazarus figure - dimly-lit and spectral. Gradually, other characters retrieve their colour – Thomasin is revived by the colours of the seasons and Venn discards his habitual red and adopts the colours of Spring. Finally, light also returns to the proselytising Clym in the concluding scene, as he stands high on the mount of Blackbarrow, delivering his sermon in the gentle afternoon sun of early summer. This particular light is fresh, indicating a mood of optimism, as distinct from the dull and dispirited twilight that overshadows our introduction to the landscape.

III

The colour red, which features as a motif in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, plays an equally prominent and prophetic role here. It is introduced as a dramatic device with the appearance of Diggory Venn, the reddle-man, who is so closely integrated with his work that he himself appears as an extension of the lurid red dye that characterises his

profession. As 'a figure red from head to heels' (Bk1Ch.VIII p.75/76), Venn is indistinguishable from his red apparel and accoutrements, the impression heightened yet further by the additional detail of his pipe, 'the stem and bowl of which were red also' (Bk1Ch.VIII p.76). The lurid redness that is at all times associated with the 'fiery mommet' (Bk1Ch.III p.35) figure of Venn indicates a Turner influence that emerges again in the flame of the red sunsets and the tufts of fire.

The references to bonfires and blazing beacons point to a Promethean motif that is further emphasised by the use of red and its associated shades. The recurrence of redness impresses us as a dynamic source of energy in *The Return of the Native*. The vivid imagery that runs through the novel of blazes, branding, kilns, lightening, simmering, metallic skies, cracking earth – all signal the fermenting fire of Eustacia's passion. She consistently reflects and attracts fire imagery in a novel that significantly opens on 5th November. We remember that Wildeve's moth messenger, referred to in Section I of this chapter, encircles the candle three times before flying straight into the flame - an apposite metaphor for the fate of the men attracted by the fire within Eustacia.

Her passion is implied by the sparks emitted from her dark eyes that are full of 'nocturnal mysteries' (Bk1 Ch.VII p.68). Her fieriness may remind us of the alchemy of another passionate and subversive Wessex character, at odds with his environment - Fitzpiers. Given their passionate nature, both characters suffer 'the curse of inflammability' (Bk1Ch.VI p.65). The shadows that at first envelope Eustacia's beauty gradually slip away to reveal 'the sad and stifled warmth within her' (Bk1 Ch.VII p.69). This warmth intensifies to a fire stored deep within like an implosive, subterranean heat. The heat is fermenting silently but steadily, and is as potentially dangerous as the

subterranean insect world that stirs restlessly under the arid, cracking earth on the day of Mrs Yeobright journey. Even logic is perceived by Eustacia in terms of fire-flashes that dart forth like electricity (Bk1Ch.VI p.67). These flashes of reason re-appear as glowworms, plucked by Wildeve to illuminate the dice game (Bk3 Ch.VIII p.229).

Love is perceived by Eustacia in terms of light – but not light in the sense of the pure translucence that we associate with the ingenuous Thomasin, or with the spiritual light of the proselytizing Clym, but rather as a short-lived, uncompromising blaze –'A blaze of love, and extinction, was better than a lantern glimmer' (Bk1 Ch.VII p.71). Even her windowpane blazes with a ruddy red glare in comparison to the pure, liquid light emanating from Thomasin's window. Sunlight unfurls inside Eustacia's mouth like the scarlet flame of a tulip. (We might recall a similar scarlet flame that curls like a snake inside Tess's mouth, as with her brave intentions thwarted once more, she descends the stairs to encounter the unsuspecting Angel (ChXXVII, p.169).

The blacks and reds feature of Eustacia's portrait, are also called up by the romantic symbols that she evokes - the memories of red Bourbon roses and rubies - the deep blackness of tropical midnights – the eclipses of the sun. Drawn subconsciously to the heath that she rightfully predicts will one day kill her, Eustacia is said to imbibe its darkness. Her own darkness, then, would seem to be a compound of natural instinct and environment. The obscurity that shades her beauty is likened to the tiger beetle, that, when illuminated, will dazzle the eye with its kaleidoscope of colour. Even her contradictory moods are expressed in terms of light - 'the garish noon rising to the dignity of sunset in a couple of seconds' (Bk3 Ch.III p.182). It is clear that the intensity

of her moods is the mainspring of her action and her passion ferments with subterranean heat.

In the climactic chapter describing the night storm, black is the predominant colour of the sky, with occasional flashes of white and red. In the Captain's garden, the flag-pole flashes white like phosphorescent lightening against the night shadows. We already know from Charley's description that Eustacia is wearing a red ribbon around her neck and the chapter concludes with the proleptic image of the scarlet-ribboned effigy in the curling flames of the fire.

IV

As we can see, the visual impact of the narrative derives from a number of different factors. We can feel the full power of Egdon's influence; we can see the alternate benevolent and malignant portraits of Nature; we note the artist's shifts of light and shadow. The spatial and temporal perspectives also play a dramatic role in evoking the atmosphere of the heath and it seems as if Hardy's diverse techniques as writer, painter, and architect, all come together at Egdon.

As far as temporal perspectives are concerned, we are told that the heath manipulates time to suit its own purpose- that dawn and dusk can be arbitrarily advanced or retarded. The time-scale of the narrative is concentrated into a year and one day. We watch as Eustacia, always conscious of time and space, tries to control both perspectives with her hour-glass and telescope. Egdon evokes an expansiveness that is unenclosed and wild. Human life appears dwarfed in comparison, and we can turn again here as we first did in the Introduction, to Lawrence's comments on the motive and the implication underlying Hardy's perspectives:

> This is a constant revelation in Hardy's novels: that there exists a great background, vital and vivid, which matters more than the people who move upon it. Against the background of dark, passionate Egdon, of the leafy, sappy passion and sentiment of the woodlands, of the unfathomed stars, is drawn the lesser scheme of lives.[27]

We have already noted that the central role of the landscape implies that it is taking precedence over humanity. This impression is further confirmed by some curious sentence inversions and an example of this technique is apparent in the opening sentence of the second chapter, 'Along the road walked an old man.' (Bk1Ch.II p.13). The road itself, as a permanent feature of the landscape and also as a picaresque setting (the characters progress along it, experiencing and enduring), is accorded priority as a motif over the human figure. Hardy insists that the landscape has always been there and that humanity is introduced as an afterthought. Consequently, Venn is introduced as 'a moving spot' (Bk1 Ch.II p.13), discerned by the Captain, far off in the horizon. Hardy is clearly adapting the *staffage* technique, whereby the landscape is central to the composition, and diminutive figures are positioned there merely to lend a human touch to the scene, thus ensuring that we identify more closely with it. We can glance back to the Introduction to note in this context the influences of Boldini and Hobbema. [28]

The portrait of Egdon could easily have been ascribed to the artist, Jacob van Ruisdael. Many of his works uncompromisingly subordinate man to the grander scale of his surroundings. But Ruisdael shows in his paintings that man can feel just as diminished by the expansive horizontal sweep, such as we see in the Egdon landscape, as by the vertical grandeur of mountains and cliffs. One such painting is *Dune Landscape with Plank Fence*. In this composition, the figure is almost incidental, and is

used merely to animate. The reduction of the figures forces us to focus our concentration on the texture of the flat and dreary landscape.

There are a number of other instances in *The Return of the Native*, and also in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, where the human figure is deliberately downscaled for different reasons. In these cases it would seem that the artist's motive is to impress upon us the idea that the individual, increasingly overwhelmed by circumstance, or perhaps even by destiny, eventually recedes into insignificance. This technique is effectively applied in *The Return of the Native*. Clym's mother and his wife share none of his apparent stoicism – when Mrs Yeobright sees him working as a furze-cutter, the effect is reductive. At first, she fails to recognise her son's individuality: 'He appeared of a russet hue, not more distinguishable from the scene around him than the green caterpillar from the leaf it feeds on' (Bk4 Ch.V p.270). Hardy's manipulation of perspectives in these furze-cutting scenes acts as an index of social values. Not only has Clym's social stature become diminished by his work, his individuality has also been submerged by it; he is defined as merely the sum total of his work: 'He was a brown spot in the midst of an expanse of olive-green gorse, and nothing more' (Bk4 Ch.II p.247). The negation, 'and nothing more' is annihilating, and it is only within Clym's microcosmic universe of plants and minute insect life that he can resume a central role.

With Egdon featuring as the main protagonist in the narrative, even the influential characters like Eustacia and Wildeve are downscaled and suffer reduction at the hands of the artist. At the very height of their passion, Eustacia and Wildeve are depicted in diminutive form, as two pearls on a table of ebony, or as two horns of a mollusk: 'Their black figures sank and disappeared from against the sky. They were as

two horns which the sluggish heath had put forth from its crown, like a mollusk, and had now again drawn in' (Bk1 Ch.IX p.87) Both these similes stress the independent will of Egdon. Eustacia and Wildeve are either offset by, or integrated with the heath, to the extent that we never evaluate them independently.

Perspectives can determine which characters are peripheral. Eustacia's devoted little servant, Charley, is introduced and defined at the outset by his low.profile. Our perception of Charley is shaped by Eustacia's low esteem of him – in her eyes, he is of no greater relevance than a fly submerged by the night shadows. But clearly, whether proactive or reactive, all the characters are necessarily reduced to insignificance, by virtue of the transience of human life, in comparison with the eternal and enduring heathland:

> Instead of there being before him [Clym] the pale face of Eustacia, and a masculine shape unknown, there was only the imperturbable countenance of the heath, which, having defied the cataclysmic onsets of centuries, reduced to insignificance by its seamed and antique features the wildest turmoil of a single man. (Bk5 Ch.II p.317)

The German artist, Casper David Friedrich uses *staffage* to depict another vision of man confronted by his surroundings. In his haunting masterpiece, *Monk by the Shore*, the solitary figure appears as observer rather than participant. But here the figure fails to humanise the scene. The infinite sweep of the horizon stretches out beyond his reach. His is the one vertical form amid the three stretching horizontals of sky, shore, and sea. It is a vision of man's essential loneliness and insignificance. A literary analogy of Friedrich's vision might be drawn from Knight's awareness of man's place in the vast spatial and temporal perspectives that come to light in his experience on the Cliff without a Name. Clym's awareness of the infinite and level horizons of the Egdon

landscape signals his own acute sense of insignificance. The level landscape is in itself a leveller:

> This was the end of their talk, and Eustacia left him. Clym watched her as she retired towards the sun. The luminous rays wrapped her up with her increasing distance, and the rustle of her dress over the sprouting sedge and grass died away. As he watched the dead flat of the scenery overpowered him [...] There was something in its oppressive horizontality, which too much reminded him of the arena of life: it gave him a sense of bare equality with, and no superiority to, a single living thing under the sun. (Bk3 Ch.V p.205)

Egdon's level horizontals make as much of an impact on the individual consciousness here as they do in Shelley's 'Ozymandias', where the adjective 'level' as in 'level sands' – implies infinity, even by virtue of its being a palindrome. The reference to the sedge is reminiscent of the landscape and anti-Romantic mood of Keat's 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', although we should note that, in this context, the sedge is sprouting - it has not 'withered from the lake'. The description of Clym in his 'nest of vivid green' also evokes an anti-Romantic mood. The mood is further developed by the detailed magnification of sharp, triangular blades of grass, the 'machine-made foliage', the uncompromisingly uniform plants with serrated edges, and the recollection of an era when 'no bird sang' (Bk3 Ch.V p.202).

On occasion, the diminishing form suggests irony or even bathos: 'Eustacia watched his [Wildeve's] shadowy form till it had disappeared. She placed her hand to her forehead, and breathed heavily; and then her rich, romantic lips parted under that homely impulse – a yawn' (Bk1 Ch.XI p.103). When the perspectives are not clear-cut, the figures tend to disappear rather than gradually recede. Characters progressively *plunge* into the shadows of the heath, or are *absorbed* into the mists and vapours of the

atmosphere, until finally, Eustacia and Wildeve are *swallowed* up by the river, inevitably submitting to Nature's supremacy.

We have been told that the native Clym is 'inwoven' with the heath. Yet, it would seem that even when the characters do not wish to identify with their environment, they are still inextricably linked to it. This reluctant connection is perceived in terms of spirals, and inter-weaving nets and webs as opposed to the linear progressions of the integrated characters. Contours play an important role in our study of Hardy's perspectives. Unexpected curves, such as Eustacia's sudden smile, are at odds with the modern, level landscape. Venn, on the other hand, is instinctively linear. During their courtship, Thomasin watches him walking home 'in a mathematically direct line' (Bk6 Ch.I p.393), whereas she had always been uncertain of Wildeve's whereabouts. When Mrs Yeobright makes her laborious approach to her son's home, we catch sight of Clym sleeping in foetal position, on the hearth rug, like the cat that sleeps curled up on the gravel path. Eustacia's sense of entrapment is underlined by a succession of spiralling contours and circular movements:

> A bramble caught hold of her skirt, and checked her progress. Instead of putting it off and hastening along she yielded herself up to the pull, and stood passively still. When she began to extricate herself it was by turning round and round on her axis, and so unwinding the prickly switch. (Bk1 Ch.VI p.59)

There is a perpetual web-like twining and untwining associated with Eustacia that can allude to the intricacies of her strategies:

> The mist had now so far collapsed that the tips of the trees and bushes around his [Wildeve's] house could just be discerned as if boring upwards through a vast white cobweb which cloaked them from the day. There was no doubt that her mind was inclined thitherward; indefinitely, fancifully – twining and untwining about him as the single object within her horizon on which dreams might crystallize. (Bk1 Ch.X p.95)

So pronounced at times is the spiral effect in relation to Eustacia that she can even appear serpent - like, as when she coils her luxurious black tresses around her head (Bk5 Ch.III p.317).

Venn is so integrated with his environment that at one point he is seen to literally emerge from the soil:

> He took two of these [turves] as he lay, and dragged them over him till one covered his head and shoulders, the other his back and legs. The reddleman would now have been quite invisible, even by daylight: the turves, standing upon him with the heather upwards, looked precisely as if they were growing. (Bk1Ch.IX p.83)

Thomasin, another character completely integrated with her environment, is depicted in one scene with wild berries falling from her hair (there is a resonance here of Giles ingrained with apple pips). Eustacia, too, is so integrated into the landscape, albeit unwillingly, that she appears as an organic part of the barrow structure before finally emerging as a human figure. Hardy's deference to 'the architectural demands of the mass' (Bk1Ch.II p.17) is responsible for the conscious deliberation of form and structure. We are introduced to her through Venn's eyes:

> There the form stood, motionless as the hill beneath. Above the plain rose the hill, above the hill rose the barrow, above the barrow rose the figure. Above the figure was nothing that could be mapped elsewhere than on a celestial globe. (Bk1 Ch.II p.17)

Deliberate, unhurried, successions of detail all repeatedly prefaced by the adverb 'above' (another example of sentence inversion), lead us to conclude that the figure is rising up naturally out of the earth like some long-buried yet irrepressible spirit from a bygone age. Perspectives shift from zoom lens studies of each strata of hillside to a panoramic view of the entire scene in which the barrow is diminished to a wart-size

blight on the heathland - the wart simile possibly alluding to Eustacia's imperfections. We watch, together with Venn, her gradual emergence, until at last she thrusts herself upwards like the spike on an ancient Celtic helmet. (The military and sexual imagery here further emphasise her forcefulness). There are other occasions when Eustacia responds, albeit unwillingly, to the gravitational pull of the heath. In the mummers' play she carefully chooses the role of the Turkish Knight because she is attracted by the gradual sinking down to the earth that his death would entail. This episode anticipates the fateful night storm in which Eustacia yields again to the magnetic force of the landscape: 'and now that she thoroughly realised the conditions she sighed bitterly, and ceased to stand erect, gradually crouching down under the umbrella as if she were drawn into the barrow by a hand from beneath' (Bk5 Ch.VII p.346).

Just as the characters are submerged or absorbed by the shadows of the heath or even by the earth itself, so too can they appear magnified or elongated so that they stand as distinct profiles against the sky. One chapter (Bk1 Ch.VI), referring to Eustacia's long-awaited glimpse of Wildeve, is actually headed 'The Figure against the Sky'. We can appreciate the drama of the scene as Eustacia, the black-caped beauty, stands, with the new moon rising behind her, in isolation on the dark, level heath – the one vertical amid the horizontals of heath and sky. We note this effect again, when, as Wildeve and Venn play cards, their profile is etched against the night sky. Their stature is further increased by their juxtaposition with the diminutive heathcroppers. In moral terms, we are viewing the scene through the eyes of the animals, and therefore the gamblers' profile against the sky makes an even greater impact. Again, the pageant of the Christmas Eve mummers bedecked in their costumes and plumes assumes the form of a

classical frieze in silhouette against the night sky. This appears to be an innocent, carefree image, although we come to recognise it later as proleptic of the darker scene when the procession of villagers running to help the dying Mrs Yeobright, are depicted as 'moving figures' who 'animate the line between heath and sky' (Bk4 Ch.VII p.287).

The impact made by significant episodes is reinforced by reflection. We have already noticed the reflected moonlight in Clym's eyes as he lies on top of the barrow awaiting Eustacia. Again, as the gamblers become absorbed in their game, the candlelight and the cards are reflected in their eyes. Mirror reflections are also introduced to suggest different perspectives, so that we look at the characters looking at themselves in the mirror. There is the emotionally charged moment in the aftermath of Mrs Yeobright's death, when the tortured Clym achieves and maintains, for the first time, an objective view of his wife as she stands before her looking - glass:

> The noise of his arrival must have aroused her, for when he opened the door she was standing before the looking-glass in her night-dress, the ends of her hair gathered into one hand, with which she was coiling the whole mass round her head, previous to beginning toilette operations. She was not a woman given to speaking first at a meeting, and she allowed Clym to walk across in silence, without turning her head. He came behind her, and she saw his face in the glass. It was ashy, haggard, and terrible. Instead of starting towards him in sorrowful surprise, as even Eustacia, undemonstrative wife as she was, would have done in days before she burdened herself with a secret, she remained motionless, looking at him in the glass. And while she looked, the carmine flush with which warmth and sound sleep had suffused her cheeks and neck, dissolved from view, and the death-like pallor in his face flew across into hers.
> (Bk5 Ch.III pp.317-318)

Clym's ashen face reminds us that Eustacia's love was founded on the ashes of her passion for Wildeve – we remember that she and Clym first talked of love at the ashen site of Eustacia's bonfire signal for Wildeve . The mirror perspectives here reflect and validate Clym's suspicions and Eustacia's guilt - the guilt underscored by Eustacia's

serpent-like coils of hair. Our next and final mirror reflection of Eustacia is in the drowning scene at Shadwater Weir: 'Across this gashed and puckered mirror a dark body was slowly borne by one of the backward currents' (Bk5 Ch.IX p.361).

The perspective techniques in *The Return of the Native* include the *doorkijke* effects of *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *The Woodlanders*, whereby our perceptions of character, motivation, and class status are all effectively shaped. Dark interiors become illuminated by streams of light from a window or an open door and we find ourselves looking in at the character who emerges from the gloom to a central position. A sudden infusion of light – candle-light or natural daylight - seems to foreground the figure: 'At the remote end was a door which, just as he [Clym] was about to open it for himself, was opened by somebody within, and light streamed forth. The person was Thomasin with a candle' (Bk2 Ch.VI p.142). Then, there is the beautiful, Vermeer-like portrait of Thomasin that we referred to in the earlier section on the light effects in this novel. We look up into the dark interior of the loft to see a shaft of sunlight alighting on the young girl who is half-submerged in soft fern and apples. She, in turn, gazes up at the sky through the pigeon- hole in the roof and becomes bathed in sunlight. The perspectives here are interesting, and, as with the mirror technique, we can snatch an unexpected glimpse of the unsuspecting characters from a different viewpoint. This sun-lit image contrasts with the darker scene where Eustacia hides in the shadowy interior of the fuel-house to spy on the mummers as they rehearse. The perspectives are similar, though of course the mood is very different, and we watch Eustacia watching the others as she weaves her strategy. Window-frame scenes can establish a sense of social distancing or unattainable love, and when Eustacia addresses the villagers from her high

window, they literally look up at her: 'Everybody turned. The speaker was a woman, gazing down upon the group from an upper window, whose panes blazed in the ruddy glare from the west' (Bk3 Ch.III p.181). There is a reminder here of our introduction to Fancy Day, when she looks down from the elevated position of her candle-lit window, on to the circle of village carolers below. In both these illustrations, there is not only distance, there is also elevation, so that social distancing is well and truly defined. When Venn discards his reddle-man identity, we see that his social status becomes elevated. Thomasin's new respect for him is expressed in terms of perspectives, so that we see Venn approaching her on horseback and leaning over to talk with her and her daughter as they sit on the grass looking up at him.

