

The Theme of Alienation
in the Major Novels
of Thomas Hardy

by

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Summary

The predicament of human isolation and alienation is a pervasive theme that has not been sufficiently studied in Thomas Hardy's fiction. This study investigates the theme of alienation focussing on Hardy's major novels.

Although the term 'alienation' is one of the most outstanding features of this age, it is not very clear what it precisely means. The writer has to draw extensively on Hegel, Marx, Fromm and other thinkers to understand the complex ramifications of the term. The numerous connections in which the term has been used are restricted to include only a few meanings and applications among which the most important refers to a disparity between one's society and one's spiritual interests or welfare.

The theme of alienation, then, is investigated in representative texts from the wide trajectory of Victorian literature. It is clear that the central intellectual characteristic of the Victorian age is, as Arnold diagnosed it, "the sense of want of correspondence between the forms of modern Europe and its spirit". The increasing difficulty of reconciling historical and spiritual perspectives has become a major theme for Hardy and other late Victorians.

Next, each of Hardy's major novels is given a chapter in which the theme of alienation is traced. In Far from the Madding Crowd, Boldwood's neurotic and self-destructive nature makes him obsessed with Bathsheba, and as a result, ^{he} murders Troy and suffers the isolation of life imprisonment; Fanny Robin's tragic and lonely death, only assisted by a dog, is a flagrant indictment of society.

In The Return of the Native, Clym is the earliest prototype in Hardy's fiction of alienated modern man. He returns to Egdon Heath only to live in isolation unable to communicate with the very people whom he thought of as a cure for his alienation. Eustacia has consistently been leading a life of alienation in Egdon Heath which leads to her suicide.

In The Mayor of Casterbridge, Henchard's alienation may be more ascribed to his own character, recalling Boldwood, than to incongruity with society. Yet Hardy emphasises the tendency of society towards modernity which Henchard cannot cope with.

In The Woodlanders, not only does wild nature fail to be a regenerative and productive force but also human nature fails to be communicative and assuring. The people of Little Hintock fail to communicate with one another. The relationship between Marty and Giles is an "obstructed relationship"; Giles dies a sacrificial death, and Marty ends as a wreck in a rare scene hardly credible in a newly emerging world. Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond, on the other hand, are isolated in the sterile enclosure of their own fantasies. Grace, anticipating Tess and Sue, is torn in a conflict between two worlds, neither of which can happily accommodate her.

In Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Tess, after her childhood experiences at Marlott and later at Trantridge, soon discovers how oppressive society is, particularly when she is rejected by Angel, whom she loves and through whom she aspires to fulfil herself. Angel suffers from self-division in his character, and the conflict between received attitudes and advanced ideas leaves him an embodiment of an alienated man hardly able to reconcile the values of two worlds.

Jude the Obscure is Hardy's most complete expression of alienation. Jude's alienation is explicitly social and implicitly

cosmic, and his failure to identify himself in society constitutes a major theme of the novel. The novel foreshadows the modern themes of failure, frustration, futility, disharmony, isolation, rootlessness, and absurdity as inescapable conditions of life.

In conclusion, the theme of alienation in the major novels of Thomas Hardy is a pervasive one. Nevertheless, not all his characters are alienated; however their happy condition, like that of the rustics in Gray's Elegy, is seen to stem from their intellectual limitations.

Part I

Alienation and Literature

Chapter One

Alienation Defined

Chapter One

Alienation Defined

Our life nowadays is commonly characterized in terms of "alienation". Reference is constantly made to it in connection with the growth of superficiality in interpersonal relations, the stunting of personal development, the widespread existence of neurotic personality traits, the absence of a sense of meaning in life and the "disappearance" or "death" of God. There is almost no aspect of contemporary life which has not been discussed in terms of "alienation". Whether or not it is one of the most outstanding features of this age, it would certainly seem to be its watchword.