There is a distance between Eustacia's sensuality, as seen in the village dance, (Bk4 Ch.III), and Clym's idealised love. The geographical distance between them can be read metaphorically – the distance exaggerated by a succession of adverbs such as 'over', 'across', 'beyond', and 'up':

> His [Clym's] room overlooked the front of the premises and the valley of the heath *beyond.* The lowest beams of the winter sun threw the shadow of the house *over* the palings, *across* the grass margin of the heath, and far *up* the vale, where the chimney outlines and those of the surrounding tree-tops stretched forth in long dark prongs. Having been seated at work all day he decided to take a turn upon the hills before it got dark; and going out forthwith, he struck *across* the heath towards Mistover. (Bk3 Ch.III p.186; my italics)

Our first impression of the distance between the two is with Eustacia's "pilgrimage" to Blooms-End, on the eve of the native's return from Paris:

> *Beyond* the irregular carpet of grass was a row of white palings, which marked the verge of the heath in this latitude. They showed upon the dusky scene that they bordered as distinctly as white lace on velvet. *Behind* the white palings was a little garden; *behind* the garden an old irregular thatched house, facing the heath, and commanding a full view of

> the valley. This was the obscure, removed spot to which was about to return a man whose latter life had been passed in the French capital – the centre and vortex of the fashionable world. (Bk2 Ch.I p.111; my italics)

Again, our awareness of distance is raised by the adverbs 'beyond' and 'behind', together with repeated phrases such as '*Behind* the white palings was a little garden; *behind* the garden ' with the allusion to Paris as the (implicit) absolute '*beyond*'.

Perspectives can vary in Hardy's portraits of Clym. He is viewed close up, as in the zoom lens shots of his microscopic world of insects and furze-bushes, but he is also seen in relation to the cosmic world of stars and planets:

> His eye travelled over the length and breadth of that distant country – over the Bay of Rainbows, the sombre Sea of Crises, the Ocean of Storms, the Lake of Dreams, the vast Walled Plains, and the wondrous Ring Mountains – till he almost felt himself to be voyaging bodily through its wild scenes, standing on its hollow hills, traversing its deserts, descending its vales and old sea bottoms, or mounting to the edges of its craters. (Bk3 Ch. IV p.193)

The cosmic dimensions here do not intimidate Clym – rather, they excite him and enhance his vision of an unlimited universe. There are diverse perspectives of the lunar landscape, where hills and vales, oceans and mountains, are dramatically cinematic and inspire the sense of dynamic energy that we find in *Two on a Tower.*

At crisis points, perspectives are structured with a progressive series of dimensions to build up the element of suspense. Details are foregrounded to impress upon us their psychological relevance, while at the same time, they are seen in relation to a more comprehensive panoramic view. The end result is that we are made aware of the universal through the immediacy of the particular. The episode in which Mrs Yeobright assumes that she has been rejected from her son's home illustrates this point:

> There, by the scraper, lay Clym's hook, and the handful of faggot-bonds he had just brought home; in front of her [Eustacia] were the empty path, the garden-gate standing slightly ajar; and, beyond, the great valley of purple heath thrilling silently in the sun. Mrs Yeobright was gone. (Bk4 Ch.VI p.278)

The accoutrements of Clym's new profession are positioned in the foreground – they make an immediate impact on us. As far as Eustacia is concerned, her husband is defined as a furze-cutter and nothing beyond that, and it is this "truth" that precipitates the tragedy. While we note the details, we are also invited to see beyond them – beyond the open gate, beyond the silent heath – until we realise, along with Eustacia, that Mrs Yeobright has left. The sentence 'Mrs Yeobright was gone' is deceptively terse – the repercussions are, of course, wide-reaching and tragic.

Notes

[1] Dorothy Van Ghent, 'On Tess of the D'Urbervilles', *Hardy* ed. by Albert J. Guerard (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,1969), pp.77-91 (p. 83).
[2] Daniel R. Schwarz, 'Beginnings and Endings in Hardy's Major Fiction', in *Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Dale Kramer (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 17-36 (p. 23).
[3] Albert J.Guerard , 'Introduction', in *Hardy*, ed. by Albert J.Guerard (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,1969), pp.1-10
(p. 8).
[4] George Wing, *Hardy* (London : Oliver and Boyd, 1968), p. 55; Lawrence, ' The Real Tragedy', p. 68.
[5] D.H. Lawrence, 'The Real Tragedy', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper (London: Macmillan,1975), p. 72.
[6] Lawrence, 'The Real Tragedy', p. 68.
[7] T.S.Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (London: Faber and Faber,1934), p. 55.
[8] Jean Brooks, 'The Poetic Structure', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, pp. 80-93 (p. 90).
[9] Brooks, p. 90.
[10] *Life*, p. 239.
[11] Alastair Smart,in 'Pictorial Imagery in the Novels of Thomas Hardy', in *Review of English Studies*, Vol. 12, 1961, p. 274.
[12] J. B. Bullen, *The Expressive Eye* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), pp. 111-112.
[13] *Life*, p. 124.
[14] Harold Orel, *Hardy: Personal Writings*, ed. by Harold Orel (London: Macmillan,1967), p. 96.
[15] *Life*, p. 409.
[16] Penelope Vigar, *The Novels of Thomas Hardy : Illusion and Reality* (London: The Athlone Press, 1974), p. 133.
[17] Vigar, p. 32.
[18] Vigar, p. 33.
[19] Vigar, p. 54.
[20] Bullen, p. 12.
[21] Smart, p. 273.
[22] Lawrence, 'The Real Tragedy', p. 71.
[23] Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 133.
[24] Bullen, p. 12
[25] Grundy, p. 29.
[26] Vigar, p. 25.
[27] Lawrence, 'The Real Tragedy', p. 72.
[28] *Life*, p. 124.

Chapter Four

A Pair of Blue Eyes

I

The landscape in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is drawn distinctly and borders what we will come to recognise as the kingdom of Hardy's Wessex. While, in description, it is less heavily orchestrated than Egdon, the two are similar in that they have a strongly emphasised imaginative quality – the setting in this novel is referred to, in Hardy's Preface, as 'the region of dream and mystery'. By contrast, the skyscape of *Two on a Tower* shows the astronomical skies taking the place of constitutive landscape. One notable feature in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is the presence of the sea, which is continuously woven into the narrative. It is true that the sea does appear momentarily in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, but it is only introduced, we must assume, as a vehicle for Fancy, enhancing her with light and colour - in this sense, its function is Impressionistic. Another important constituent of the landscape is colour, and whereas Tess is associated with white and red, and Eustacia is associated with black and red, in this novel, the prevailing impression of Elfride and her environment is blue.

The novel highlights the variety of schools of art that Hardy draws upon to colour the narrative. Alastair Smart views *A Pair of Blue Eyes* as a hybrid of artistic influences and, as we noted in the Introduction, it bears testament to, 'the profound and far-reaching effect exerted by the whole heritage of European art upon Hardy's thought and sensibility.'[1] As in *The Return of the Native*, Hardy intentionally and overtly leans on the European masters to sketch his characters:

> Notice, as Elfride's own, the thoughtfulness which appears in the face of the Madonna della Sedia, without its rapture: the warmth and spirit of the

> type of woman's feature most common to the beauties – mortal and immortal – of Rubens, without their insistent fleshiness. The characteristic expression of the female faces of Corregio – that of the yearning human thoughts that lie too deep for tears – was hers sometimes, but seldom under ordinary conditions. (Vol. I , Ch. I, p.8)

Raphael, Rubens, and Corregio work together here in this miniature portrait study of Elfride and, while we note throughout the passage the reductive irony aimed affectionately at Elfride, we are left with the impression of warm womanhood.

The epigraph's quotation from *Hamlet*: 'The perfume and suppliance of a minute; / No more' concurs with the Impressionists' aim to capture the fragility of the moment. There are also suggestions of Vermeer in the nuances of light that characterise the cameo portrait of Elfride seated at her piano - the moment is frozen in time, the light setting her apart from the main action and enhancing her features with a special radiance: 'The furthermost candle on the piano comes immediately in a line with her head, and half invisible itself, forms the accidentally frizzled hair into a nebulous haze of light, surrounding her crown like an aureola' (Vol.I, Ch. III p.22). This can recall, in the pose and lighting, Vermeer's *Lady Seated at a Virginal.* As far as the lighting emphasis is concerned in the novel at large, Rembrandt and Turner also appear to be seminal influences, inspiring the treatment of light and colour.

II

As is often the case with Hardy, the light / shadow interaction works on a metaphorical level as well as on an aesthetic one. It can alert us to moments of emotional intensity, leading us to conclude, with Joan Grundy, that there is a connection between 'emotion, experience and colour'.[2] Grundy's view of the novel as 'self-consciously

pictorial' is borne out, not only by the numerous allusions to artists, but also by Hardy's strategic staging of key scenes.[3] In Vol.II, Ch.XIV, the meeting of the trio in the Luxellian vault is carefully composed:

> The blackened coffins were now revealed more clearly than at first, the whitened walls and arches throwing them forward in strong relief. It was a scene which was remembered by all three as an indelible mark in their history. Knight, with an abstracted face, was standing between his companions, though a little in advance of them, Elfride being on his right hand, and Stephen Smith on his left. The white daylight on his right side gleamed faintly in, and was toned to a blueness by contrast with the yellow rays from the candle against the wall. Elfride, timidly shrinking back, and nearest the entrance, received most of the light therefrom, whilst Stephen was entirely in candlelight, and to him the spot of outer sky visible above the steps was a steely blue patch, and nothing more.
> (Vol.II Ch. XIV p.260)

The drama is heightened by the moribund blackness of the interior contrasting with the sudden, and (for Stephen), fateful, shaft of iridescent light from outside.

Rembrandt's *chiaroscuro* and monochrome techniques contribute effectively to Hardy's construction of mood and atmosphere, as we can see in Vol.III, Ch.V, where the light / dark interplay adds to the drama of the graveyard scene and the revelation that ensues:

> Before she replied the moonlight returned again, irradiating that portion of churchyard within their view. It brightened the near part first, and against the background which the cloud-shadow had not yet uncovered stood, brightest of all, a white tomb – the tomb of young Jethway.
> (Vol.III, Ch.V p.315)

In Hardy's recurrent image of the endlessly stretching, lonely road, the white monochrome helps to accentuate its continuity: 'the hard, white turnpike road as it followed the level ridge in a perfectly straight line, seeming to be absorbed ultimately by the white of the sky' (Vol.I, Ch.V p.38). Often, the monochrome can intensify or anticipate the mood. The 'sorrowful monochrome' of evening (Vol.II,Ch.XII pp.237-238)

almost prepares us for Stephen's shock on catching sight of Elfride and Knight in the summerhouse: 'And thus waiting for the night's nearer approach, he watched the placid scene, over which the pale luminosity of the west cast a sorrowful monochrome, that became slowly embrowned by the dusk' (Vol.II,Ch.XII pp.237-238).

Night, with its all-enveloping shadows and prescience of danger, is an appropriate backdrop to Elfride's secret journey to Mrs. Jethway's cottage (Vol.III, Ch. III). The sky, the church, the bushes, the trees, all appear to be profoundly black, and the general blackness is unalleviated except for a thin shore-line of white fog:

> It was night in the valley between Endlestow Crags and the shore. The brook which trickled that way to the sea was distinct in its murmurs now, and over the line of its course there began to hang a white riband of fog. Against the sky, on the left hand of the vale, the black form of the church could be seen. On the other rose hazel-bushes, a few trees, and where these were absent, furze tufts – as tall as men - on stems nearly as stout as timber. The shriek of some bird was occasionally heard, as it flew terror-stricken from its first roost to seek a new sleeping-place where it might pass the night unmolested. (Vol.III,Ch.III p.301)

We can see from this description that the quality of the light plays a dramatic role, shaping the mood and atmosphere. A similar effect is achieved by the description of the scene at Windy Beak. Elfride reluctantly tells Knight that she and Stephen had once sat together at the same spot. The probability that this revelation will incur repercussions is anticipated by the ashen grey tones of the scene, the ash symbolising the remains of a doomed love:

> Two or three degrees above that melancholy and eternally level line the ocean horizon, hung a sea of brass, with no visible rays, in a sky of ashen hue. It was a sky the sun did not illuminate or enkindle, as is usual at sunsets. This sheet of sky was met by the salt mass of grey water, flecked here and there with white. A waft of dampness occasionally rose to their faces, which was probably rarefied spray from the blows of the sea upon the foot of the cliff. (Vol.III,Ch.IV p.308)

The melancholy engendered by Hardy's monochromes can be seen as a counterpoint to the promise contained within Turner's painting of *Norham Castle: Sunrise*. In this painting, the monochrome evokes a different response; all forms lose their angularity, yielding themselves up submissively to melt in the fragile, liquid glow of the emerging sun. We are offered no such promise in the Windy Beak seascape – the horizon is unremittingly level, the colours are anaemic, and the sunset lacks its customary warmth. Sea and sky merge together in their greyness and their ashen tones reflect the elegiac tenor of the episode, setting the mood for the following chapter (Vol.III,Ch.V), which appropriately chronicles the start of Autumn and the chilly night air of October.

In contrast, Hardy's monochromes can sometimes deliberately defy the anticipated reflection of mood:

> As seen from the rectory dining-room, which took a warm tone of light from the fire, the weather and scene outside seemed to have stereotyped themselves in unrelieved shades of gray. The long-armed trees and shrubs of juniper, cedar, and pine varieties, were grayish-black; those of the broad-leaved sort, together with the herbage, were grayish-green; the eternal hills and tower behind them were grayish-brown; the sky, dropping behind all, gray of the purest melancholy.
>
> Yet in spite of this sombre artistic effect the morning was not one which tended to lower the spirits. It was even cheering. For it did not rain, nor was rain likely to fall for many days to come. (Vol.I, Ch.V p.34)

While the muted tones of grey, and grey tinged with green or brown, pervade the landscape, ('grey'is repeated here as insistently as the 'blue' of Elfride's eyes) the mood is neither subdued nor melancholic. Our expectations are thus undermined through the use of Hardy's painterly methods, perhaps alerting us to the likelihood of further surprises regarding characters and events.

More often though, the treatment of light, (and reflected or refracted light), induces the kind of psychological response we would expect. Following Knight's

unsuccessful attempt to present Elfride with a gift of gold earrings, the focus shifts to the reflections of golden sunlight in the wet carriage:

> ... the sunset rays glanced directly upon the wet uphill road they had climbed. The ruts formed by their carriage-wheels on the ascent - a pair of Liliputian canals - were as so many shining bars of gold, tapering to nothing in the distance. (Vol.II, Ch.VII p.196)

We can see from this image, the Turner-like concentration on the luminous shimmer, with all the contours receding, until they finally melt into a fluidity of yellow light. (The focus on the sun's reflection at ground level anticipates the revelatory inversion of perspectives experienced by Knight on the Cliff without a Name).

Turner is referred to directly in Vol.I, Ch. XIII, in the description of the London crowds:

> Crowds – mostly of women – were surging, bustling, and pacing up and down. Gaslights glared from butchers' stalls, illuminating the lumps of flesh to splotches of orange and vermillion, like the wild colouring of Turner's later pictures, whilst the purl and babble of tongues of every pitch and mood was to this human wildwood what the ripple of a brook is to the natural forest. (Vol.I, Ch.XIII p.133)

Turner's influence can be discerned in Hardy's own recorded impression of London:

> ... what is called sunshine up here – a red-hot bullet hanging in a livid atmosphere – reflected from window-panes in the form of bleared copper eyes, and inflaming the sheets of plate glass with smears of gory light. A drab snow mingled itself with liquid horsedung, and in the river puddings of ice moved slowly on.[4]

The livid colours of the scene quoted above echo the intensity of the sunrise following the failed elopement of the previous day: ' The day began to break, and revealed that they were by the sea. Red rocks overhung them, and, receding into distance, grew livid in the blue-gray atmosphere' (Vol.I,Ch.XII p.115). Later in the novel, there is the 'splotch of vermillion red' of the sunset over the Cliff – there, the sun resembles 'a

red face looking on with a drunken leer' (Vol.II Ch.IX p.217). Turner's influence makes its impress in these scenes, as it does in the vibrantly coloured Preface:

> The place is pre-eminently (for one person at least) the region of dream and mystery. The ghostly birds, the pall-like sea, the frothy wind, the eternal soliloquy of the waters, the bloom of dark purple cast that seems to exhale from the shoreward precipices, in themselves lend to the scene an atmosphere like the twilight of a night vision. (Preface)

We can see from the above description that Hardy's light and colour effects are imbued with a poetic resonance. This can trigger associative thought in the reader to such an extent that, according to Grundy, the entire novel can be experienced in terms of its light and colour: 'It is *felt* in terms of colours – Elfride's blue eyes, the golden sun, silver moonlight, the blackness of the after-sunset, the coffin and death'.[5] A striking example of such use of colour can be found in the description of Elfride's blue eyes:

> These eyes were blue; heavenly blue.
> At least heavenly blue in High Parnassian. But at the risk of lapsing into too extreme a realism for narrative art, let it be said in reasonable prose that her eyes were, more truly, blue as autumn distance - blue as the blue we see between the retreating mouldings of hills and woody slopes on a sunny September morning. A misty and shady blue, that had no beginning or surface, and was looked *into* rather than *at*. (Vol.I Ch.I p.8)

Clearly, the eponymous blue of Elfride's eyes is evocative and captivating enough a subject as to justify its being used as the title of the novel. It is not a question of a colour being selected from a palette at random – the poetic resonance of the word '*blue*' repeated five times in this one short passage defies any idea of randomness. As the novel develops, it will emerge that this particular blue will leave, tragically, an indelible impression – it is a fateful blue and its nuances offer both promise and danger. Furthermore, we are told that the blue is to be looked into, rather than at. This prepares the way for us to conclude that Elfride is perceived to be a repository for the dreams and

delusions of those fated to fall in love with her. Hardy seems to be implying that these eyes, when gazed into, carry a reflected wish-projection. This is the view held by J. B Bullen:

> In an important sense Elfride is an image before she is a character: throughout the novel she is remembered by her lovers as an image carried on the mental retina – she is almost the projection of something within their own minds. [6]

We have already been given clues as to the lack of depth in Elfride's character that leaves her unable to rank among Corregio's women. As a character in her own right, she appears to be undeveloped, leading Bullen to conclude that: 'Elfride's role is ultimately bound up with how others see her.'[7] If we turn again to the scene in the Luxellian vault, we can see that when white daylight filters into the Luxellian vault (Vol.II, Ch.XIV p.260), it assumes a blue quality and we might perceive this phenomenon in psychological terms, inasmuch that, for Stephen, the dawning of light is tinged irrevocably with the blue associated with Elfride.

Hardy's 'tricks of light and shade' are perceived by Penelope Vigar to be the means of evoking 'strange, meaningful resemblances at the most appropriate points in the narrative'.[8] These effects can help to shape the perceptions of the central characters and the onlookers, as much as our own. One example that, for Vigar, proves the effectiveness of using light and shadow is in (what proves to be the pivotal) summerhouse scene. Fears are confirmed for Stephen, as he catches a glimpse of the lovers:

> They entered the Belvedere. In the lower part it was formed of close woodwork nailed crosswise, and had openings in the upper by way of windows.
>
> The scratch of a striking light was heard, and a glow radiated from the interior of the building. The light gave birth to dancing leaf-shadows, stem-shadows, lustrous streaks, dots, sparkles, and threads of silver sheen of all imaginable variety and transience. It awakened gnats, which flew

> towards it, revealed shiny gossamer threads, disturbed earthworms. Stephen gave but little attention to these phenomena, and less time. He saw in the summer-house a strongly illuminated picture.
> (Vol.II, Ch.XII pp.239-241)

Illumination brings to Stephen the unwelcome disclosure of a double betrayal – his deep love for Elfride has been superseded by her subsequent love for Stephen's highly valued friend and mentor. The cross that Stephen now has to bear is evoked by the image of the cross of slatted wood beneath the window. Oblivious to the positive, life-affirming qualities of the light that entice responsive insects and leaves, Stephen's focus is exclusively directed upon the lovers. For the rejected suitor, this light is almost death-inducing, now that his own 'bright star' (p.241) has abandoned his world. The sense of death through knowledge is further conveyed by the reference to 'the horizontal bars of woodwork, which crossed their forms like the ribs of a skeleton' (Vol.II, Ch.XII p.241). If we choose to think of the fickle Elfride as an Eve figure succumbing to temptation, then the reference to 'ribs' becomes even more loaded. Ominous too, is the sequential episode where Stephen brushes against the symbol of death in the form of the dark voyeuse, Mrs. Jethway.