In spite of the term's popularity, few people have a very clear idea of precisely what it means. "Alienation" is a term which most people understand in terms of their acquaintance with the writings of certain philosophers, psychologists and sociologists whose uses of the term are most significant. It would make no sense to say, "Never mind what Hegel, Marx or Sartre say what they mean by "alienation", I want to know what the term itself means". For it is largely through the influence of these and other recent writers that the term has come to have whatever meaning it has today.

Hegel's and Marx's discussions of "alienation" are of considerable significance and they constitute the background of a good deal of the contemporary ideas on "alienation". It seems to a number of contemporary social scientists who have attempted to generalize about the way the term "alienation" functions, that, however different the contexts in which it is employed may be, its various uses still share a number of common features. Arnold Kaufman, for example, offers the following general analysis:

"To claim that a person is alienated is to claim that his relation to something else has certain features which result in avoidable discontent or loss of satisfaction"(1)

Lewis Feuer suggests that "the word 'alienation' is used to describe the subjective tone of self-destructive experience" and states,

"Alienation is used to convey the emotional tone which accompanies any behaviour in which the person is compelled to act self-destructively"(2)

Kenneth Keniston contends that

"Most usages of 'alienation' share the assumption that some relationship or connection that once existed, that is 'natural', desirable, or good has been lost."(3)

From the linguistic point of view, and long before Hegel and Marx, an important use of "alienation" which goes back to Middle English and has its roots in Latin usage, is in connection with the state of unconsciousness and the loss of one's mental powers. "Alienation" means "withdrawal, loss, or derangement of mental faculties; insanity"(4). "Alienist" is "one who treats mental diseases, a mental pathologist, a mad-doctor"(5). Another important use of the term is "to make estranged, to estrange, or turn away the feelings or affections of any one, to convert into an alien or stranger, to make averse or hostile or unwelcome"(6).

Hegel

It is in The Phenomenology of Spirit that Hegel for the first time used the term "alienation" systematically in anything like the special ways in which it is used today. He provides an

adequate discussion of "alienation" and "self-alienated spirit" in that book. Hegel is directly concerned with the theme of "alienation" when he attempts to trace the entire development of the human spirit. He is less interested in accurate chronology than in what might be termed the "logical" development implicit in man's history. Hegel holds that the world in which man lives is largely a world he himself has created. Social, political, and cultural institutions constitute what he refers to as "the social substance". As a product of the human spirit, Hegel considers it to be essentially "spiritual":

"this world is a spiritual reality, it is essentially the fusion of individuality with being. This its existence is the work of self-consciousness, but likewise an actuality immediately present and alien to it"⁽⁷⁾.

This suggests that a spiritual nature is imparted to everything created by human activity. Hegel even goes so far to suggest that the entire phenomenal world is "spiritual":

"Consciousness ... must have taken up a relation to the object in all its aspects and phases, and have grasped its meaning from the point of view of each of them. This totality of its determinate characteristics makes the object per se or inherently a spiritual reality"⁽⁸⁾.

The whole of his discussion of 'alienation' occurs in a section on "Culture and its Realm of Actual Reality" which is precisely the world of social substance.

Hegel regards this social substance as the objectification of the human spirit, in which spirit finds the objective form that is essential to its actualization. Thus he speaks of it as "objective spirit". It is the very nature of spirit to be objective and universal.

Hegel's concept of the nature of man underlies his use of the term "alienation" and "self-alienation". To Hegel, man's nature is twofold, individuality and universality:

"Mind [or Spirit] is the nature of human beings en masse [i.e. generally] and their nature is therefore twofold: (i) at one extreme, explicit individuality of consciousness and will, and (ii) at the other extreme, universality, which knows and wills what is substantive".⁽⁹⁾

Hegel objects strongly to the view that the nature of man consists only in "individuality" and therefore he attaches great importance to "universality". He says of human consciousness that universality is its "essence":

"Self-consciousness ... only has real existence so far as it alienates itself from itself. By doing so, it puts itself in the position of something universal, and this its universality is its validity ... and is its actuality ... its claim to be valid rests on its having made itself ... conform to what is universal."⁽¹⁰⁾

The idea Hegel wishes to convey is that the social substance is common to the whole of the people and therefore transcends the individuality of the individual. If the individual is to achieve the universal, he must make himself "conformable" to it, and live in accordance with it. Hegel considers unity with the social substance essential for man to attain universality as his essential nature.