When London becomes the new locus for the dashed dreams and delusions of the doomed trio, we see the insipid greys of the rainy city streets contributing to an atmosphere that is dismal and enervating. The prevailing listlessness of the mood predicts the failure of Elfride's final effort to resurrect the relationship:

> The scene shifts to Knight's chambers in Bede's Inn. It was late in the evening of the day following his departure from Endlestow. A drizzling rain descended upon London, forming a humid and dreary halo over every well-lighted street. The rain had not yet been prevalent long enough to give to rapid vehicles that clear and distinct rattle which follows the thorough washing of the stones by a drenching rain, but was just sufficient

> to make footway and roadway slippery, adhesive, and clogging to both feet and wheels. (Vol.III,Ch.VIII p.337)

A veil of damp humidity smudges the contours and dims the light so that there is an overall impression of stagnancy. While the rain provides the main subject matter here, it works in a very different way from the rain in Renoir's famous *Parapluies* painting. There, the rain, as central focus, is vigorous and necessitates the use of the umbrellas, which in turn bring line, form, and cohesiveness to the composition. The London rain diffuses line and form – it is seen as a chronic condition, a state of mind, rather than an energy. Nothing is clear and distinct in the scene. Rather than a refreshing downpour, it is an unremitting drizzle, and we can assume that correspondingly, Knight has not benefited from any new clarity of vision; he is blinkered by his own dreary halo of light - in his case, the light obscures rather than brightens. The juxtaposition of 'dreary' and 'halo' functions curiously like an oxymoron here and appears to be a deliberate irony on Hardy's part, implying a paradigmatic love based on sanctimonious and anachronistic values. (In this context, it might be feasible to imagine that Knight's name is intended to conjure up medieval chivalry). Knight can also be interpreted as Night itself, obscuring the light – he is, after all, limited by his idealised concept of love and thus remains tragically unenlightened). This highly romanticised concept of love is one that Knight will adhere to with a dogged tenacity, or perhaps, and more insidiously, it is one that will adhere to him. It is an ideal that will, (like the slippery, adhesive, mud-clogged cobbles of the London street), impede any possibility of progress. Just as the vision of lost love will haunt Knight, so too will it continue to obsess Stephen. As we see in Vol.III, Ch.XI, Elfride's features will subconsciously shape Stephen's perception of womanhood:

> In its numerous repetitions on the sides and edges of the leaves, Knight began to notice a peculiarity. All the feminine Saints had one type of feature. There were large nimbi and small nimbi about their drooping heads, but the face was always the same. (Vol.III,Ch.XI p.355)

This subject is developed later as the central theme of *The Well Beloved.*

Hardy's use of colour and light in relation to mood and action, supports Grundy's theory that the colours are further heightened by Hardy's own associations with the region:

> We know from the poems how strong for Hardy is the link between emotion, experience and colour; such strong emotional colouring in a novel associated so closely with the most lyrical episode of his own life is therefore not surprising.[9]

The connections that Grundy observes can be seen again in the climactic train journey to Camelton. The train bearing the rival lovers and Elfride's coffin sets out at sunset on the Eve of St Valentine's Day. The influence of Turner can be seen in the fiery ochre of the setting sun before the colours gradually fade to a flat brown. We can assume that the sunset is intended as a metaphor for the transience of beauty and love. Hardy's sense of dramatic irony is always on the lookout for opportunities and there is an ironic mix of pathos and comedy in the scene. Knight and Stephen, unaware that they are accompanied by the corpse of Elfride, engage on a mission to re-capture their lost love:

> Evening drew on apace. It chanced to be the eve of St.Valentine's - that bishop of blessed memory to youthful lovers - and the sun shone low under the rim of a thick hard cloud, decorating the eminences of the landscape with crowns of orange fire. (Vol.III,Ch.XII p.367)

The lovers' mission is nearly over – it is evening and the sun is setting on the eve of the day that celebrates love. That it is 'the eve of St.Valentine's day' –a day sanctified by 'the bishop of blessed memory' - cannot help to resurrect a doomed love. To ensure that the bishop's influence prevails over the scene, Hardy draws from an ecclesiastical

register here, selecting the words '*eminences*' and '*crowns*' in his depiction of the sun casting its last glow over the high points of the landscape.

With the parting sun, Stephen's prophetic dream about lost love anticipates the loss of Elfride. The warm tones of the sunset are eclipsed by the flat browns and black silhouettes of night:

> The train continued rattling on, and Stephen leant back in his corner and closed his eyes. The yellows of evening had turned to browns, the dusky shades thickened, and a flying cloud of dust occasionally stroked the window – borne upon a chilling breeze which blew from the north-east. The previously gilded but now dreary hills began to lose their daylight aspects of rotundity, and to become black discs vandyked against the sky, all nature wearing the cloak that six o' clock casts over the landscape at this time of the year. (Vol.III, Ch.XII p.369)

The falling shadows and silhouetted contours signal the approach of night and with the fading of the colours from the landscape, the light literally fades for the men. On hearing that the hearse contains the body of their beloved Elfride, the unseeing Knight suddenly notices Stephen and leads him away from the light:

> Knight stood staring blindly at where the hearse had been; as if he saw it, or some one, there. Then he turned, and beheld the lithe form of Stephen bowed down like that of an old man. He took his young friend's arm, and led him away from the light. (Vol.III, Ch.XIII p.371)

The light and shade metaphor is extended in the revelation that Elfride had finally married Lord Luxellian. Knight and Stephen stare at the coffin-plate inscription:

> They read it, and read it, and read it again – Stephen and Knight – as if animated by one soul. Then Stephen put his hand upon Knight's arm, and they retired from the yellow glow, farther, farther, till the chill darkness enclosed them round, and the quiet sky asserted its presence overhead as a dim gray sheet of blank monotony. (Vol.III,Ch.XIII p.375)

The bright *blue* associated with Elfride is to remain buried forever in the shadowed vault of the little church at Endlestow. Knight and Stephen leave the distraught Luxellian

despairing over the loss of Elfride. If we recall the concluding moments of Stephen's abortive elopement with Elfride, 'And the pony went on, and she spoke to him no more. He saw her figure diminish and her blue veil grow gray – saw it with the agonising sensations of a slow death' (Vol.I,Ch.XII p.119), we can see that the inevitable diminution from blue to grey described here recurs finally and tragically at the conclusion of the novel.

III

Just as light and shadow can influence perceptions, so too can perspectives. Unable to straddle the irreconcilable gulf between his idyll and reality, Knight is doomed to remain on the periphery of life. Hardy adapts the *doorkijke* framing technique in Vol.III, Ch.VII, to accentuate Knight's distance from his dream and his inevitable sense of loss:

> Elfride's dressing-room lay in the salient angle in this direction, and it was lighted by two windows in such a position that, from Knight's standing – place, his sight passed through both windows, and raked the room. Elfride was there; she was pausing between the two windows, looking at her figure in the cheval-glass. She regarded herself long and attentively in front; turned, flung back her head, and observed the reflection over her shoulder. (Vol.III,Ch.VII p.331)

In the famous Cliff scene, the perspectives are strongly cinematic, with seesawing summits and valleys. The Atlantic sea, as seen from the cliff-top directly above, is scaled down until it becomes small and insignificant, as if to emphasise the insignificance of Stephen's return. Hardy's experiments with spatial perspectives, as seen in the dramatic precipices, gorges, and ravines, offer us alternating zoom lens shots of the cliffside and telescopic views of the sea below. Not only are the perspectives strong cinematically, they also make a psychological impact on the characters and on the reader, as can be seen in the example selected by Norman Page:

> After the rescue, intense relief prompts their first embrace: "At the moment of embracing, Elfride's eyes involuntarily flashed towards the *Puffin* steamboat. It had doubled the point, and was no longer to be seen." And in the same moment Stephen has, effectively, disappeared from her emotional horizons.[10]

As well as constructing the exaggerated angles and edges, Hardy also adjusts the temporal perspectives, so that the span of millions of years is 'by a momentary sweep' (p.214) contracted down to a moment in time. In what we might think of as a Blakean synecdoche, the confrontation with the fossilised trilobite reveals centuries of gradual evolution: 'Time closed up like a fan before him. He saw himself at one extremity of the years, face to face with the beginning and all the intermediate centuries simultaneously' (Vol.II,Ch.IX p.214). The dramatic perspectives contribute to the suspense, and David Lodge selects the Cliff scene to demonstrate the visual intensity of Hardy's fiction:

> His [Hardy's] work is notable for such breathtaking shifts of perspective, which display the fragile human figure dwarfed by a Universe whose vast dimensions of space and time were just beginning to be truly apprehended. And invariably his characters, fallaciously but understandably, read into this disparity of scale a kind of cosmic malice. Confronting the dead eyes of the fossil, which have replaced the living, seductive blue eyes of Elfride in his field of vision, Knight acquires a new understanding, both poignant and bleak, of his own mortality.[11]

There is a connection, Vigar believes, between 'metaphorical suggestion and exact pictorial representation', and we can see that this observation is particularly relevant in the confrontation between the fossilised Knight and the fossil.[12] From another angle, Martin Seymour-Smith argues the case for a metaphoric reading of the scene:

> The sexual implications are obvious. While Elfride loves him, and has been prepared to sacrifice all propriety in order to save his life, he is too inhibited to love her. He is terrified of losing himself in the emotional depths over whose analogue, beneath the aptly named Cliff with No Name – really Beeny Cliff – he has just hung.[13]

Revelatory episodes occur in graveyards or on cliff-edges and so it would appear that perspectives consistently play a central role in Knight's enlightenment regarding Elfride's former lovers. In Vol.III, Ch.V, the revelations are deliberately timed to follow the crumbling of the medieval church tower that finally allows the moonlight to filter through:

> The heavy arch spanning the junction of tower and nave formed to-night a black frame to a distant misty view, stretching far westward. Just outside the arch came a heap of fallen stones, then a portion of moonlit churchyard, then the wide and convex sea behind. It was a *coup-d'oeil* which had never been possible since the mediaeval masons first attached the old tower to the older church it dignified, and hence must be supposed to have had an interest apart from that of simple moonlight on ancient wall and sea and shore – any mention of which has by this time, it is to be feared, become one of the cuckoo-cries which are heard but not regarded. (Vol.III,Ch.V p.315)

The construction of this description is, according to Vigar, ingenuously strategic, and she defers to, 'Hardy's wilful ingenuity in suddenly focussing attention on some particular thing, an isolated, often incongruous event '.[14] She believes that Hardy's disproportioning and exaggeration techniques can be enlightening:

> Nearly always the effects of disproportioning and apparent exaggeration in his novels are simply the result of a different angle on actuality, a deliberate contrivance to make us look at something in a new way. An ordinary scene can be suddenly given a new perspective, or it can be metaphorically enlarged or condensed to give us overall a heightened, clearer picture.[15]

The words in the description of the tower are chosen carefully, with the repetition of '*arch*' followed by the two '*then*' clauses emphasising the complex and successive dimensions. There is the sense that the truth will be gradually revealed only by advancing through these perspectives. The collapse of the tower inadvertently kills Mrs. Jethway and she leaves behind her a testimony of allegations denouncing Elfride. The lyric beauty

contained in the image of 'simple moonlight on ancient wall and sea and shore' is almost undermined by the oblique reference to cuckoo-cries – the cuckoo, by appropriating the original love nests of other birds, might be interpreted as a dramatic device here relating to Elfride's succession of former lovers. To accept what appears on the surface to be simple beauty seems to be a dangerous delusion.

One of the most striking examples of Hardy's perspectives can be found in Vol.II, Ch.X, following the drama on the Cliff. Stephen, having just returned from Bombay, gazes out at the Endelstow valley:

> He was overlooking the valley containing Elfride's residence.
> From this point of observation the prospect exhibited the peculiarity of being either brilliant foreground or the subdued tone of distance, a sudden dip in the surface of the country lowering out of sight all the intermediate prospect. In apparent contact with the trees and bushes growing close beside him appeared the distant tract, terminated suddenly by the brink of the series of cliffs which culminated in the tall giant without a name – small and unimportant as here beheld. A leaf on a bough at Stephen's elbow blotted out a whole hill in the contrasting district far away; a green bunch of nuts covered a complete upland there, and the great cliff itself was outvied by a pigmy crag in the bank hard by him. Stephen had looked upon these things hundreds of times before to-day, but he had never viewed them with such tenderness as now. (Vol.II,Ch.X p.223)

The uncanny swings from foreground, to middle distance, to horizon, convey the cinematic potential of the description. The zoom lens shot of the leaf at Stephen's elbow exaggerates it enough to obscure the distant hillside; even the Cliff is ironically diminished by the little crag in the foreground. These vacillations support Vigar's observations regarding Hardy's disproportioning technique; the strategic positioning and scaling of the composition suggests that everything has a relative value.[16]

IV

The landscape itself is often used as an agent, rather than a backdrop. The deliberate identification of Elfride's '*blue*' with the blue tones of natural landscape illustrates the artist's method of inter-relating the characters and Nature. We have already discussed the importance of light and shadow in evoking mood. In this section of the chapter we will look at the ways in which Nature appears to reflect, inspire, or contradict mood.

Elfride's secret journey to Mrs Jethaway's cottage (Vol.III, Ch.III) presents us with an anti-Romantic and post-Darwinian vision of Nature. The allusion to the nameless bird, 'some bird' (p.301), implies that its persecution is typical in Nature's "survival of the fittest" existence. This nameless bird, whose function is emblematic, could be related to those in the woods of Mellstock or Hintock - Hardy tends to use anonymity in this way to make a statement about human nature. In Wessex, the maxim, "the fittest is not necessarily the best", emerges as a universal truth. The inimical features of the night, as seen in this passage – the dark silhouettes, the disproportioning of the vegetation, the terrorised shriek of some anonymous victim of Nature – all these are proleptic of Elfride's unsuccessful quest to avert her nemesis. Like the nameless bird ousted from its roosting place, Elfride's hopes for future happiness have been "molested" by the threats of Mrs. Jethway.

Even the church, traditionally a symbol of hope, appears here only in black silhouette. (We already have the impression in this novel that the church is doomed anyway, that it cannot be restored, and that attempts to do so will lead ultimately to its own ruin and to tragedy for others, as we see in Vol.III,Ch.V, when the restored church

tower finally crumbles, killing Mrs. Jethway). The stark contrast, already noted in this scene, between the blackness of the night sky and the moonlight, parallels the black and white "truths" that determine Knight's perception of love. The moonlight throws Jethway's tomb in sharp relief against those obscured by the shadows, and we might assume from this that Nature appears to collude with circumstance to victimise Elfride. If so, it would be a discomfiting anti-Romantic vision and one that sits uneasily, in the context of Hardy's work as a whole, alongside the alternative vision of a Wordsworthian affinity between man and Nature, such as we see in *Tintern Abbey*.

In the events leading up to the return of Stephen Smith and Knight's subsequent cliff-edge life and death experience, the scenery assumes characteristics that predict inevitable danger. Imagery of death, decay, and abandonment are evoked by the rocks and precipices that overhang the sea and charge the atmosphere with suspense:

> One of the two ridges between which they walked dwindled lower and became insignificant. That on the right hand rose with their advance, and terminated in a clearly defined edge against the light, as if it were abruptly sawn off. A little farther, and the bed of the rivulet ended in the same fashion.
>
> They had come to a bank breast-high. And over it the valley was no longer to be seen. It was withdrawn cleanly and completely. In its place was sky and boundless atmosphere; and perpendicularly down beneath them – small and far off – lay the corrugated surface of the Atlantic.
>
> The small stream here found its death. Running over the precipice it was dispersed in spray before it was half way down, and falling like rain upon projected ledges, made minute grassy meadows of them. Lower down it soaked away amid the debris of the cliff. This was the inglorious end of the river. (Vol.II,Ch.VIII p.204)

The irrepressible power of Nature and its corroding effect on the terrain are impressed upon us in this scene. Images of sharply sawn precipices, dangerously angled projections, eroded cliff-faces, debris of crumbling stone – all these are strategically drawn into the composition of the scene to prepare us for some imminent danger that will inevitably

involve man and Nature. When suddenly, the valley can no longer be seen, we note the determination underpinning the phrase: 'It was withdrawn cleanly and completely'. This raises the question of whose authority is at work here – whether it is Hardy's, or Nature's, is ambiguous. The small stream hurls itself over the precipice, evaporating into spray until finally finding its death in the sea. The idea of the stream 'finding' its death is disturbing – it suggests that the sole purpose of its course was to seek out its end. Hardy might be employing this image as a metaphor to imply that man's purpose in life is to *find* his own demise – 'finding' in this context denoting fulfillment or revelation, or simply, destiny. The ominous imagery continues with substrates of the topography being stripped back to the raw bone: 'The composition of the huge hill was revealed to its backbone and marrow here at its rent extremity. It consisted of a vast stratification of blackish-gray slate, unvaried in its whole height by a single change of shade' (Vol.II, Ch.VIII p.205). While the geologist's rational analysis may reveal only slate and soil, it is the personality of the Cliff that inspires an irrational fear in Elfride. But at times we must put our trust in the irrational - Knight's efforts to rationalise the peculiarities of the terrain and the quirks of the inverted wind currents, cannot save him from mortal danger.

There might be a double irony in Knight's confrontation with the trilobite, given that, in an earlier chapter, he who was once master of his own microcosmic universe of Zoophytes, is now demoted in Nature's hierarchy to share a common destiny. It is made pointedly clear that hope and compassion are meted out by Nature rather than by Knight. Sunlight, with its occasional, warm and errant rays, is contrasted directly with Knight and the light/shadow symbolism of his name is implied in the following passage:

> One stream only of evening sunlight came into the room from a window quite in the corner, overlooking a court. An aquarium stood in the

> window. It was a dull parallelepipedon enough for living creatures at most hours of the day; but for a few minutes in the evening, as now, an errant, kindly ray lighted up and warmed the little world therein, when the many-coloured zoophytes opened and put forth their arms, the weeds acquired a rich transparency, the shells gleamed of a more golden yellow, and the timid community expressed gladness more plainly than in words. (Vol.I,Ch.XIII p.129)

When Nature does not appear indifferent to the fate of mankind, it can look as if it is responding to mood and circumstance. In Vol.I, Ch.VIII, there appears to be a corresponding melancholy in the landscape when Elfride, on hearing the sound of a kiss beneath her window, mistakenly believes Stephen to be engaged with a lover:

> Her face flushed and she looked out, but to no purpose. The dark ruin of the upland drew a keen sad line against the pale glow of the sky, unbroken except where a young cedar on the lawn, that had outgrown its fellow trees, shot its pointed head across the horizon, piercing the firmamental lustre like a sting. (Vol.I,Ch.VIII p.71)

The hill and trees are charcoal sketched, thus appearing grey and dismal. Even the sky is only faintly promising with its pale glow. The cedar sapling, described in a register spiked with both military and phallic connotations, incisively thrusts itself into view, piercing the horizon 'like a sting', and thereby underlining Elfride's vulnerability. The imagery is chilling because it reflects Elfride's fears. It is also prophetic, for there is a subsequent and tragic association between Elfride and silhouetted trees that reveals itself ultimately in Vol.III, Ch.XIII, when her hearse is carried from the train:

> When the train stopped the half-estranged friends could perceive by the lamplight that the assemblage of idlers enclosed as a kernel a group of men in black coats. A side gate in the platform - railing was open, and outside this stood a dark vehicle, which they could not at first characterise. Then Knight saw on its upper part forms against the sky like fir-trees by night, and knew the vehicle to be a hearse. Few people were at the carriage doors to meet the passengers – the majority had congregated at this upper end. Knight and Stephen alighted, and turned for a moment in the same direction. (Vol.III,Ch.XIII p.370)

There appears to be a deliberate correlation between the exterior landscape and the interior psyche of the characters. We have witnessed fading hopes that synchronise with sunsets and moments of crises that correspond to cliff-edges. We have noted also the slow rotation of quotidian, loveless days reflected in the monochromatic greys and browns of a muted landscape. We may therefore conclude that the light and perspective techniques combine with mood to give the impression of Nature in sympathy with character and circumstance. Of course, it is rarely as clear-cut as this with Hardy and occasionally, as on the excursion to Barwith Bay in Vol.II, Ch.VII, he will surreptitiously introduce a rogue word or phrase that will be set at odds with the rest, thereby grazing the pastoral veneer:

> The journey was along a road by neutral green hills, upon which hedgerows lay trailing like ropes on a quay. Gaps in these uplands revealed the blue sea, flecked with a few dashes of white and a solitary white sail, the whole brimming up to a keen horizon which lay like a line ruled from hillside to hillside. Then they rolled down a pass, the chocolate-toned rocks forming a wall on both sides, from one of which fell a heavy jagged shade over half the roadway. A spout of fresh water burst from an occasional crevice, and pattering down upon broad green leaves, ran along as a rivulet at the bottom. Unkempt locks of heather overhung the brow of each steep, whence at divers points a bramble swung forth into mid-air, snatching at their head-dresses like a claw. (Vol.II, Ch.VII p.193)

We can detect certain incongruities that puncture the idyll here. The 'neutral green' of the hills may be extended to suggest Nature's neutrality with regard to the aspirations of mankind, (in this case, the thwarted ambition of Knight to secure Elfride with his gift of earrings). A Nature that is dangerously untamed is implied by the 'jagged' shadows of the overhanging rocks, the cataract of fresh water spouting out from the rock, the 'unkempt' heathers, and the renegade bramble that rebelliously claws at their hats.

There is a sense of energy barely suppressed, brimming up until it reaches the level ruled line of the horizon. Even in the sense that the line is 'ruled' it would seem as if some authoritative force is at work here. The drama, vibrancy, and immediacy of the description point specifically to Turner's influence. The Barwith Bay colours are used, Turner-style, to heighten the senses and leave us with an overall impression of Nature as a willful force, straining towards release.

It would appear that when the atmosphere becomes emotionally charged, it corresponds to landscapes shot through with vibrant colour:

> They mounted the last crest, and the bay which was to be the end of their pilgrimage burst upon them. The ocean blueness deepened its colour as it stretched to the feet of the crags, where it terminated in a fringe of white – silent at this distance, though moving and heaving like a counterpane upon a restless sleeper. The shadowed hollows of the purple and brown rocks would have been called blue had not that tint been so entirely appropriated by the water beside them. (Vol.II,Ch.VII p.193/194)

The haunting image of the ocean as a restless sleeper's counterpane succeeds dramatically and prophetically at this juncture; it is as if Elfride's doomed lovers of the past, present, and future, are thus metamorphosed.

We can see that when the focus is concentrated on the precariousness of Knight's tenuous finger-tip hold on life, Hardy freezes the moment to speculate on Nature's predilection for human suffering –if indeed there is such a predilection. For we are invited to consider this malevolent aspect of Nature, along with Knight, who is by now convinced that he is being victimised by a cosmic force. Hardy offers a balanced argument here. It is tempting to assume that the cruel theatre of the Cliff experience is being stage-managed by an invincible cosmic force. Yet, we are made aware that Knight has lost objectivity of thought and thus, as Lodge argues, fallaciously perceives a cosmic

malice - seeing himself as a martyr spitted on to a rock to suffer the systematic lashings of the elements.[17] The rain and wind are typical for an average summer day – it is Knight's perception of them that has lost proportion. (This subjective and distorted view of Nature's hostility to man recurs in *The Return of the Native*, when Eustacia suffers a torrent of arrows while Thomasin sees only prosy rain. Again, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Tess assumes that Nature is judgmental, whereas it is quite apparent that it is only concerned with its own natural laws).

During the voyage to Plymouth, the night sky seems to reflect the mood as Elfride's blitheness gives way to terror at the unexpected vision of Mrs.Jethway:

> Knight appeared with the rug, and they sat down behind a weather-cloth on the windward side, just as the two red eyes of the Needles glared upon them from the gloom, their pointed summits rising like shadowy phantom figures against the sky. (Vol.III,Ch.II p.288/289)

The beautiful sunset of the previous evening surrenders to an ominous leaden sky to suggest the overshadowing of Elfride's bright horizons. Similarly, the inimical features of the sea-scape description, in Vol.III, Ch.VI, set the mood for Knight's discovery of Mrs Jethaway's body:

> The sea, though comparatively placid, could as usual be heard from this point along the whole distance between promontories to the right and left, floundering and entangling itself among the insulated stocks of rock which dotted the water's edge – the miserable skeletons of tortured old cliffs that would not even yet succumb to the wear and tear of the tides. (Vol.III,Ch.VI p.323)

This anti-Romantic vision, in which the self-destructive sea helplessly entangles itself among the aged and skeletal cliffs, implies a slow, grinding torture and an enduring misery. If there is any element of hope here, it is only in the stoicism of the weather-

beaten old cliffs that will 'not even yet succumb' to the steady and relentless pull of the tides.

Nature seems to suffer in sympathy along with Knight on hearing Elfride's full confession:

> The scene was engraved for years on the retina of Knight's eye: the dead and brown stubble, the weeds among it, the distant belt of beeches shutting out the view of the house, the leaves of which were now red and sick to death. (Vol.III, Ch.VII p.335)

The faded monochromes of the brown stubble are indicative of a jaded vision; the weeds are symbolic of stunted development; the home of his beloved is blocked from his sight; and the beech leaves that eclipse his view are feverish and withering. The tainted purity of a love once idealised is associated with decaying vegetation in a lingering impression that is to haunt Knight for a long time.

Finally, if we were to select just two from the number of illustrations of Hardy's Romantic and anti-Romantic impulses– for example, the moonlight on water (a lyrical moment in a scene that, on the whole, is not lyrical), and the barren stubble fields, we would be left with a dual perspective of beauty and sadness. These contrasting images point to a creative tension within Hardy's writing that, together with the drama of the perspectives and the intense shimmer of light and colour, contributes to the pace and energy of the novel.

Notes

[1] Alastair Smart, ' Pictorial Imagery in the Novels of Thomas Hardy', in *Review of English Studies*, Vol. 12, 1961, pp.262-80 (p. 263).
[2] Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 52.
[3] Grundy, p. 51.
[4] *Life*, p. 243.
[5] Grundy, p. 52.
[6] J. B. Bullen, *The Expressive Eye* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), p. 55.
[7] Bullen, p. 60.
[8] Penelope Vigar, *The Novels of Thomas Hardy : Illusion and Reality* (London: The Athlone Press, 1974), p. 47.
[9] Grundy, p. 52.
[10] Norman Page, *Thomas Hardy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 97.
[11] David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 15-16.
[12] Vigar, p. 40.
[13] Martin Seymour-Smith, *Hardy*, (London; Bloomsbury, 1995), p. 168.
[14] Vigar, p. 40.
[15] Vigar, pp. 44-45.
[16] Vigar, p. 44-45.
[17] Lodge, pp. 15-16.

Chapter Five

Two on a Tower

I

The setting of *Two on a Tower* differs from those of the other novels selected for this discussion. As we suggested in the Introduction, Hardy's range of landscapes includes the enclosed, pastoral settings of Mellstock and Hintock, the vast expanse of Egdon Heath, the lush valley of Talbothays, and the flinty fields of Flintcomb-Ash. By contrast with the detailed local regions of Hintock, Mellstock, or the Froom Valley, the landscape in this novel is not elaborated. It does not have the kind of distinctive personality that characterises Egdon Heath. Nor does it function allegorically, as in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. If we choose to categorise *A Pair of Blue Eyes* in terms of seascape, rather than landscape, then we might want to consider *Two on a Tower* as a skyscape.

The experimental shifts of perspectives at the Cliff without a Name are more fully developed in *Two on a Tower*. In both novels, it is clear that Hardy's light effects, and his management of spatial and temporal perspectives, are intended to shape our perception of the characters in relation to their setting, or, more widely - to Nature, or even the cosmos. Just as Knight's inverted view of the sea leads him (and the reader) to conclude that his judgements and values have also been turned upside down, so do we observe a similar inversion in *Two on a Tower*, caused by the dominant presence of the sky. For the sky is more than a ceiling – it is all-encompassing. We might even say that the upward-gazing Swithin is grounded in the stars.

Not all the critics find the astronomical setting satisfying. As far as Morton Dauwen Zabel is concerned, the astronomical motif is stultifying rather than enlightening. He refers to it as 'the added burden of astronomical machinery that nearly crushes the lives out of the characters instead of rendering them tragically pitiable'. His argument questions the credibility of Hardy's 'grandiose symbolism', and he claims that the 'immensities of scale ... [that] wildly exceed the proportions necessary for maintaining his picture of man's atomic part in existence.'[1] I tend to share the views of Richard Taylor and Jean Brooks, who argue that the human / stellar contrasts heighten rather than detract from the positive, human values. Taylor believes that Viviette's humane values are seen in opposition to 'the soulless universe'. He advances his argument: 'It is the love and self-immolating nobility of Viviette that proves to be of far greater value than the stellar immensities with which Swithin is concerned', and concludes, 'The novel celebrates a turning away from external nature and back to human sympathies.'[2] Hardy's intention, as Brooks interprets it, is to maintain a balance between these 'stellar immensities' and human love: 'Hardy's double vision of man's greatness in values and littleness in the cosmic scheme keeps the tragic balance between fate – the impersonal nature of things – and personal responsibility.'[3]

As we might expect from the title, when the focus is not directed on the constellations, it centres on the tower itself. There are frequent allusions to the tower as a place of refuge from social censure (for example, Vol.II, Ch.V), and in this sense, it can be compared with the abandoned house at Bramshurst, appropriated by Tess and Angel. As the one vertical point of interest in the landscape, the tower assumes a physical and metaphorical significance: 'And again the carriage sped along the road, the lady's

[Viviette's] eyes resting on the segmental hill, the blue trees that muffled it, and the column that formed its apex, till they were out of sight' (Vol.I, Ch.I p.2). As its phallic connotation would suggest, it is also psychologically significant; it promises fulfilment for a woman who is needy, a woman who yearns to love and be loved.

The stellar landscape also carries a significance beyond its artistic value, as we see in the description in Vol.I, Chapter VIII:

> Then they proceeded to scan the sky, roving from planet to star, from single stars to double stars, from double to coloured stars, in the cursory manner of the merely curious. They plunged down to that at other times invisible stellar multitude in the back rows of the celestial theatre: remote layers of constellations whose shapes were new and singular; pretty twinklers which for infinite ages had spent their beams without calling forth from a single earthly poet a single line, or being able to bestow a ray of comfort on a single benighted traveller. (Vol.I, Ch.VIII pp.56-57)

The backdrop is constructed with successive dimensions. The phrases – 'they proceeded' – 'they plunged' – and the multiplication from single to double – all help in the construction of a stellar amphitheatre that is vast and daunting. Swithin's fascination is a mixture of curiosity and fear:

> "There is a size at which dignity begins," he exclaimed; "further on there is a size at which grandeur begins; further on there is a size at which solemnity begins; further on, a size at which awfulness begins; further on, a size at which ghastliness begins." (Vol.I, Ch.IV p.30)

The unfathomable immensities are intended to diminish the human figure when set against them and the psychological repercussions that arise are discussed further in the last section of this chapter. Hardy's *staffage* technique is introduced in the first chapter of the novel:

> He [Swithin] then retraced his way to the top of the column, but, instead of looking longer at the sun, watched her [Viviette] diminishing towards the distant fence, behind which waited the carriage. When in the midst of the field, a dark spot on an area of brown, there crossed her path a moving

> figure, whom it was as difficult to distinguish from the earth he trod as the caterpillar from its leaf, by reason of the excellent match between his clothes and the clods. (Vol.I, Ch.I p.11)

Perspectives are exploited to the full in this scene, with Swithin standing on the top of his lofty tower and looking down to view the diminishing Viviette. As a further reductive device, the zoom lens switches on to the cloddish Haymoss, who appears as a speck or dark spot, indistinguishable from the lumpen earth. The characters are thus integrated into the surroundings so effectively that they literally seem to become an extension of them, reminding us of the Flintcomb-Ash descriptions and the depiction of Clym as furze-cutter. The same technique is applied again when Viviette, now dislocated from her own social class and unable to unite overtly with her beloved Swithin, diminishes into a nebulous no man's land:

> Lady Constantine paused for a moment under the vicarage windows, till she could sufficiently well hear the voices of the diners to be sure that they were actually within, and then went on her way, which was towards the Rings-Hill column. She appeared a mere spot, hardly indistinguishable from the grass, as she crossed the open ground, and soon became absorbed in the black mass of the fir plantation. (Vol.II, Ch.XI p.153)

The 'open ground' implies an absence of physical and social parameters. Ironically, despite the vast expanses of terrain and sky, there is no place for Viviette.

II

Many of the scenes in the novel are enhanced by light as much as perspectives. Hardy's Dutch School lighting methods, as applied in *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *The Woodlanders*, can be identified again in four portraits of Swithin and Viviette. In

Vol.I, Ch. I, the concentration of light that mirrors Swithin's intensity as he studies his subject makes him appear radiant with a spiritual or religious fervour:

> The sun shone full in his face, and on his head he wore a black velvet skull-cap, leaving to view below it a curly margin of very light shining hair, which accorded well with the flush upon his cheek.
> He had such a complexion as that with which Raffaelle enriches the countenance of the youthful son of Zacharias...' (Vol.I, Ch.I p.7)

This study can be compared with the portrait of *The Astronomer* by Vermeer, while the reference to Raphael might also suggest the painting of Ptolemy in *The School of Athens*. Viviette's features are sublimated by the light in her Vermeer-like portrait in Vol.I, Ch. XII:

> On ascending he found her already there. She sat in the observing-chair: the warm light from the west, which flowed in through the opening of the dome, brightened her face, and her face only, her robes of sable lawn rendering the remainder of her figure almost invisible.
> (Vol.I, Ch.XII p.75)

The *doorkijke* technique that characterises so many of the scenes in *Under the Greenwood Tree* is equally effective in the following descriptions:

> On raising her head above the hatchway she [Viviette] beheld Swithin bending over a scroll of paper which lay on the little table beside him. The small lantern that illuminated it showed also that he was warmly wrapped up in a coat and thick cap, behind him standing the telescope on its frame. (Vol.I, Ch.IV p.26)

and again, in the last of these examples :

> In another half-minute he rose through the hatchway. A lady in black was sitting in the sun, and the boy with the flaxen hair whom he had seen yesterday was at her feet. (Vol.III, Ch.XII p.259)

The child's golden hair immediately captures Swithin's attention. The contrasting gold against black –the gold of the sun and the golden-haired child - are set in relief against

the hatchway's black interior and the black of Viviette's dress. The image succeeds artistically as well as psychologically when we see Swithin struck by the sight of his golden love-child.

The light in the following passage might be interpreted as Evangelical with images of temples and priests contributing to the religious register: 'He [Swithin] brought a little lantern from the cabin, and lighted her up the winding staircase to the temple of that sublime mystery on whose threshold he stood as priest' (Vol.I, Ch.VIII p.55). Again, when Viviette visits the village church in Vol.I, Ch. XI, we can assume that the contrast between light and shade carries moral implications:

> It was Friday night, and she heard the organist practising voluntaries within. The hour, the notes, the even-song of the birds, and her own previous emotions, combined to influence her devotionally. She entered, turning to the right and passing under the chancel arch, where she sat down and viewed the whole empty length, east and west. The semi-Norman arches of the nave, with their multitudinous notchings, were still visible by the light from the tower window, but the lower portion of the building was in obscurity, except where the feeble glimmer from the candle of the organist spread a glow-worm radiance around.
> (Vol.I, Ch.XI p.70)

The source of light emanating from the organist's candle transforms the obscurity into radiance and thus seems to function as a moral corrective. We note that the agent of this light is the church organist, Tabitha Lark, anticipating the one 'speck of colour and animation' that will ultimately illuminate the blank horizon (Vol.III, Ch.XII p.262).

The shadowing of the church, as seen in Vol.I, Chapter XI, detracts from its substance, making it appear as a token, rather than as a moral foundation:

> By the time she had drawn near home the sun was going down. The heavy, many-chevroned church, now subdued by violet shadow, except where its upper courses caught the western stroke of flame-colour, stood close to her grounds, though the village of which it formerly was the nucleus had become quite depopulated: its cottages had been demolished

> to enlarge the park, leaving the old building to stand there alone, like a standard without an army. (Vol.I, Ch.XI pp.69-70)

It becomes clear that the church functions ineffectually and as an emblem only. While it formerly functioned as the moral centre of the community, it is now redundant. (The reductive effect caused by the shadowing of the church is also exploited in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*).

The moral dilemma of the lovers is often alluded to by a fading of the light or by physical disorientation, and more obviously, in Vol.I, Ch. XIV, the moral or religious cross-road metaphor is translated into a concrete image: 'They were now approaching cross-roads, and casually looking up they beheld, thirty or forty yards beyond the crossing, Mr. Torkingham, who was leaning over a gate, his back being towards them'(Vol.I, Ch.XIV p.90). The significance of the cross-roads is further underlined by the presence of the village parson, and the fact that his back is turned anticipates the church's final 'revenge' on Viviette.

As in *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, flickering candles, lantern light, and projected shadow are used to imply moral ambiguity, self-questioning, or revelation. For Viviette and Swithin, the flickers of light in Vol.II, Ch. I, correlate with the vacillation between desire and morality – for example: 'Each was swayed by the emotion within them, much as the candle-flame was swayed by the tempest without. It was the most critical evening of their lives' (Vol.II, Ch.I p.97). Finally, in Vol.I, Ch. XI, we see that the candle-light is revelatory:

> The rays from the organist's candle illuminated but one small fragment of the chancel outside the precincts of the instrument, and that was the portion of the eastern wall whereon the ten commandments were inscribed. The gilt letters shone sternly into Lady Constantine's eyes; and she, being as impressionable as a turtle-dove, watched a certain one of

> those commandments on the second table, till its thunder broke her spirit with blank contrition. (Vol.I, Ch.XI p.70)

A more subtle biblical allusion is introduced in the very first chapter of the novel:

> She [Viviette] walked round the column to the other side, where she found the door through which the interior was reached. The paint, if it had ever owned any, was all washed from its face, and down the decaying surface of the boards liquid rust from the nails and hinges had run in red stains. Over the door was a stone tablet, bearing, apparently, letters or words; but the inscription, whatever it was, had been smoothed over with a plaster of lichen. (Vol.I, Ch.I p.6)

It becomes clear that the tower is the destined locus where the original stone tablets bearing the Ten Commandments are to be directly challenged. We note that the lettering has been plastered over with lichen – 'plastered' being a builder's term, we might assume a sense of purpose- and it is almost as if Nature has superimposed itself over the Law. The exacting retribution of Old Testament law is further implied by the blood red stains of the rusty nails. (We can be reminded of Tess's shock on seeing the red lettered Commandments painted onto the stone wall).

Light is directed sympathetically to illuminate or to protect the lovers, as we can see in Vol.II, Ch. I, where it is focused inwards, contrasting with the external darkness, and the windowless tower shuts itself off from the scrutiny of the outside world:

> The pale rays of the little lantern fell upon her [Viviette's] beautiful face, snugly and neatly bound in by her black bonnet; but not a beam of the lantern leaked out into the night to suggest to any watchful eye that human life at its highest excitement was beating within that dark and isolated tower; for the dome had no windows, and every shutter that afforded an opening for the telescope was hermetically closed. (Vol.II, Ch.I p.97)

If love is expressed in terms of light, then passion is correspondingly introduced by metallic flashes and streaks:

> St. Cleeve soon saw the answer she had given, and watched her approach from the tower as the sunset drew on. The vivid circumstances of his life at this date led him ever to remember the external scenes in which they were set. It was an evening of phenomenal irradiations, and the west heaven gleamed like a foundry of all metals common and rare. The clouds were broken into a thousand fragments, and the margin of every fragment shone. Foreseeing the disadvantage and pain to her of maintaining a resolve under the pressure of a meeting, he vowed not to urge her by word or sign; to put the question plainly and calmly, and to discuss it on a reasonable basis only, like the philosophers they assumed themselves to be.
>
> But this intention was scarcely adhered to in all its integrity. She duly appeared on the margin of the field, flooded with the metallic radiance that marked the close of this day; whereupon he quickly descended the steps, and met her at the cabin door. They entered it together.
> (Vol.III, Ch.VII pp.221-222)

The foundry image is loaded with heat and intensity, the exceptional sky colours and formations appearing as much of a natural phenomenon as human passion.

In Vol.III, Ch. XII, the intensity of the light splinters the shadows with an iridescent flash that heightens the prominence of the lovers and their meeting place:

> While he [Swithin] lingered his eye fell on Rings-Hill Speer.
>
> It appeared dark, for a moment, against the blue sky behind it; then the fleeting cloud which shadowed it passed on, and the face of the column brightened into such luminousness that the sky behind sank to the complexion of a dark foil. (Vol.III, Ch.XII p.258)

The shift of focus emphasised by the progression from dark to light is revealing. Previously, the tower had been the setting in which Swithin had gleaned new knowledge about the galaxies; now the sky itself is reduced to a backdrop for it. All light centres now on the column – it has become more than an observation point or a lovers' secret refuge – it is the single most prominent focus in Swithin's field of vision.

As in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, colour, like light itself, can also be used metaphorically. Reduction is achieved not only by Hardy's *staffage*

technique, but also by the gradation from vibrant colour to grey, as when Elfride's *blue* fades to grey and when dawn at Stonehenge appears in silver and grey. This technique is applied to Viviette's portrait:

> Her cheeks had lost for ever that firm contour which had been drawn by the vigorous hand of youth, and the masses of hair that were once darkness visible had become touched here and there by a faint grey haze, like the Via Lactea in a midnight sky. (Vol.III, Ch.XII p.259)

The fading of colour at the conclusion of the narratives contributes to their elegiac mood. In the concluding scene of *Two on a Tower*, a single speck of colour on a horizon of monochromatic browns and greys denotes Tabitha Lark - her very name suggesting blithe, airborne animation: 'He looked up for help. Nobody appeared in sight but Tabitha Lark, who was skirting the field with a bounding tread - the single bright spot of colour and animation within the wide horizon' (Vol.III, Ch.XII pp.261-262). While she lacks the passion and nobility of Viviette, nevertheless it is Tabitha who represents the single animating feature on an otherwise lifeless and jaded landscape. This might be regarded as a compromise resolution, such as we see at the conclusion of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, where again a younger and less complex figure emerges onto the landscape.

III

As elsewhere in Wessex, Nature plays an ambivalent role – appearing either in allegiance with, or opposition to, the lovers. When, in Vol.III, Ch.VIII, the vision of the love-child blends in naturally with the environment, it becomes apparent that there exists an unconscious, symbiotic relationship between the lovers and Nature:

> On returning from one of these walks to the column a curious circumstance occurred. It was evening, and she [Viviette] was coming as usual down through the sighing plantation, choosing her way between the ramparts of the camp towards the outlet giving upon the field, when suddenly in a dusky vista among the fir-trunks she saw, or thought she saw, a golden-haired, toddling child. The child moved a step or two, and vanished behind a tree. Lady Constantine, fearing it had lost its way, went quickly to the spot, searched, and called aloud. But no child could she perceive or hear anywhere around. She returned to where she had stood when first beholding it, and looked in the same direction, but nothing reappeared. The only object at all resembling a little boy or girl was the upper tuft of a bunch of fern, which had prematurely yellowed to about the colour of a fair child's hair, and waved occasionally in the breeze.
> (Vol.III, Ch.VIII pp.226-227)

Perhaps we are not to interpret this episode as a mere trompe d'oeil, or even as a proleptic device which hints at Viviette's pregnancy. Hardy may have another motive for this effect. So integrated is the story of Viviette and Swithin with the natural landscape, that here the product of their natural love match is indistinguishable from the environment. We can see early signs of this symbiotic relationship at work in the first chapter, when the natural vegetation entwines itself around the masonry of the tower:

> It had been built in the Tuscan order of classic architecture, and was really a tower, being hollow, with steps inside. The gloom and solitude which prevailed round the base were remarkable. The sob of the environing trees was here expressively manifest; and moved by the light breeze, their thin straight stems rocked in seconds, like inverted pendulums; while some boughs and twigs rubbed the pillar's sides, or occasionally clicked in catching each other. Below the level of their summits the masonry was lichen-stained and mildewed, for the sun never pierced that moaning cloud of black vegetation. Pads of moss grew in the joints of the stone-work, and here and there shade loving insects had engraved on the mortar patterns of no human style or meaning; but curious and suggestive. Above the trees the case was different: the pillar rose into the sky a bright and cheerful thing, unimpeded, clean, and flushed with the sunlight. (Vol.I, Ch.I p.5)

Over the years there has evolved a seamless fusion between the tower and Nature, so that we might assume that the love between Swithin and Viviette is 'natural'. The fact that the

tower is hollow almost invites us to think of it as an obvious receptacle, readily awaiting (unlike the empty church) some kind of emotional investment.

So intuitive is Nature that it anticipates the lovers' fate, as we can see in Vol.II, Ch.V. The plot is developed in this chapter with its account of the clandestine marriage and the unexpected appearance of Viviette's brother, Louis. With the snapping of dry twigs under the lovers' tread, Nature attempts to warn them of danger:

> Leaving the house and park on their right, they traced the highway yet a little further, and plunging through the stubble of the opposite field, drew near the isolated earthwork bearing the plantation and tower, which together rose like a flattened dome and lantern from the lighter-hued plain of stubble. It was far too dark to distinguish firs from other trees by the eye alone, but the peculiar dialect of sylvan language which the piny conclave used would have been enough to proclaim their quality at any time. In the lovers'stealthy progress up the slopes a dry stick here and there snapped beneath their feet, seeming like a shot of alarm.
> (Vol.II, Ch.V p.123)

Other scenes, though, depict a Nature that is decidedly unsympathetic. Grotesque imagery reflects the inevitability of human suffering when the individual is set against religious orthodoxy and social convention:

> On an early winter afternoon, clear but not cold, when the vegetable world was a weird multitude of skeletons through whose ribs the sun shone freely, a gleaming landau came to a pause on the crest of a hill in Wessex.
> (Vol.I, Ch.I p.3)

The landscape here is literally stripped to the bare bone. The notion that Nature can be associated with human censoriousness is evident when the lovers' path is obstructed by a symbol of irreverent defiance that results in tragedy: 'They were passing under a huge oak-tree whose limbs, irregular with shoulders, knuckles, and elbows, stretched horizontally over the lane in a manner recalling Absalom's death' (Vol.I, Ch.XIV p.90).

This reference to Absalom serves as a caveat for those who rebel and conspire against the established order. We can see in Vol.I, Ch.VIII, that Viviette (like Tess) can appear to be judged as much by Nature as by biblical ethics:

> Very little was said by either till they were crossing the fallow, when he asked if his arm would help her. She did not take the offered support just then; but when they were ascending the prehistoric earthwork, under the heavy gloom of the fir-trees, she seized it, as if rather influenced by the oppressive solitude than by fatigue.
>
> Thus they reached the foot of the column, ten thousand spirits in prison seeming to gasp their griefs from the funereal boughs overhead, and a few twigs scratching the pillar with the drag of impish claws as tenacious as those figuring in St.Anthony's temptation. (Vol.I, Ch.XIV p.54)

Both St.Anthony and Viviette appear as victims challenged by temptation. A different mood is evoked in Vol.I, Ch.IV, when the lovers' story is twinned with the transit of the stars. Swithin and Viviette might remind us of Angel and Tess stepping forth together as Adam and Eve figures, in the edenic dawn at Talbothays:

> They retraced their steps, the tender hoar-frost taking the imprint of their feet, while two stars in the Twins looked down upon their two persons through the trees, as if those two persons could bear some sort of comparison with them. (Vol.I, Ch.IV p.34)

It is difficult to imagine that the silent beauty of the white virginal frost as described in the scene above, can transform itself into the hostile cosmic force (as seen inVol.I, Ch.IX) that will summon all its faculties to compound the suffering of the individual:

> In a wild wish for annihilation he [Swithin] flung himself down on a patch of heather that lay a little removed from the road, and in this humid bed remained motionless, while time passed by unheeded.
>
> At last, from sheer misery and weariness, he fell asleep.
>
> The March rain pelted him mercilessly, the beaded moisture from the heavily charged locks of heath penetrated him through back and sides, and clotted his hair to unsightly tags and tufts. When he awoke it was dark. (Vol.I, Ch.IX p.63)

There are strong reminders here of Knight's apparent victimisation by Nature on the Cliff, where he experiences a distorted, subjective view of Nature's participation in his fate. Such instances support David Lodge's claim regarding Knight's impressions, in that the pathetic fallacy can appear to be a fallacy in itself.[4] Yet, the objective view put forward by Viviette is contradicted in Vol.II, Ch. II:

> While these tactics were under discussion, the two-and-thirty winds of heaven continued, as before, to beat about the tower, though their onsets appeared to be somewhat lessening in force. Himself now calmed and satisfied, Swithin, as is the wont of humanity, took serener views of Nature's crushing mechanics without, and said, "The wind doesn't seem disposed to put the tragic period to our hopes and fears that I spoke of in my momentary despair."
>
> "The disposition of the wind is as vicious as ever," she answered, looking into his face with pausing thoughts on, perhaps, other subjects than that discussed. "It is your mood of viewing it that has changed. There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so."
>
> And, as if flatly to stultify Swithin's assumption, a circular hurricane, exceeding in violence any that had preceded it, seized hold upon Rings-Hill Speer at that moment with the determination of a conscious agent. The first sensation of a resulting catastrophe was conveyed to their intelligence by the flapping of the candle-flame against the lantern-glass; then the wind, which hitherto they had heard rather than felt, rubbed past them like a fugitive. Swithin beheld around and above him, in place of the concavity of the dome, the open heaven, with its racing clouds, remote horizon, and intermittent gleam of stars. The dome that had covered the tower had been whirled off bodily; and they heard it descend, crashing upon the trees. (Vol.II, Ch.II pp.99-100)

It can be difficult to reconcile the voice of reason with Nature's apparently dark intentions: 'Having executed its grotesque purpose the wind sank to comparative mildness' (Vol.II, Ch.II p.100). In this instance, it would seem that Nature, if not actually perpetrating human suffering, is at least implicated in it. Yet, although Viviette would

deny that Nature has a malevolent purpose, she does gain a certain comfort in finding that its dark moods correspond with her own:

> At first all was obscurity; but when he had been gone about ten minutes lights began to move to and fro in the hollow where the house stood, and shouts occasionally mingled with the wind, which retained some violence yet, playing over the trees beneath her as on a lyre. But not a bough of them was visible, a cloak of blackness covering everything netherward; while overhead the windy sky looked down with a strange and disguised face, the three or four stars that alone were visible being so dissociated by clouds that she knew not which they were.
>
> Under any other circumstances Lady Constantine might have felt a nameless fear in thus sitting aloft on a lonely column, with a forest groaning under her feet, and palaeolithic dead men feeding its roots; but the recent passionate decision stirred her pulses to an intensity beside which the ordinary tremors of feminine existence asserted themselves in vain. The apocalyptic effect of the scene surrounding her was, indeed, not inharmonious, and afforded an appropriate background to her intentions.
> (Vol.II, Ch.II p.102)

Nature's example can be inspirational. Sometimes this works on a subliminal level, as is the case in the following passage, where Swithin, unconsciously energised by the natural cut and thrust activity of Nature, resolves his own quandary and justifies his way forward:

> On the morning of his departure he had sat on the edge of his bed, the sunlight streaming through the early mist, the house-martens scratching the back of the ceiling over his head, as they scrambled out from the roof for their day's gnat-chasing, the thrushes cracking snails on the garden stones outside with the noisiness of little smiths at work on little anvils. The sun, in sending its rods of yellow fire into his room, sent, as he suddenly thought, mental illumination with it.
> (Vol.III, Ch.VIII pp.223-224)

Animal instincts are seen to work together with human intuition here, the one inducing the other – the natural daily pursuits of the house-martens setting off for a day's hunting, the blacksmith thrushes demolishing the snails, the sun's rays piercing Swithin's room – all these processes, some of them Darwinian, point to an essential and irrepressible life-

force. The gentle diminutives- 'little smiths' and 'little anvils' do not mitigate the killing instinct. Subliminal though the overall effect may be, it inspires a gradual assumption in Swithin that Viviette may have other self-interested reasons for advocating a separation. This makes the separation more acceptable and consequently we see Swithin switching his gaze forward rather than backward. Having resolved upon his direction, Swithin sets forth on his excursion to observe (ironically), the Transit of Venus. Clearly, Swithin is making his own transition.

Occasionally, Nature is seen to be at odds with mood:

> A fog defaced all the trees of the park that morning; the white atmosphere adhered to the ground like a fungoid growth from it, and made the turfed undulations look slimy and raw. But Lady Constantine settled down in her chair to await the coming of the late curate's son with a serenity which the vast blanks outside could neither baffle nor destroy. (Vol.I, Ch.VII p.46)

Our expectations are challenged in this scene with a portrayal of human mood undeterred by Nature.

More often, though we see Hardy stretching the full potential of landscape and lyric to reflect mood: 'The summer passed away, and autumn with its infinite suite of tints came creeping on. Darker grew the evenings, tearfuller the moonlights, and heavier the dews' (Vol.II, Ch.I p.93). In the same chapter, it is not only the unusual juxtaposition of silk and stubble that leaves its imprint. The subtle use of assonance resulting from the progression of "*s*" sounds is reminiscent of a lover's sigh:

> It was a melancholy evening for coming abroad. A blusterous wind had risen during the day, and still continued to increase. Yet he stood watchful in the darkness, and was ultimately rewarded by discerning a shady muffled shape that embodied itself from the field, accompanied by the scratching of silk over stubble. (Vol.II, Ch.I p.94)

(A parallel can be drawn with the fragility of Elfride's beauty incongruously offset against the stubble field (*A Pair of Blue Eyes*:Vol.III, Ch.VII p.337)).

The landscape's correspondence with mood is also apparent in Vol.I, Ch. IX:

> Ten days passed without a sight of him; ten blurred and dreary days, during which the whole landscape dripped like a mop; the park trees swabbed the gravel from the drive, while the sky was a zinc-coloured archivault of immovable cloud. (Vol.I, Ch.IX p.61)

Days are indistinguishable, merging into each other and registering only as the gap between meetings with Swithin. The unremitting rain falls as steady drips and there are hints of tears in the image. The zinc sky is indicative of an unrelieved monochrome of greyish white and the cloud is 'immovable', implying that Nature can be as uncompromising as fate itself. Hardy's perspectives function metaphorically in this scene; the landscape extends beyond the immediate canvas so that 'the whole landscape' appears all-inclusive, suggesting an intensification of Viviette's mood. There is another shift from the immediate to the extended view in Vol.II, Ch.IV: 'Then through the wet cobwebs, that hung like movable diaphragms on each blade and bough, he pushed his way down to the furrow which led from the secluded fir-tree island to the wide world beyond the field' (Vol.II, Ch.IV p.111). Hardy's close-up focus on each blade of grass and on every bough, invests the scene with an immediacy - we can almost see before us the fragile webs breathing in and out with the rhythm of the breeze - but within the same scene, our gaze is stretched by the adverb 'beyond'. As we push our way with Swithin through the trees and the grass and up to the horizon, we are conscious that there is a world beyond the field. In terms of a temporal as well as a spatial overview, the magnification of our own particular narratives is always seen in proportion, along with the transient flow and ebb of past and future generations:

> What events had been enacted in that earthen camp since it was first thrown up, nobody could say; but the primitive simplicity of the young man's preparations accorded well with the prehistoric spot on which they were made. Embedded under his feet were possibly even now rude trinkets that had been worn at bridal ceremonies of the early inhabitants. Little signified those ceremonies to-day, or the happiness or otherwise of the contracting parties. That his own rite, nevertheless, signified much, was the inconsequent reasoning of Swithin, as it is of many another bridegroom besides; and he, like the rest, went on with his preparations in that mood which sees in his stale repetition the wondrous possibilities of an untried move. (Vol.II, Ch.IV p.110)

Although Nature is presented as an agent in different and often opposing ways, many of the landscape depictions are memorable simply for their intrinsic beauty, as is evident in the description taken from Vol.II, Ch.IV:

> A more beautiful October morning than that of the next day never beamed into the Welland valleys. The yearly dissolution of leafage was setting in apace. The foliage of the park trees rapidly resolved itself into the multitude of complexions which mark the subtle grades of decay, reflecting wet lights of such innumerable hues that it was a wonder to think their beauties only a repetition of scenes that had been exhibited there on scores of previous Octobers, and had been allowed to pass away without a single dirge from the imperturbable beings who walked among them. Far in the shadows semi-opaque screens of blue haze made mysteries of the commonest gravel-pit, dingle, or recess.
> (Vol.II, Ch.IV pp.109-110)

Hardy demonstrates from this example that even the most mundane and unimpressive features of the landscape can be enhanced by subtle gradations of tone and texture and by the Impressionistic nuance of light and haze.

IV

Hardy's astronomical landscape evokes a different response. We have seen in our discussion on Hardy's use of *staffage*, that both Viviette and Swithin appear overpowered

by the infinity of space above them. Their growing isolation from society and the Church is emphasised by their down-scaling in contrast with the skies:

> Thus the interest of their sidereal observations led them on, till the knowledge that scarce any other human vision was travelling within a hundred million miles of their own gave them such a sense of the isolation of that faculty as almost to be a sense of isolation in respect of their whole personality, causing a shudder at its absoluteness. At night, when human discords and harmonies are hushed, in a general sense, for the greater part of twelve hours, there is nothing to moderate the blow with which the infinitely great, the stellar universe, strikes down upon the infinitely little, the mind of the beholder; and this was the case now. Having got closer to immensity than their fellow-creatures, they saw at once its beauty and its frightfulness. They more and more felt the contrast between their own tiny magnitudes and those among which they had recklessly plunged, till they were oppressed with the presence of a vastness they could not cope with even as an idea, and which hung about them like a nightmare.
> (Vol.I, Ch.VIII p.57)

The yawning chasms stretch out before and above them, with the result that everything is reduced, including their own sense of self. The astronomical backdrop of the concluding chapter intensifies this response:

> There were gloomy deserts in those southern skies such as the north shows scarcely an example of; sites set apart for the position of suns which for some unfathomable reason were left uncreated, their places remaining ever since conspicuous by their emptiness.
> The inspection of these chasms brought him a second pulsation of that old horror which he had used to describe to Viviette as produced in him by bottomlessness in the north heaven. The ghostly finger of limitless vacancy touched him now on the other side. Infinite deeps in the north stellar region had a homely familiarity about them, when compared with infinite deeps in the region of the south pole. This was an even more unknown tract of the unknown. Space here, being less the historic haunt of human thought than overhead at home, seemed to be pervaded with a more lonely loneliness. (Vol.III, Ch.XII p.250)

The 'limitless vacancy' carries a resonance of the overwhelming vacancy in Shelley's 'Mont Blanc', and in this sense, it further underlines the anti-Romantic tone of the passage,

> And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy? ('Mont Blanc')

and contrasts with the more lyrical renditions of the landscape illustrated in the previous section. The anti-Romantic mood prevails in Vol.III, Ch.V, reflecting Viviette's shock at seeing the newspaper's lurid illustration of Sir Blount's death: 'The sense of her [Viviette's] situation obscured the morning prospect. The country was unusually silent under the intensifying sun, the songless season of birds having just set in' (Vol.III, Ch.V p.203). Far removed from the Romantic lyricism of Keats' nightingale, this scene is silent and devoid of song.

Unfulfilment in Nature seems to mirror unfulfilment in love and in the following passage, the repetition of the suffix, "un" - as in 'unhappiness', 'unripe', 'unbrowned' emphasises this theme:

> The looming fear of unhappiness between them revived in Swithin the warm emotions of their earlier acquaintance. Almost before the sun had set he hastened to Welland House in search of her. The air was disturbed by stiff summer blasts, productive of windfalls and premature descents of leafage. It was an hour when unripe apples shower down in orchards, and unbrowned chestnuts descend in their husks upon the park glades.
> (Vol.III, Ch.VII p.218)

Finally, and inevitably, Viviette, once romantically associated with the mysterious depths of the galaxies, loses her lustre:

> Swithin looked down, and started. Her tight clasp had loosened. A wave of whiteness, like that of marble which has never seen the sun, crept up from her neck, and travelled upwards and onwards over her cheek, lips,

> eyelids, forehead, temples, its margin banishing back the live pink till the latter had entirely disappeared. (Vol.III, Ch.XII p.261)

In conclusion, if we refer back to the comments made by Taylor and Brooks, we will see that there are positive values to counter the theme of unfulfilment. These values - love and humanity, and, in Viviette's case, noble selflessness - transcend her death, and stand undiminished against the stars. In this context, Auden's observation of Hardy's 'hawk's vision' perspective appears particularly relevant:

> What I valued most in Hardy, then, as I still do, was his hawk's vision, his way of looking at life from a very great height, as in the stage directions of *The Dynasts*, or the opening chapter of *The Return of the Native*. To see the individual life related not only to the local social life of its time, but to the whole of human history, life on earth, the stars, gives one both humility and self-confidence.[5]

Notes

[1] Morton Dauwen Zabel, 'Hardy in Defense of his Art', in *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 24-46 (p. 39).
[2] Richard H. Taylor, *The Neglected Hardy*, (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 143; p. 126; p. 146.
[3] Jean Brooks, ' The Poetic Structure', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper, (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 80-93 (p. 88).
[4] David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*, (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 15-16.
[5] Auden, 'A Literary Transference', in *Hardy*, ed. by Albert J.Guerard (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,1963), pp.135-143 (p. 140).

Chapter Six

Tess of the D'Urbervilles

I

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is as memorable for its light and landscape as it is for its plot and poignancy. We said at the start of our discussion that Joan Grundy believes this to be 'the most iridescent of all Hardy's novels' and refers to it as 'a mesh of colours and dappled light'.[1] With this in mind, we will examine the light /shadow interplay, the monochromes, and the colour values that are intrinsic to the text. We will identify the ways in which, at key psychological moments, the narrator consciously maximises the 'the fantastic mysteries of light and shade' (Ch.L p.348).

Our first glimpse of the Blackmoor landscape shows that light, shadow, and colour are prominent features of the narrative. The Vale of Blackmoor is introduced as a bright vista of sunlit fields and white lanes, while behind stretches an airy expansiveness, a colourless atmosphere. We are led through to the more immediate, close-range focus on the valley itself, 'Here in the valley' (Ch.II p.18), with its gradations of colour tones ranging from azure to deep ultramarine, and its rich brushstrokes of lush grass and trees, all of which add to the impression of vibrancy. This section of the present chapter will examine the extent to which Hardy's light effects can reflect and even inspire mood and atmosphere.

The insistent use of white throughout the novel is striking, and as was pointed out in our Introduction, Tony Tanner's observations in this context are particularly insightful.[2] From our own study of the text, we can see that white is used to

serve different functions – it can be perceived positively, as a symbol of purity, or alternatively, it can be representative of death. In the Flintcomb-Ash landscape, the white monochromes imply more than a loss of colour – the Arctic snow-scenes encase the surrounding landscape (and, by extension, Tess herself), in a stultifying shroud. Tess's association with white is established early in the second chapter – the white of the virginal muslin dresses of the May Day dancers at Marlott is offset by the pre-lapsarian greenery of hedges and creepers. The impression of whiteness, sustained by the ancient Forest of the White Hart (the scene of Tess's seduction), identifies the hounding of the aristocratic hart with Tess's own fate. Early on, at the Marlott dance, Tess stands out from the others. We are told that 'no two whites were alike among them' (Ch.II p.13) and Tess, in her white dress, is quite distinct. (In contrast, at Sandbourne, Tess's dressing gown is grey-white). Angel's impression of the Marlott dancers is of a swirl of white – the effect is Impressionistic, and the mood contrasts with the ominous, Turner vortex of swirling snow at Flintcomb-Ash. The pastoral image of the white-muslined dancers at Marlott can be counterpointed with the frustrated, white night-gowned milkmaids appearing as 'a row of avenging ghosts' (Ch.XXXI p.198). Tess frequently appears as a conduit for natural light and Angel perceives her as an undulating billow, warmed by the sun, as he carries her across the stream on her way to church (Ch.XXIII p.145). In this scene, the fluff and froth of her muslin dress combine with the natural sunlight to create light effects here, which are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the engulfing dark tonality of the wedding night sky at Wellbridge. In his discourse on the recurring red/white motif that runs throughout in the novel, Tanner reminds us that the young Tess

is often described as a 'white shape', and is represented 'almost more as a colour value in a landscape than a human being'.[3]

On Tess's return from the village dance at Trantridge, the whiteness of the long road is heightened by the moonlight, and again, the long ascent of white road is emphasised in her return to Marlott, following her seduction (Ch.XII p.76). Shadows in The Chase offset the whiteness: 'The obscurity was now so great that he could see absolutely nothing but a pale nebulousness at his feet, which represented the white muslin figure he had left upon the dead leaves' (Ch.XI p.73). As white as moonlight, Tess, like the moon, is suspended or caught in the web of white mist (Ch.XI p.69). Her vulnerability is implied by allusions to opaque light, paleness, muslin, vapour, webs – the atmosphere itself becoming a net and colluding in her entrapment. Once fragile as gossamer, as blank as snow, the virginal Tess is tinctured after the seduction in The Chase. The prevailing white highlights the contrast with the dark, underside of Wessex – a world of instinct and survival. Nature's deadly design belies its innocent surface impressions. In Robert Frost's poem, 'Design', it is the seemingly innocent white heal-all plant that becomes the unwitting accessory to murder: 'What had that flower to do with being white?' asks the narrator. Hardy considers the same question: 'Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive' (Ch.XI p.74).

Throughout the narrative, the symbolic use of white is evident at crucial moments, as when Tess's confession letter, unwittingly overlooked by Angel, re-appears later from under the carpet as a tiny corner of white envelope (Ch.XXXIII p.210/211). This scene

could be seen as a precursor to the white oblong of ceiling at Sandbourne (an enlargement of the white envelope) that becomes stained with blood (Ch.LVI p.382). There are recurring allusions to the whiteness of the moonlight, white dusty roads, snow-storms, and skeletons - all of which prepare us for the starkness of Flintcomb-Ash, where it would seem as if all the colour of Talbothays has haemorrhaged. Clearly, the Flintcomb-Ash landscape, like all the other landscapes in the novel, is more than landscape – it is an experience. The phallic-shaped, white flints and the white monochrome of the snowy, calcareous fields suggests a white vacuity reminiscent of Shelley's 'Mont Blanc':

> For the very spirit fails,
> Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
> That vanishes among the viewless gales!
> Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
> Mont Blanc appears – still, snowy, and serene.

The impression of vacancy, as expressed in the poem,

> And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy?

is evoked by the white vacuity of the road leading to Sandbourne station (Ch.LVII p.384). In contrast to the vibrancy of Talbothays, where the light functions as an active agent in a positive sense, Flintcomb Ash appears flat and grey:

> Every leaf of the vegetable having already been consumed the whole field was in colour a desolate drab; it was a complexion without features, as if a face from chin to brow should be only an expanse of skin. The sky wore, in another colour, the same likeness; a white vacuity of countenance with the lineaments gone. (Ch.XLIII p.285)

(There are affinities with the monochrome of Ruisdael's *Winter Landscape*, and the horizontality of Friedrich's *Monk by the Shore*). Any opportunity for individuality and self-fulfilment at Flintcomb-Ash is negated in the grey / white opaqueness.

Snow and associative white imagery dominate the narrative in the Flintcomb-Ash scenes and there are recurring references to Arctic icebergs, snow-hills, snow-mist, white pillars of cloud, arctic seas, white bears, flossy fields, - all of which correspond to the pallor of Tess's face. The white pillar of cloud (Ch.XLIII p.289) recurs in the allotment scene (Ch.L p.347), where there is a haunting impression of whiteness resulting from 'the pale opalescence of the sky', the rows of white pegs, the white aprons, and the pallid faces. The white pillars of cloud and snow imply an allusion to the metamorphosis of Lot's wife into the Pillar of Salt, especially when we consider the dramatic, psychological moments when Angel stops to look back. The biblical connotations lend further weight to the narrative. When the white is not starkly white, it appears in white-grey or white-brown monochromes. This 'whitey-brown' (Ch.XLIV p.297) it is very different in tone and mood to the freshly rustic white/brown tonality of Angel's white tunic and muddy boots at Talbothays. Long-Ash Lane, with its unbroken, white ascent, is alleviated only by the brown colour of the horse-droppings. The churchyard at Kingsbere, representative of a past era, is depicted in sepia tones – 'embrowned by the shades of nightfall' (Ch.LII p.363). A frosty, comfortless white is evoked by the 'wan starlight' and 'steely stars'in the night sky when Tess returns to Marlott to nurse her mother (Ch.L p.344/345). The chill of the mood is implied again on Angel's return to Emminster, where there are allusions to skeletons and spectres and Angel's own ghostly appearance – this is the whiteness associated with death. At the

Cross-In-Hand, the white monolith sets the scene for the silvery-white monoliths of Stonehenge, and ultimately, for the whiteness of the first milestone that Angel and Liza-Lu pass by at Wintoncester. Dawn at Stonehenge, heralded by Angel's white-lipped kiss (Ch.LVII p.385), is tinged with silvery light, indicated by 'The band of silver paleness' and 'All waited in the growing light, their faces and hands as if they were silvered'(Ch.LVIII p.395). The 'luminous mists and moonlight' interest Penelope Vigar, as she recognises the same light effects in the seduction at The Chase, and therefore concludes that there is an intended parallel between the two scenes.[4]

The soft tonality of white muslin and silvery dawns leaves a subtle, almost subliminal, impress. Then there are the dramatic red/white, passion/purity, contrasts that make their impact both aesthetically and psychologically. The symbolic function of red is studied by Tanner:

> For an artist as visibly sensitive as Hardy, colour is of the first importance and significance, and there is one colour which literally catches the eye, and is meant to catch it, throughout the book. This colour is red, the colour of blood, which is associated with Tess from first to last. It dogs her, disturbs her, destroys her. She is full of it, she spills it, she loses it. Watching Tess's life we begin to see that her destiny is nothing more or less than the colour red.[5]

Where we are offered images of Tess in her pristine white dress, we are also shown the deep redness of her lips and her ivory teeth. She is distinguished from the other village dancers because of the impact of her scarlet ribbon offset against the whiteness of her dress. When Prince is fatally wounded, Tess is splattered, (Tanner would say, 'tinctured'), with drops of crimson blood: 'we perhaps tend to think of people being shaped by experience rather than coloured by it – yet the use of a word connected with dye and paint is clearly intentional.'[6] The whiteness of the lane, the pale

atmosphere, the heightened pallor of Tess - all these are offset by the redness of spilt blood. Ironically, the blood itself becomes an artistic medium with its prisms of reflected lights (Ch.IV p.33). References to red include Alec's mansion, which is of the same crimson brick as the Wintoncester prison-house. The full, redness of Alec's lips is accentuated along with the redness of the strawberries and roses that he bestows on his victim, until we are mesmerised by the vision of Tess sitting in the van, with red roses at her breast and roses and strawberries brimming from her basket (Ch.VI p.44). Red is the prevailing impression, and the thorn that pricks Tess's chin is prescient of the blood she will shed when seduced. Tess attempts to erase the 'spot' of Alec's kiss with her white handkerchief (Ch.VIII p.56) – a poignantly futile gesture repeated when Angel, disillusioned yet defensive, vows to his parents that his bride is spotless. The spot of red upon white is suggested by the imprint of first Alec's, (Ch.XII p.78) and later, Angel's, kiss upon the white marble of Tess's skin (Ch.XXX p.185). As a stereotypical arch seducer, Alec's portrait is complete, with his twirling black moustache and long cigar, and the cigar with its burning coal is explicitly phallic. Against 'the blue narcotic haze' of his cigar-smoke, he emerges as 'the blood-red ray in the spectrum of [Tess's] young life' (Ch.V p.42).

The red imagery is sustained throughout many scenes, as in the fleeting glimpses of Alec darting away between the red-berried trees (Ch.XII p.79), the harvester with the red kerchief and the field-woman with her red petticoat (Ch.XIV p.89/90), the red-lettered sermon and Tess's corresponding flush of shame (Ch.XII p.80), the snake-like, red interior of Tess's yawn (Ch.XXVII p.169), the ruddy, liquid fire of the reaping machine, the blood-red stains on Tess's white arms in the wild

garden, and, later, the scratches made on her arms by the corn sheaves (Ch.XIV p.88), the Elizabethan imagery evoked by Tess's rose-pink and white skin tones (as suggested by the editorial footnote), the red-brick floor of the dairy kitchen (Ch.XXVII p.169), the parcel of heirloom jewels wrapped and sealed with red wax (Ch.XXXIV p.219). Certain images make a dramatic impact – for example, the bloodstained paper, which, like Tess herself, is stained and fragile (Ch.XLIV p.298), and, as Tanner observes, resembles Tess in being 'too flimsy to rest, too heavy to fly away'.[7] The fateful red heart stain of blood on the white ceiling (Ch.LVI p.382) with its insidious, slow, scarlet drops, can be linked with the earlier episode when Tess strikes Alec across his face with her glove, the blood dropping steadily on to the straw (Ch.XLVII p.331). The stain of red occurs again in the description of the Wintoncester prison-house – 'the one blot on the city's beauty' (Ch.LIX p.397). In the Baptism scene, the whiteness of Tess's nightgown is heightened by the glow of candlelight, and there is the impression of a sublime radiance, an apotheosis – the spots of scarlet on her cheeks appearing as the only colour in the scene (Ch.XIV p.95). There are large-scale landscape portraits of Talbothays, with its red and white cows heavy with milk (Ch.XVI p.105), and descriptions of Tess milking these cows while the sunlight plays upon her pink dress and white bonnet (Ch.XXIV p.150). We see the white/pink imagery again when Tess plunges her rose-pink hands into 'the immaculate whiteness of the curds' (Ch.XXVIII p.176). In the "confession" scene the red-white motif plays a central role. The ashes in the hearth, prophetic of a marriage that will turn to dust, are rekindled by the intensely red fire, an apocalyptic fire heralding the Last Judgement, – in this case, Angel's judgement. The Last Day symbolism is re-enforced by the fact that the marriage takes

place on the last day of the year. While the mood is different, this scene recalls Angel sitting by 'the cheerful firelight', the hiss of the sap rising from the sticks, as he discusses wedding dates with Tess (Ch.XXXI p.196). The repercussions of Tess's confession are symbolised by the absence of colour – the red of the fire now ashen. Even the dawn is perceived as 'ashy and furtive' (Ch.XXXVI p.235).

By contrast, in Chapter XLVII, redness intrudes dramatically into the landscape with the emergence of the red tyrannical threshing machine:

> Close under the eaves of the stack, and as yet barely visible was the red tyrant that the women had come to serve – a timber-framed construction, with straps and wheels appertaining – the threshing machine, which, whilst it was going, kept up a despotic demand upon the endurance of their muscles and nerves.
>
> A little way off there was another indistinct figure; this one black, with a sustained hiss that spoke of strength very much in reserve. The long chimney running up beside an ash-tree, and the warmth which radiated from the spot, explained without the necessity of much daylight that here was the engine which was to act as the *primum mobile* of this little world. By the engine stood a dark motionless being, a sooty and grimy embodiment of tallness, in a sort of trance, with a heap of coals by his side: it was the engine-man. (Ch.XLVII p.325)

Here we have a vision of Hell, with the ominous figure of the engine-man. His incandescent fire recalls the dull crimson fire of Tess's face when provoked by Alec (Ch.XLVII p.331), and the scarlet blood that falls when she strikes him. The red elevator is counterpointed with 'the white-faced moon' (Ch.XLVIII p.334) and the white face of Tess.

White offset by black is another dramatic device that Hardy exploits in his light effects. In contrast with the white nebulousness of the young Tess, there are black depths of shadow in The Chase (Ch.XI p.73). Much later, in Chapter XXXI, morality is implied by white against black, as in Tess's perception of her past as the 'long dark

vista of intrigue behind her' (Ch.XXXI p.196). Notably, it is at Sandbourne that Tess first appears with a black veil and feathers (Ch.LVI p.381), mirroring the blackness of Alec's eyes (Ch.XLVI p.323) and her own black, coiled hair (Ch.LV). Whereas the Baptism scene is highlighted with white, the montage depicting Tess and her siblings on the eve of their eviction from their family home, is characterised by black, with the white night-gowns of the Baptism scene replaced by the children's black frocks. At Stonehenge, the mysterious blackness of the sky implies a judgement on man: 'At an indefinite height overhead something made the black sky blacker, which had the semblance of a vast architrave uniting the pillars horizontally' (Ch.LVIII p.392).The tacit indictment represented by the 'something' is repeated in the blackness of the silent black flag denoting Tess's death.

As we have seen in *The Return of the Native*, fogs and mist are often included in Hardy's light effects. White vaporous mists give rise to doubt and uncertainty, so that it makes it difficult to see into the heart of anything. The pale nebulousness of the white - muslined Tess is also indicative of mist. There are no distinct lines or contours - both topographic and moral demarcation lines have receded into 'a faint luminous fog' (Ch.XI p.69). Even the moon, like Tess herself, appears to be entrapped in the white mist (Ch.XI p.69). Once suffused with translucent light, Tess is now drained of colour and on her return to her birthplace we note that her 'familiar green world beyond [is] now half veiled in mist' (Ch.XII p.75). The mist /fog /haze effects can be evoked by means of colour as well as by the predominant white and silver. This works effectively in Hardy's application of the Impressionistic yellow pollens and blue fog – as in the evening blue and yellow toning of the Trantridge dance, Alec's 'blue narcotic haze'

(Ch.V p.42), and, the horizontal sunbeams and blue shadows at Talbothays (Ch.XXXI p.193/194).[8] In the famous garden scene (Ch.XIX p.122), where the feline Tess is driven by her own sexuality, the air is hazy with floating pollen, and the vibrant red, yellow, and purple weeds appear fluorescent in the evening light. These scenes are typical of what Vigar would term, the 'emotional overtones of colour' in Hardy's art.[9] She claims that lighting and perspective, and the selected highlighting and blurring of detail, are all manipulated to dramatic effect: ' he can show the different visions of life mingling or in ironic tension with each other, so that the unexpected and dreamlike contrast vividly with the real and probable'.[10] J. B. Bullen similarly recognises 'the emotional significance of colour contrasts' and 'the organisation of colour and space'.[11]

In the Edenic dawns and dusks at Talbothays, fog crystallises on Tess's eyelashes and on Angel's hair (Ch.XXXI p.194) and it is only thunderstorms that can convert the oppressively vaporous quality of the light to a sharp, sun-piercing clarity. As we noted in our introductory appraisal of influential artists, the treatment of light in these beautiful early morning scenes is testament to the seminal influence of Turner. We cannot mistake the Turner concentration on light rather than on scenery, and the effect of light as 'modified by objects', while in the soulful Talbothays dawn there is confirmation that, for Hardy, each of Turner's paintings represents 'landscape *plus* a man's soul'.[12] We might turn again to Turner's *Norham Castle : Sunrise* as a possible source for Hardy's inspiration. There are also other possible connections with Impressionists - Grundy sees a resemblance between the young field-worker with the straw hat in the Marlott harvest scene and the straw-hatted man in Renoir's *Le Moulin de la Galette.*[13] In her exposition

of the Impressionist sensibility that features prominently in the novel, Grundy pays special attention to the prevailing 'pollen of radiance' in Talbothays and 'the combination of the luminous and the misty'.[14]

The contrast of light with shadow is another technique favoured by Hardy. The pearly dawn mists, the silent synchronisation of the garlic pickers, the slow rhythms of the milking sessions, the noon-time heat-haze, the long, cool shadows of the dairy-house interiors – all these images are enhanced by the interdependence of light and shadow. The implications of shadowing have already been noted in our study of *The Return of the Native*. In this novel, shadow tends to be linked with sexual immorality as conventionally perceived, and the bright intensity of Tess's love for Angel is described as 'a photosphere', undermined by lurking shadows. These 'gloomy spectres' that are 'waiting like wolves' represent her anxiety. The shadow of the past hangs over Tess and we are told that 'she walked in brightness, but she knew that in the background those shapes of darkness were always spread' (Ch.XXXI p.195). We are told that Angel's narrowness lurks in even deeper shadow (Ch.XXXIX p.258), as we see when Angel's enlightenment following Tess's confession darkens his ideal world. The shadows of The Chase landscape and the 'dark patch' of Kingsbere (Ch.XVI p.102) are as significant as the shadow of Tess's confession: 'A large shadow of her shape rose upon the wall and ceiling. She bent forward, at which each diamond on her neck gave a sinister wink like a toad's'(Ch.XXXIV p.225). Here, the shadow projected on to the ceiling anticipates the more sinister shadow on the ceiling at Sandbourne. We also see examples of the traditional association of light with truth - the light becomes stronger once Tess asks Angel to consider her as Tess the fair milkmaid only (Ch.XX p.130),

and it is the stream of morning light at Bramshurst that discloses the whereabouts of the lovers (Ch.LVIII p.390). More often though, in Tess's Wessex, the truth does not illuminate, it eclipses. The dawning of the truth at Wellbridge has none of the iridescence of an epiphany – rather it is an 'ashy and furtive' dawn (Ch.XXXVI p.235) - an unwelcome reveille in a spiritually somnolent world. Climactically, with the emergence of daylight at Stonehenge, Tess's world is thrown into darkness.

Abstractions, like individualism, solipsism, love, are all expressed in terms of light. Hardy employs his light metaphor not merely for aesthetic reasons, but also to direct us to universal issues, such as the self-interest and solitariness of the individual:

> ... and as they went there moved onward with them, around the shadow of each one's head, an opalized circle of glory, formed by the moon's rays upon the glistening sheet of dew. Each pedestrian could see no halo but his or her own, which never deserted the head-shadow whatever its vulgar unsteadiness might be; but adhered to it, and persistently beautified it; till the erratic motions seemed an inherent part of the irradiation and the fumes of their breathing a component of the night's mist: and the spirit of the scene, and of the moonlight, and of Nature, seemed harmoniously to mingle with the spirit of wine. (Ch.X pp.68-69)[15]

The halo of light described here recurs in the portrait of the man with the straw-hatted nimbus - a parody of the Tuscan saint referred to in the harvest scene at Marlott (Ch.XIV p.92). Tess's love for Angel is expressed in terms of spiritual light: – 'she felt glorified by an irradiation not her own, like the Angel whom St John saw in the sun' (Ch.XXXIII p.213). Yet, this epiphany can be seen as somewhat undermined by the repetition of the glorification theme in relation to the ephemeral lifespan of the gnats:

> Looking over the damp sod in the direction of the sun a glistening ripple of gossamer-webs was visible to their eyes under the luminary, like the track of moonlight on the sea. Gnats, knowing nothing of their brief glorification, wandered across the air in this pathway, irradiated as if they

> bore fire within them; then passed out of its line, and were quite extinct.
> (Ch.XXXII p.200).

The mood following Angel's revelation is reflected in the ashen dawn – it is, paradoxically, a darkening dawn of unwelcome truth. Other contradictions become apparent, such as the Romantic and anti-Romantic treatment of light upon landscape: 'The gold of the summer picture was now grey, the colours mean, the rich soil mud, and the river cold' (Ch.XXXVII p.251). This image is at odds with the conventionally Romantic view of the evening sun slanting on to the backs of the white-coated cows, and the subsequent dazzling reflections of light (Ch.XVI p.102). The light / morality theme that we referred to earlier, continues with Baby Sorrow's death, which is compared to an eclipse, with the celestial blue tones of morning enforcing the impact of the analogy:

> Poor Sorrow's campaign against sin, the world, and the devil was doomed to be of limited brilliancy – luckily perhaps for himself, considering his beginnings. In the blue of the morning that fragile soldier and servant breathed his last; and when the other children awoke they cried bitterly, and begged Sissy to have another pretty baby.
> (Ch.XIV p.95)

But, typically, the religious imagery of the Baptism and the heavenly blue of the sky is ironically undercut when Tess's impulse to kill Alec is perceived by her as an enlightenment (Ch.LVII p.385). Shadow denotes loss, as when the light vanishes from the dairymaids' world on Angel's return to Emminster. (Ch.XXV p.155). Disillusionment is also suggested by shadow. On her approach to Flintcomb-Ash, Tess catches a glimpse of the lovers in the twilight (Ch.XLV p.313), and a new moon shines on Angel's face when he returns to his father's home (Ch.XXXIX p.260). The light effects in both scenes

imply that love is now perceived in half-light, or under the prosaic, unromantic light of the new moon.

Sunlight can be seen as sometimes benign and sometimes malevolent. This vacillation illustrates the creative Romantic and anti-Romantic tension within Hardy. Durbeyfield absorbs the revelation of his noble lineage in the evening sun, but the fact that the sun is now setting suggests that such Romanticism is past its zenith (Ch. I p.11). The morality of the sun is ambivalent, with degeneration from the golden, spiritual, liquid light to satanic pokers of red fire. The fire motif underlines the sun's molten fire that engulfs the threshing machine (Ch.XLVIII p.333). Then, there is the molten-metallic glare of sunlight on the river at Talbothays – the harshness of the metallic imagery enforcing Tess's sense of vulnerability. Yet, the sunlight can also be recuperative, as is evident in 'The Rally' chapter:

> Either the change in the quality of the air from heavy to light, or the sense of being amid new scenes where there were no invidious eyes upon her, sent up her spirits wonderfully. Her hopes mingled with the sunshine in an ideal photosphere which surrounded her as she bounded along against the soft south wind. (Ch.XVI p.103)

There is a similar, tonic quality in the sunlight of the garlic mead, and this scene, reminiscent of Millet's *The Gleaners*, glows with yellow light emanating from the buttercups and the slanting sunbeams (Ch.XXII p.140). Yet, this is the same sun that first highlights Alec as the 'blood-red ray' in the spectrum of Tess's life. This early prophesy of Tess's suffering at the hands of a male is reinforced by the unsympathetic and essentially masculine portrayal of the sun in the following passage: 'Tess did not look after him, but slowly wound along the crooked lane. It was still early, and though the sun's lower limb was just free of the hill, his rays, ungenial and peering, addressed

the eye rather than the touch as yet' (Ch.XII p.79). The slow deliberation of the sun's laborious movement, together with its peering, intrusive rays, imply a force that is both threatening and inexorable. We are encouraged to think of the force as masculine: 'The sun, on account of the mist, had a curious, sentient, personal look, demanding the masculine pronoun for its adequate expression' (Ch.XIV p.86). The sunlight that can appear as an 'inflamed wound in the sky' (Ch.XXI p.136) can also bestow its blessing on the love-nest at Bramshurst. Yet, ironically, it is precisely this 'shaft of dazzling sunlight' (Ch.LVII p.388) that exposes the lovers - the sun contributes to their fate. Ultimately, it is the same altar on which the pagan Sun was once worshipped at Stonehenge that will finally serve as the sacrificial alter for Tess, herself a direct descendent of the Pagan d'Urbervilles. In the concluding scene at Wintoncester, the sun smiles pitilessly on the grief-stricken Angel and Liza-Lu– its pitiless smile might almost be interpreted here as an oxymoron. Significant also is the fact that the sun is at its lowest on Tess's wedding day, the last day of the year, and, in one sense, Tess's own shortest day. During its brief appearance, the sun spots Tess's skirt as if it were a dab of red paint.(Ch.XXXIV p.217). It is a low winter sun that filters into the barn during Alec's sermon (Ch.XLIV p.303), a confirmation that his preaching days are waning. And, on the day when Tess first accepts Angel's proposal, the 'sad yellow rays' (Ch.XXIX p.183) of the early morning candles are prophetic of the sad dawn at Stonehenge.

From these examples, we can see that modifications of light can shape our perception of mood and motive. Hardy demonstrates his admiration for the Impressionists and Turner by adapting their techniques into prose. As Grundy suggests,

there are reminders of Monet's yellow and blue fogs.[16] We can recognise also Seurat's *pointillism*, (an Impressionist technique using tiny dots of various pure colour). Then, as in the shimmeringly translucent dawns, there are the literary adaptations of Turner's techniques:

> Or perhaps the summer fog was more general, and the meadows lay like a white sea, out of which the scattered trees rose like dangerous rocks. Birds would soar through it into the upper radiance, and hang on the wing sunning themselves, or alight on the wet rails subdividing the mead, which now shone like glass rods. Minute diamonds of moisture from the mist hung, too, on Tess's eyelashes, and drops upon her hair, like seed pearls. When the day grew quite strong and commonplace these dried off her; moreover, Tess then lost her strange and ethereal beauty; her teeth, lips, and eyes scintillated in the sunbeams, and she was again the dazzlingly fair dairymaid only, who had to hold her own against the other women of the world. (Ch.XX p.131)

The liquid light together with the heightened use of white all point to Turner's idea of using light as a medium.[17] As the early morning dew clings to Tess, it appears that not only is she a child of Nature, but also that Nature finds a natural conduit in her. There is the familiar hallmark of Turner in the spectral and aqueous quality of light and in the white fogs attenuating over the meadows. Shimmers of light glisten and ripple like moonlight over the sea (Ch.XXXII p.200), and, as we have already suggested, the winter landscapes of Flintcomb-Ash could easily have been inspired by a Turner vortex of swirling snow, crashing icebergs, and white mists. A similar effect is achieved in the allotment scene where the prevailing white springs to life with the swirling flashes of firelight and the pillars of cloud (Ch.L p.347).

In this context, it is worth turning again to the light effects on Tess's arrival at Talbothays. The Turner "dazzle" is evident in the reflected glare of white and brass in the sunlight: 'Those of them (cows) that were spotted with white reflected the sunshine in

dazzling brilliancy, and the polished brass knobs on their horns glittered with something of military display' (Ch.XVI p.106). Even the minor features of Hardy's landscape painting here appear palpable – we can almost feel the shadowed indentations in the grass and the fog of breath exhaled by the cows. Turner's influence is also evident in the composition of the London milk - train scene, so carefully constructed to maximise the dream-like atmosphere evoked by the white/silver/grey monochromes. While Angel and Tess wait for the arrival of the early morning milk–train that will transport the milk churns to London, they envelope themselves in the white sail-cloth of the milk wagon. The silver and grey tonality is all-prevailing, even her arms resemble white marble. These details are set against the lustreless, leaden sky and the gauze of silvery rain, all of which synthesise with the flashes of light, the train's white steam, the white milk churns, and the prevailing veil of white mist.

A fine-tuning of the light effects can shift the balance between dream and reality. In broad sunlight Tess loses her mystery and reverts back to Tess, the fair milkmaid. Another reductive effect is achieved by the reflection of starlight in the wet cow-tracks:

> The cow and horse tracks in the road were full of water, the rain having been enough to charge them, but not enough to wash them away. Across these minute pools the reflected stars flitted in a quick transit as she passed; she would not have known they were shining overhead if she had not seen them there – the vastest things of the universe imaged in objects so mean. (Ch.XXXV p.231).

The fluidity of the light is effective in the closing scene at Wintoncester. The horizon recedes in the radiance of the morning sun, and line and form melt into the light, until the main focus is concentrated to the exclusion of all other details, on the valedictory wave of the black flag (Ch.LIX p.397).

These effects induced by Hardy's light and colour applications imbue the landscape with deeper meanings. For Vigar, Hardy's 'conscious use of artistic structure and lighting' suggests 'allegorical overtones' that are underlined by scenes such as 'the rich langorous azure of the Vale of Blackmoor; the intense sunlight and sharp stubble of the harvest-field; the desolate brown of the swede-plain, and the frost and rain and snow.'[18] There is an illusory, dreamlike quality that alternates with depictions of grim reality, thereby supporting Vigar's theory that Hardy is intentionally constructing 'metaphors of light'.[19]

II

As we have observed in the other novels, perspectives can be as effective as light and shadow in determining our responses to character and motivation. Tess's story is in itself a journey – a succession of arduous inclines and irreparable descents. We have become well acquainted with Hardy's penchant for the interminable white road. Where there is human suffering, we expect the road to become elongated with steep gradients; where there is deviation of integrity, the road tends to wind crookedly. The length of road can chart not only geographical distance, but also intellectual and social distance, as is the case when Angel returns to Emminster to tell his family that he intends to marry Tess (Ch.XXVp.156). Fertile green valleys contrast dramatically with the dismal starve-acre fields to suggest that Tess's own journey, with its uplands and lowlands, is an allegorical one and that we are being presented with a secular *Pilgrim's Progress*. (The Bunyan motif, as adapted by Hardy, reminds Irving Howe of medieval panelled paintings of martyrdom).[20] The garden imagery of Talbothays and the serpentine curve of the rivers also point to a biblical reference. These references are

extended by the recurring pillars of white cloud and by the key moments when Angel turns to look back. The perspectives also make an impact on our moral evaluation of the Marlott and Trantridge landscapes –Marlott is sheltered, green and fertile, while the route to Trantridge is represented by a long, sharp descent (Ch.VIII p.54). The large-minded English stranger in Brazil exploits this allegorical device by using the landscape with all its topographical irregularities as a metaphor for Tess's own history (Ch.XLIX p.341).

Hills and horizons function symbolically in Hardy's perspectives. The hill as summit – the axis of hope or despair – provides us with a perfect vantage-point both for, and of, the character. The horizon functions physically and metaphorically. The character who stands gazing can glimpse distant possibilities opening out, while we can perceive a broader, more universal, view of the narrative. We have already noted the versatility of vantage-points in the introduction to the beautiful Vale of Blackmoor, where, from the summit, our eye is drawn from the open hills beyond to the foregrounded valley below, and then on into the middle-distance perspective. The succession of adverbs in this passage (Ch.II p.12) - *behind, down, here, beneath, beyond* - suggests a range of perspectives. Perspectives and parameters are downscaled so that fields become paddocks, and hedges, green threads. Middle distance and horizon are then progressively considered in terms of perspectives. This vacillation between the distant and the immediate view works on a psychological as well as a physical level, inviting both participation and objectivity. Metaphoric landscape and horizons can be equally effective, as we see in the conclusion of 'The Rally' chapter (Ch.XXIV p.152). When the relationship between Tess and Angel progresses on to a different level, it is

expressed in terms of perspectives, with a veil being discarded to disclose new horizons. The succession of emerging landscapes described anticipates the successive dimensions at Wintoncester, where 'landscape beyond landscape' are revealed (Ch.LIX p.397). With the peeling away of horizons we soon realise that this story is not only relevant to the immediate setting – it stretches beyond its locale to become universal. The layer-by-layer composition of the horizons and of the tower, flag-pole, and black flag, maximises the suspense.

As Tess, in Chapter XVI, stands on the summit gazing down into the Valley of the Great Dairies, we witness a general broadening of the perspectives. We are presented with large, comprehensive views of humanity, and Hardy offers as a point of reference the works of the Flemish artists, Asloot and Sallaert. Similarly, the perspectives are scaled-up cosmically, in breadth and height and depth, when little Abraham gazes up at the stars and black hollows (Ch.IV p.31). In this context, human life appears even more fragile and ephemeral. (Generally though, the dramatic scale shifts in *Tess* are not of a temporal or geological kind such as we find in *The Return of the Native*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (the Cliff scene), and *Two on a Tower*). This phenomenon occurs again in the scene at Stonehenge, where the night sky appears as an immense architrave over the ancient monoliths. In contrast, the myopia of Angel and his brothers is accentuated by the uncompromising clarity of Hardy's close-up lens that zooms in on microscopic detail. The focus on the little nails in the soles of the brothers' boots becomes almost a moral criticism – we are looking through the eyes of the narrator, who is in turn looking through the eyes of the brothers at the small detail that attracts their attention (Ch.XXVI p.162). The adjective 'little' is reductive in this context, undermining any possible religious

connection with the nails of the Crucifixion. The concentration here on the particular rather than the universal is surely meaningful. Distance can serve as a moral index where characters become ennobled by distance, or immortalised in classical art form. Figures on the horizon are not noticeably tainted and we are told that distance actually enhances their features (Ch.XXXIX p.265). The opposite effect is achieved by the *black speck* of Alec at Flintcomb-Ash (Ch.XLVI p.314) and the *mere dot* of the policeman at Stonehenge (Ch.LVIII p.395), and these examples and their implications will be discussed in our comments on Hardy's *staffage* technique.

Hardy makes full use of the fact that Talbothays lies in a valley. Both Tess and Angel are seen to *descend* into a region that is burgeoning with fertility. On Angel's return to Talbothays, he descends into the world of natural instincts, where fermenting Nature and oozing abundance challenge the rarefied atmosphere of Emminster. Nature's gravitational pull also affects Tess and she descends 'lower and lower towards the dairy of her pilgrimage' (Ch.XVI p.104). The image of a feline Tess prowling stealthily through the rank weeds of the garden marks her progression into her own sexuality. In contrast to Tess's newfound optimism on the summit at Talbothays, summits can maximise the impact of loss; Terence Wright considers Hardy's use of the half-turned, backward-gazing figure: 'The figure half-turned to look back becomes an image of regret for opportunities missed and potential unfulfilled.'[21] Arguably, Angel's own backward glance at the Marlott dance (Ch.II p.18) both anticipates and precipitates the tragedy and can be linked to his backward glances at the Sandbourne station (Ch. LVII p.384), and finally, at Wintoncester.

We look on as Angel watches Tess disappear over the crest of the hill (Ch.XXXVII p.254) and, Tess, in turn, watches her own dream vanish before her eyes: 'he [Angel] who, in the moment she had grasped him to keep for her own, had disappeared like a shape in a vision' (Ch.XLI p.273). (The implications of Angel's 'shape' differ from Tess's own white 'shape' in her early phases; with Angel, there is lack of definition – he is a 'shape against the light' (Ch.LIII p.367) – whereas Tess's whiteness precedes the impress of experience). The sense of loss culminates in the mood of the concluding scene, where a bowed Angel and Liza-Lu slowly ascend the summit of the hill at Wintoncester. (On one memorable occasion the summit is man-made, as in the montage of itinerant villagers perching upon their mountains of furniture).

The summit functions in a similar way to cross-roads or bridges, in that it marks a transition. Thus, we note that at The Cross-In-Hand and at Wellbridge - the latter representing for Ian Gregor, 'a pivotal point between the scene of recovery in the Froom Valley and the scene of growing despair at Flintcomb-Ash' - the characters are obliged to halt and contemplate before either taking decisive action or coming to terms with loss.[22] Similarly, we, too, are stopped in our tracks, so that we view the action and recognise the mood through the eyes of the narrator who, in turn, is looking through the eyes of the character. On her return to her birthplace, following her seduction, Tess approaches the edge of the escarpment (Ch.XII p.75). Through Tess's eyes, we become aware of the horizons, behind and beyond. Bowed with thought she looks behind her – this retrospective view anticipating that of her younger sister at Wintoncester.

Hardy' s *staffage* technique reduces the human figure to a speck on the canvas. We have seen the effectiveness of this device in *The Return of the Native*, where Clym, as furze-cutter, becomes totally integrated into the gorse landscape, and where Eustacia and Wildeve are sucked into the dark heath like horns on the mollusk of a snail. These instances show that there is no margin for the uniqueness of personality. Human identity is downscaled in contrast to the continuous purpose of Nature. By deliberately diminishing the individual in this manner, we are made aware of the transience and limitation of human understanding and endeavour. Hardy uses horizontals to further dramatise the impact of *staffage*. At times the horizontals can elongate not only line and form, but also Time itself. There is a sense of unremitting horizontality at Flintcomb-Ash – even the rain falls horizontally – and the expanse of level land is as overwhelming to Tess as it is to Clym at Egdon Heath. (If we look again at Friedrich's *Monk by the Shore*, we can observe the individual as the one solitary vertical against a background of overpowering horizontals such as sea, shore, and sky). In the more positive mood of Talbothays, the horizontal sunbeams slant across the level meadows. Here, the horizons, together with the slow, steady pulse-beat of Nature, suggest an attenuation of both space and time.

At times, the individual is totally absorbed into the landscape: 'A field-man is a personality afield; a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it' (Ch.XIV p.88). This phenomenon recurs in other group scenes, such as in the garlic mead, the milking scenes, and most dramatically, in the Flintcomb-Ash landscape, where the landscape acts as a metaphor for destiny or circumstance, in that it absorbs and

objectifies Tess. When Tess arrives at Talbothays, she appears as a fly on a billiard – table (Ch.XVI p.105). She is downscaled to the extent that her arrival is recorded by only one solitary heron and the only fanfare is the moo-ing of the cattle waiting to be milked (ChXVI p105). The same effect is achieved in Tess's journey to Emminster, where she is absorbed into the fore- dawn, so that we are reminded again of the 'hawk's vision' that Auden refers to.[23] In this scene, the fields in the valley are seen as meshes in a net (Ch.XLIV p.297) – yet another illustration of her entrapment. The reduction is produced by a bird's-eye view from above, rather than the absorption of the figure into the horizontal plains. Similarly, at Flintcomb-Ash, the individual is so greatly reduced that he or she is seen only as an extension of his, or her, work. The ten-legged creature in the turnip field is in fact, two horses and a man (Ch.XLVI p.314). This seamless fusion between the human figure and the machine makes its impact most forcibly when Tess appears as a depersonalised, automated extension of the Plutonic thresher (ChXLVIII p.333). In the spiritual wasteland of Flintcomb-Ash, Tess and Marian become totally integrated into the featureless white and brown landscape until they appear as flies crawling over the land (Ch.LIII p.285). At Sandbourne, Tess appears as a moving spot as she runs after Angel (Ch.LVII p.384). Tanner regards this moment as 'the ultimate reduction of Tess, the distillation of her fate… 'and sees in these reductions 'a paradigm of the terms of human life – a spot of featured animation moving painfully across a vast featureless repose'.[24] Alec, as preacher, is reduced to a black speck, his personality deserving no greater reference than 'it':

> For hours, nothing relieved the joyless monotony of things. Then, far beyond the ploughing-teams, a black speck was seen; it had come from the corner of a fence, where there was a gap, and its tendency was up the incline, towards the swede-cutters. From the proportions of a mere point it

> advanced to the shape of a ninepin, and was soon perceived to be a man in black, arriving from the direction of Flintcomb-Ash. (Ch.XLVI p.314)

It would seem that there is a moral purpose behind the downscaling of Tess at Sandbourne and the preacher, Alec, at Flintcomb-Ash. The policeman at Stonehenge suffers the same reduction:

> The eastward pillars and their architraves stood up blackly against the light, and the great flame-shaped Sun-stone beyond them; and the Stone of Sacrifice midway. Presently the night wind died out, and the quivering of the little pools in the cup-like hollows of the stones lay still. At the same time something seemed to move on the verge of the dip eastward – a mere dot. It was the head of a man, approaching them from the hollow beyond the Sun-stone. (Ch.LVIII p.395)

In Hardy's deliberate downscaling of authority, such as the Church and the Law, he might be suggesting that religious and social laws are arbitrary and irrelevant to Nature.

In addition to *staffage*, other techniques involving perspectives are employed to emphasise anonymity. Rows of tomorrows, like the rows of milking stalls, or the rows of milkmaids in the garlic meadow, become elongated and eventually recede into the far horizon. Tess says: 'And you seem to see numbers of to-morrows just all in a line, the first of 'em the biggest and clearest, the others getting smaller and smaller as they stand farther away' (Ch.XIX p.124). The transience of human life is evident in Tess's bifocal vision of forward - looking and retrospective perspectives:' "The best is not to remember that your nature and your past doings have been just like thousands' and thousands' and that your coming life and doings'll be like thousands' and thousands" '(Ch.XIX p.126). Time is charted cyclically in the slow rotation of the passing seasons and in the circular shadows following the slow diurnal roll around the base of the tree-trunks. In the allotment scene we are told that nobody looks at his or her companions, and this point is underlined by the zoom lens focus on the individual and,

in turn, the individual's own focus on his or her own patch of territory. This scene reiterates the point Hardy makes in his description of the Trantridge dancers, whose self-absorption and essential solitariness is so beautifully articulated in the 'opalized circle of glory'.[25] (Hardy records a similar impression after attending a church service in Kensington, where the congregants strike him as 'a churchful of jostling phantasmagorias crowded like a heap of soap bubbles, infinitely intersecting, but each seeing only his own!').[26] These impressions might well have been inspired by Hardy's own observation of London life:

> London appears not to see itself. Each individual is conscious of himself but nobody is conscious of themselves collectively, except perhaps some poor gaper who stares round with a half-idiotic aspect. There is no consciousness of where anything comes from or goes to – only that it is present. [27]

Certainly, this view endorses Tess's own vision of the anonymous Londoners, who will unconcernedly breakfast on the milk carried by train from Talbothays (Ch.XXX p.187).

The *doorkijke* technique of the Dutch masters that we discussed in connection with *The Woodlanders* and in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, also plays a prominent role in this narrative. A number of memorable impressions are captured by this application of the window-frame or door-frame device. Window-frame scenes can heighten contrasting moods – the young ingenuous Tess gazes from her bedroom window on to the Romantic view of Shaston's towers and white mansions in the evening sun (Ch.V p.37), but on her return from Trantridge, Tess listlessly window-gazes, charting Time by the passing seasons (Ch.XIII p.85). Social and intellectual distancing can also be implied by the framing technique. Just as we noted the distance separating Giles from Grace, or the village carollers from Fancy Day, so we see Angel polarised against the dairymaids. As

the milkers munch their breakfast, Angel sits at his reserved seat at the hearth, in the chimney nook, and observes their profiles etched against the window-frames (Ch.XVIII p.119). Hardy's irony emerges again in the association of the milkers' dark silhouettes with a classical frieze:

> Between the posts were ranged the milchers, each exhibiting herself at the present moment to a whimsical eye in the rear as a circle on two stalks, down the centre of which a switch moved pendulum-wise; while the sun, lowering itself behind this patient row, threw their shadows accurately inwards upon the wall. Thus it drew shadows of those obscure and homely figures every evening with as much care over each contour as if it had been the profile of a court beauty on a palace wall; copied them as diligently as it had copied Olympian shapes on marble *facades* long ago; or the outline of Alexander, Caesar, and the Pharaohs.
> (Ch.XVI pp.105-106)

While irony is clearly at work here, the effect is still impressive, in that the moment has thus been immortalised in art form. (These scenes recall the caricature of the village choir as an Etruscan pageant in *Under the Greenwood Tree).*

As in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, there is the influence of Vermeer again in this novel, in the characteristic shafts of sunlight that slant in from windows or open doorways to illuminate the dark interiors. Thus we see Angel and Tess in the dark interior of the dairy kitchen with its red-brick floor, the only source of light emanating from the sun streaming in through a back window (Ch.XXVII p.169). In another scene, the perspectives stretch out from the immediate into the distance when the milk-house door, left slightly ajar, reveals rows upon rows of milking stalls (Ch.XVIII p.119). This swing in perspectives is noticeable again when Angel, poised to kiss Tess, changes his mind 'for tender conscience' sake' (Ch.XXIV p.151). He stands with his arm encircling Tess while she looks into the distance to regain objectivity. In this instance, perspective

is an index for the narrowness of Angel's vision and the expansiveness of her own. Tess is as encircled here by Angel as she is by the monoliths of Stonehenge. On another occasion in the milk-house, the atmosphere becomes increasingly oppressive when Angel presses Tess to accept his proposal (Ch.XXVII p.173). It looks as if the religious and social strictures are as stultifying as the humidity. Tess, encircled this time by Fate, turns her gaze instinctively toward the open meadow. Her sense of entrapment and yearning for space is apparent even when Alec first kisses her; she clings to distance, looking vaguely over to the trees on the horizon (Ch.XII p.78). At Talbothays, there is an alternating swing between the immediate, close-up focus of the interior scenes featuring the dairyhouse and the garden, and the diffused distance shots of the open vistas beyond. This interaction between the interior and the exterior recurs at Flintcomb-Ash. Snowdrifts insidiously edge their way indoors and we see Tess lighting her lamp and looking out of her window on to the snow-covered landscape. Tess's conflict prior to her fruitless journey to Emminster is underlined by the contrast of the steely starlight with the warmth of the yellow candlelight within the cottage (Ch.XLIV p.296). Her hesitation on the threshold is expounded more literally in the graveyard scene at Kingsbere, where she challenges the arbitrariness of Fate, articulating it in terms of perspectives: ' "Why am I on the wrong side of this door?" '(Ch.LII p.364). Other impressions involving windows and doors make their impact - the somnambulant bridegroom, Angel, in the moonlight at Tess's open door (Ch.XXXVII p.246), Alec's silhouette darkening Tess's window (Ch.XLVI p.320), Tess catching sight of Liza-Lu in the declining light at the open doorway (Ch.XLIX p.343), the ghostly, skeletal Angel standing at his father's doorway (Ch.LIII p.367/368), Tess, on the eve of her family's

eviction from Marlott, looking out of her window and back again to her siblings indoors (Ch.XLI p.356). The light and framing techniques effectively freeze the moment in each of these scenes.

III

It is not only the light and perspectives that animate the landscapes. The creative tension sparked by Hardy's contending Romantic and anti-Romantic impulses also adds to the dynamic of the narrative and helps shape our perceptions. This essential division within Hardy can be problematic, as David Lodge explains:

> Hardy's undertaking to defend Tess as a pure woman by emphasizing her kinship with Nature perpetually drew him towards the Romantic view of Nature as a reservoir of benevolent impulses, a view which one side of his mind rejected as falsely sentimental.[28]

It is clear from the outset, in the very first image of the empty egg-basket carried by John Durbeyfield (Ch.I p.7), that our Romantic expectations are to be thwarted one way or another. Durbeyfield's visions of aristocratic heritage will be frustrated (even the sole-surviving Prince will be sacrificed), as will be the ideals of Angel and the dreams of Tess. The basket that Tess carries on her return from Trantridge in the opening scene of the 'Maiden no More' chapter, is now described as a burden. In contrast, the egg / bird motif continues in a different mood with the 'bird-singing morning in May' (Ch.XVI p.107) that inspires Tess's rally. To balance the regenerated optimism at Talbothays, there are the dispiriting images of the Flintcomb-Ash landscapes, the dead leaves at Wellbridge and at The Chase, the pale and blasted nettle-stems at The Cross-in Hand (Ch.LIV p.371), and the nettles sprouting in God's forgotten garden cemetery (Ch.XIV p.97). Our Romantic expectations are undermined by the decaying colour tones of the woodland (Ch.XII p.79), and by the 'machine-made

tone' of the hoarse little reed-sparrow (Ch.XXI p.136) - a dramatic reduction of Keats's nightingale ('Ode to a Nightingale'). The solitary, prophetic bird singing in the mute grove achieves the same effect (Ch.VII p.49).

Hardy draws on the pastoral convention as a symbol of a past golden age. There is a nostalgic reference to the pastoral when, prior to her arrest at Stonehenge, Tess recalls that her mother's ancestors were shepherds (Ch.LVIII p.393). Kevin Moore argues that this fact identifies Tess as 'a daughter of the romantic pastoral tradition'.[29] Nature is portrayed as being essentially pure in that it is not subject to social or religious law – the reference to Tess as a pure woman therefore defines her as a child of Nature. But Hardy is always careful not to allow the Romantic or the sentimental a free rein. Pathos is blended with the prosaic. The perfect counterpointing of the Romantic and anti-Romantic positions can be found in the image of the little marmalade jar filled with graveyard flowers (Ch.XIV p.97). This shows what Hardy would describe as 'the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things'.[30] At times a discordant note, struck as a result of an incongruous word or image, tends to undermine the apparent Romanticism of the passage: 'Then they all rode home in one of the largest wagons, in the company of a broad tarnished moon that had risen from the ground to the eastwards, its face resembling the outworn gold-leaf halo of some worm-eaten Tuscan saint' (Ch.XIV p.92). Here the Romantic symbols – the moon and Italian religious art icons - suffer the onset of over-ripeness and decay, and imply, as Moore suggests, ' a decaying and fragmented romanticism'.[31] Romantic expectations are dismantled again with an irony that undermines the optimism of Tess's rally: 'Her hopes mingled with the sunshine in an ideal photosphere which surrounded

her as she bounded along against the soft south wind. She heard a pleasant noise in every breeze, and in every bird's note seemed to lurk a joy' (Ch.XVI p.103). With the oxymoronic juxtaposition of 'lurk' and 'joy' there is the apprehension of something inconsistent and morally ambiguous in Nature. We can think again about the pitiless smile of the sun at Wintoncester (Ch.LIX p.396). Similarly, there is the quiet peace of the soft February day that lulls Tess into contentment before the sudden and startling appearance of Alec at her window (Ch.XLVI p.320). Romantic imagery can be undercut with bathos, as when Angel's meditation on Tess's beauty is brought to an abrupt close with his 'prosaic sneeze' (Ch.XXIV p.151). Other illustrations of the anti-Romantic influence the mood; there is a resonance of Keats's 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' in the references to the sedge and Tess's silent mourning as she agonises over Angel's proposal (Ch.XXVIII p.175), and we have already noted comparisons between the white vacuity of Flintcomb-Ash and that of Shelley's 'Mont Blanc'.

The inimical features of the Flintcomb-Ash landscape point to the pathetic fallacy, representing, for Dorothy Van Ghent, ' Hardy's vision of human abandonment in the dissevering earth.'[32] The rain falls like glass splinters on the field-workers pitted against the raw elements (Ch.XLIII p.278). Yet, at Talbothays, Tess's half-conscious, rhapsodic apostrophe of the beauties of the valley (Ch.XVI p.104) suggests Romantic possibilities of the kind celebrated in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey.* Nature, then, can be seen in alignment with human suffering or joy, or in confederacy with circumstance. There is conspiracy implied in 'Nature in her fantastic trickery' (Ch.XXXVI p.237) and in winter's 'stealthy and measured glides like the moves of a chess-player' (Ch.XLIII p.287). Elsewhere, Nature's apparent nonchalance refutes the pathetic fallacy, leading us

to question, along with David Lodge, whether 'Hardy's ambiguous treatment of Nature throughout *Tess* might be formulated as his inability to decide whether the pathetic fallacy was fallacious or not.'[33] We note the blithe continuity in the Durbeyfield cottage following the eviction of Tess and her family; we are told that the newcomers are as carefree as the spring birds. Similarly, Tess's personal misery at Trantridge is unrecognised by Nature: 'Meanwhile the trees were just as green as before; the birds sang and the sun shone as clearly now as ever. The familiar surroundings had not darkened because of her grief, nor sickened because of her pain' (Ch.XIVp.91). The dissonance between Nature and mood is emphasised again with the shattering of Angel's dream of Tess as his ideal love:

> The night came in and took up its place there, unconcerned and indifferent; the night which had already swallowed up his happiness, and was now digesting it listlessly; and was ready to swallow up the happiness of a thousand other people with as little disturbance or change of mien. (Ch.XXXV p.235)

We have seen many instances in *The Woodlanders* and in *The Return of the Native* where Nature appears to indict man. In this novel, the Forest of the White Hart is symbolic of Tess's victimisation; the hart – or, (Tess's) heart – has, as an aristocratic species, been long since hunted down by man in the name of sport. The gentle roosting pheasants, in their last nap, like Tess, are shot and mutilated for the same reason. There is a direct identification with the hart, and with the pheasants, as well as numerous other parallels involving animals. Tess is portrayed as a victim, either of man, or, of herself. In the famous 'garden' scene, she becomes a victim of her own sexuality:

> The outskirt of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch, and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells – weeds whose red and yellow and purple hues

> formed a polychrome as dazzling as that of cultivated flowers. She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the appletree-trunks, made blood-red stains on her skin; thus she drew quite near to Clare, still unobserved of him. (Ch.XIX pp.122-123)

Tess is outwith the garden literally and metaphorically and it is feasible to suggest that Hardy re-enforces the association with an exiled Eve figure by an intended play on the imagery of 'outskirt' and her own "skirts". This scene carries metaphorical implications for both David Lodge and Dorothy Van Ghent, although their respective analyses differ. Lodge alights on the anarchic underside of the garden as proof of something similar within Tess, a sexuality that co-exists alongside the pretty innocence. Van Ghent, on the other hand, sees it more as a comment on Clare – a view that Lodge dismisses:

> ... in so far as the paragraph has metaphorical implications, it throws light not, as Miss Van Ghent suggests, on Clare and what he will do to Tess, but on Tess herself, revealing a facet of her character of which he is sufficiently ignorant.[34]

Lodge's argument, I think, makes for a more interesting (and more balanced) reading of Tess.

All the techniques involving landscape, light, and perspective come together in the final scene at Wintoncester. If Hardy, as artist, is responsible for the deft orchestration of light and shadow and perspectives, then it is Hardy, as architect, who shapes our perception of the city of Wintoncester. Clearly, there is no flexibility in the rigidity of the buildings. It is a construct of isometric structures, sharp angles, and impressive cathedral towers. In other words, it points to a rationalism and rigidity, reminiscent of the uncompromisingly square severity of the Emminster church. When counterpointed with the floating nebulousness of The Chase, where line and form struggle for clarity, the city

appears structured on society's cornerstones of law and religion. We are told that the red - brick prisonhouse represents a reaction to the 'quaint irregularities' (Ch.LIX p.397) of Gothic architecture. In contrast with the formalism and rigidity, the Gothic eccentricities appear more humane. The primeval yews and oaks that first appeared in The Chase, reappear here, with their connotations of antiquity, romance, and death, in full and tragic circle at Wintoncester. The historical perspective is mediated by Nature, as we have already seen in the posts worn to smoothness by infinite numbers of cows and calves (Ch.XVI p.105), and in the slow measure of the seasons. Time passes as slowly and as rhythmically as the metronome switch of a cow's tail. The Forest's landscape of bygone years finally integrates with our own individual story, into a compound of 'landscape beyond landscape' (Ch.LIX p.397).

Notes

[1] Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 59.
[2] Tony Tanner, 'Colour and Movement in Tess of the D'Urbervilles', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. by R. P. Draper (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 190-216 (pp. 190-199).
[3] Tanner, p. 193.
[4] Penelope Vigar, *The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality* (London: The Athlone Press, 1974), p. 186.
[5] Tanner, p. 192.
[6] Tanner, p. 192.
[7] Tanner, p. 197.
[8] ChX: see Appendix V, for inclusion of the Chaseborough dance scene, as reinstated in the 1912 Wessex edition.
[9] Vigar, p. 128.
[10] Vigar, p. 128.
[11] J. B. Bullen, *The Expressive Eye* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 7.
[12] *Life*, p. 225.
[13] Grundy, p. 60.
[14] Grundy, p. 61, p. 63.
[15] See Appendix V.
[16] Grundy, p. 63.
[17] *Life*, p. 225.
[18] Vigar, p. 179.
[19] Vigar, p. 32.
[20] Irving Howe, 'Let the Day Perish', in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ed. by Albert J. La Valley (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp.62-68 (p. 66).
[21] Terence Wright, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 75.
[22] Ian Gregor, *The Great Web* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 38.
[23] W. H. Auden, 'A Literary Transference', in *Hardy*, ed. by Albert J. Guerard (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp.135-142 (p. 139).
[24] Tanner, p. 206; p. 209.
[25] Ch.X : see Appendix V.
[26] *Life*, p. 219.
[27] *Life*, p. 215.
[28] David Lodge, 'Tess, Nature, and the Voices of Hardy', in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ed. by Albert J. LaValley (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp. 74-85 (p. 74).
[29] Kevin Z.Moore, *The Descent of the Imaginatiion: Postromantic Culture in the Later Novels of Thomas Hardy* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), p. 217.
[30] *Life*, p. 178.
[31] Moore, p. 200.
[32] Dorothy Van Ghent, 'On Tess of the D'Urbervilles', in Hardy, ed. by Albert J. Guerard (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp.77-90 (p. 81).
[33] David Lodge, 'Tess, Nature, and the Voices of Thomas Hardy', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. by R.P.Draper (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp.175-189 (p. 186).
[34] Lodge, *Twentieth Century Interpretations*, p. 79.

Conclusion

If we accept Penelope Vigar's premise that Hardy, first and foremost, wants us to recognise the 'narrative pictures' and 'visual anecdotes' of his art as 'an illusion of reality', then we must view the novels, as he himself did, as a series of impressions.[1]

Many of the scenes in the novels we have examined can be seen as the outcome of Hardy's imaginative response to the realities of life. This response can be thought of in terms of a literary Impressionism. We know that as far as realism is concerned, he discounts inventorial documentation in favour of what he calls 'disproportioning'.[2] Vigar reminds us that, 'In his best work, Hardy is seldom objective in his presentation of reality; rather, he selects detail with an instinctive feeling for the total emotional effect', and she goes on to say,

> The form of pictorial art is basic to Hardy's view of life as he expresses it in his works, and essential to his pervasive theme, which is the contrast between appearance and reality, what life *is like*, and what life *is*. As such it is inextricably bound up with his entire thought and expression.[3]

Details are selected and blurred, lighting and perspectives are adjusted, colour is enhanced or toned down, with the result that the real and the dreamlike alternately fuse and contrast with each other.

We have only to recall the blue and yellow fogs, the dew-laden dawn light, the sun-speckled shadows, the floating mists – to conclude that there is an overall Impressionist effect.

Hardy, we know felt Impressionism to be 'even more suggestive in the direction of literature than in that of art', and, as Vigar demonstrates, his point is proven in our perception of Egdon Heath :

> It is a huge diffuse impression of blackness, enormity and barrenness, broken only by the sound of dry heather-bells whispering in the wind, and later by the shooting red and gold flames of the bonfires. The general commentary is in effect only a canvas, big, rambling and obscure enough to accommodate its subject. The picture itself is contained in a very few words, but the important thing is that we do see it and we do feel it. In the same way, an Impressionist painting can convey a whole moving landscape, breeze blowing, water rippling, sunlight flickering; and when one looks closely there are only crude brush-strokes and strange combinations of colour.[4]

Given Hardy's advice to us that, 'what you carry away with you from a scene is the true feature to grasp', we are left with a kaleidoscope of impressions – or, in Vigar's words, 'a vision of moments which remain distinctly in the mind, a string of outstanding incidents.'[5] Even the most mundane and unpromising features can be suddenly and unexpectedly enhanced by Hardy's response to light, as we can see from the following diary entry: 'December 4. A gusty wind makes the rain-drops hit the window in stars, and the sunshine flaps open and shut like a fan, flinging into the room a tin-coloured light'.[6]

Other artistic influences have been identified throughout our discussion, and amongst these, we have seen that Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Ruisdael, have all been sources of creative inspiration and energy. Yet, it is the Impressionists, and in particular, Turner, (who can be considered a pioneer of Impressionism), who seem to have contributed most to the shifting focus and colouring of the narratives. There is, overall, a sense of continuous movement expressed in the onward and backward glimpses of promise or regret, the careless footsteps left in the woodlands, the elusive shifts of light and shadow, the receding horizons, the ascents and descents – all these are as artistically and metaphorically relevant as the long, winding road itself.

By contrast with the dynamic of these images, there are the more static Dutch School portraits and interiors, the medieval, triptych-style paintings depicting Tess's

progress, the classical, Etruscan-style friezes, and, of course, the stylized and symbolic vignettes, such as the sunset wagon ride home after the Marlott harvest, (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*), or the Luxellian vault scene in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. All these momentarily halt the action for the purpose of contemplation. We have noted that the fixity of some of the scenes has provoked criticism by Lloyd Fernando and others. Hardy's deliberate disproportioning of detail, light, and perspective is criticised for its artificiality. In Fernando's opinion, there is too much conscious deliberation and contrivance, with the result that the animation of the characters is sacrificed to art. We are left, he says, with 'a series of tableaux'.[7] Certain scenes would support his argument that 'His [Hardy's] pictures are less pictures of reality than pictures of pictures.'[8] We recall the more fixed and representational portraits – Tess, adorned with strawberries and roses; the baptism of Baby Sorrow; Tess's fireside confession to Angel; Tess and Marian as *The Two Marys*; Angel and Liza-Lu at Wintoncester; Giles, 'Autumn's very brother', brimming over with apples, pips, and rind; the moonlit silhouette of Dick Dewy; Eustacia as "Queen of Night", regally posed against the night sky; Clym on the Mount, preaching to the eremites.

There *is* a characteristic slowness and undistracting silence in some scenes that emphasise an intended artistry. We might perceive as set-pieces, the depictions of the early morning garlic - pickers; Tess nursing her baby in the Marlott cornfield; the fieldworkers at Flintcomb-Ash; dawn at Stonehenge. All these would appear to justify Fernando's claims, and yet, in spite of artistic contrivance or crafting, Hardy still succeeds in evoking responses that are instinctive and spontaneous. It is, after

all, spontaneity rather than precision that appeals to Hardy himself, as we can see from his diary reference to Robert Herrick's poem, 'Delight in Disorder': [9]

> A sweet disorder in the dress...
> A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
> I see a wild civility,
> Do more bewitch me than when art
> Is too precise in every part.

Clearly, it is the accidental rather than the intentional that appeals to Hardy: 'In a work of art it is the accident which *charms*, not the intention; that we love and admire. Instance the amber tones that pervade the folds of drapery in ancient marbles, the deadened polish of the surfaces, and the cracks and the scratches'.[10] In answer to Fernando, then, I would argue that there are those of us who, like Grundy, value the visual intensity and are drawn to 'the link between emotion, experience and colour', seeing it as 'the inescapably visual nature of experience'. Spontaneously, instinctively, 'We see the bloom on the picture, yet we feel its actuality too'.[11]

It is possible to see, as Hardy intended, not only the figure in the scene, and behind the figure the scene at large, but beyond that, we can catch also a glimpse of the universal picture itself. If light and perspectives can function metaphorically, then the landscape can be seen as a medium. Against the plunging depths of the night skies, or the expanses of heath and sea, man, striving and essentially alone, is silhouetted as a representative of the human predicament. His individual, and according to John Danby, 'deciduous' story is considered in comparison with the eternal processes of Nature: 'The vast perspectives of time that have been before the here-and-now of the narrative, the equally vast spaces that will succeed when the story is finished, are essentially inward parts of Hardy's deepest feeling about the human fates he is describing.' [12]

What Eliot intends as criticism – 'he makes a great deal of landscape'– can be seen as an acknowledgement of what Lawrence believes to be Hardy's imaginativeness.[13] The value of using landscape as a medium can be perceived in Virginia Woolf's observation:

> His light does not fall directly upon the human heart. It passes over it and out on to the darkness of the heath and upon the trees swaying in the storm. When we look back into the room the group by the fireside is dispersed. Each man or woman is battling with the storm, alone, revealing himself most when he is least under the observation of other human beings.[14]

The landscape in itself is also meaningful to Woolf, aware as she is of 'the sense that the little prospect of man's existence is ringed by a landscape which, while it exists apart, yet confers a deep and solemn beauty upon his drama.[15] Both Woolf and Lawrence make the same point about Hardy's use of landscape; they talk in similar terms about 'the little prospect of man's existence', and 'the small lives [that] are spilled and wasted'.[16] Their approaches, though, are different; Woolf draws conclusions about man, whereas Lawrence draws conclusions about unfathomable Nature.

Finally, as we summarise our appraisal of Hardy's 'literary pictorialism', we might borrow Woolf's conclusion for our own purpose:

> When we come to take stock of our impressions of the whole, the effect is commanding and satisfactory. We have been freed from the cramp and pettiness imposed by life. Our imaginations have been stretched and heightened; our humour has been made to laugh out; we have drunk deep of the beauty of the earth.[17]

Notes

[1] Penelope Vigar, *The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality* (London: The Athlone Press, 1974), p. 15; Harold Orel, *Hardy: Personal Writings*, ed. by Harold Orel (London: Macmillan,1967), p. 27.
[2] *Life*, p. 239.
[3] Vigar, pp. 23-24; Vigar, p. 18.
[4] *Life*, p. 191; Vigar, p. 24.
[5] *Life*, p. 191; Vigar, p. 15.
[6] *Life*, p. 175.
[7] Lloyd Fernando, ' Thomas Hardy's Rhetoric of Painting', *Review of English Literature*, 6 (1965), 62-73 (p. 68).
[8] Fernando, p. 71.
[9] *Life*, p. 108.
[10] *Life*, p. 199.
[11] Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 52; p. 18; p. 24.
[12] John F. Danby, 'The Individual and the Universal', in *Thomas Hardy: Three Pastoral Novels*, ed. by R.P. Draper (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 89-97 (pp. 92-93).
[13] T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), p.55; Lawrence, 'The Real Tragedy', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. by R.P. Draper (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 66-74 (p. 68).
[14] Virginia Woolf, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, pp. 74 -80 (p. 76).
[15] Virginia Woolf, 'On Hardy's Achievement', in *Thomas Hardy: Three Pastoral Novels*, pp. 83-85 (p. 84).
[16] Lawrence, 'The Real Tragedy', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, p. 68.
[17] Grundy, p.18, Woolf, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy' , pp. 79-80.

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