It is this dichotomy of individuality and universality that means, to Hegel, "alienation". Richard Schacht persuasively argues that Hegel uses the term "alienation" in two different ways. He uses it to refer to a separation between the individual and the social substance or (as "self-alienation") between one's actual condition and essential nature. He also uses it to refer to "a surrender or sacrifice of particularity and wilfulness to attain

unity".(11)

In the first sense, "alienation" involves separation, strangeness, something becoming alien. When the person ceases to identify with the social substance and comes to limit himself to his own particular person, he now views the substance as something external and opposed to him. It has become "alien" or "alienated".

It is observed that "alienation", in this sense, is used by Hegel in connection with the "emergence" of an awareness of the "otherness" of something. It must have "become" alien to him after a period in which he was at one with it. It is also noted that it is the social substance that is said to be alienated, not the individual. Today, we say it is the individual who is alienated from something like the social substance when the same lack of unity exists. The two modes of expression are complementary.

When the individual ceases to be at one with the social substance, Hegel contends, he loses his universality, and "therein alienates [himself] from [his] inner nature and arrives at the extreme discordance with [himself]"(12) He thus becomes self-alienated.Self-alienation is used to refer to a separation or disparity between actual condition and essential nature.

The second sense of alienation which Hegel explains derives from the notion — held by Hobbes and Rousseau and other social contract philosophers — of the surrender or transfer of a right to another. It is something deliberate and involves a conscious relinquishment or surrender with the intention of attaining a desired end: namely unity with the social substance. Alienation in this sense is, in fact, for Hegel, a means to overcome "alienation" in the former sense and to eliminate the gulf that had separated him from the social substance, and, consequently, to

attain universality. "The power of the individual consists in conforming [himself] to that substance, i.e. in emptying [or relinquishing] his self and thus establishing [himself] as the objectively existing substance"(13)

For Hegel, the social substance is not only the creation of spirit, but its objectification as well. This means that the social substance is spirit in objectified form. From this it follows that when the social substance is alienated from the individual, it is objectified spirit that is alienated from him, or, to put it another way, it is the individual's own true self-objectification that is alienated from him.

There is an entire section in the Phenomenology entitled "Self-alienated Spirit", in which he describes the spirit as self-alienated when there is a discordant relation between the individual and the social substance. When the social substance is alienated from the individual, spirit is divided within itself; and it is between its divided aspects that this relation of alienation holds. In short, spirit is self-alienated.

When one considers the fruitfulness of Hegel's use of the term "alienation", one is confronted with the question of his reason for using it in two distinct senses. It is in fact confusing to say a person who is at one with the social substance and of a person who is not, that each has "alienated his self". Hegel's twofold use creates confusion, but this does not detract from the usefulness of the term. Hegel's use of the term to mean separation between the individual and the social substance is not new, for it had previously been used to convey the idea of separation between individuals and between men and God. Hegel's innovation in his use of the term is that he applied it to the discordant relation between the individual and the non personal

social substance. But where Hegel seems less persuasive is when he speaks of an essential nature of man implicit in his use of self-alienation to refer to a separation or disparity between a person's actual condition and his essential "inner" nature. This obviously presupposes that he has such an essential nature. There are many who do not, in fact, consider man to have such a definite and describable thing as "essential nature". It may be that Hegel's conception of man's essential nature is not completely satisfactory, or is questionable; but he is most convincing about his basic point that man's spiritual life involves both distinct individuality and participation in a social and cultural community.

Marx

Hegel's basic concept of man's capacity for spiritual life was severely attacked by Marx in his "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" which revealed a previously unknown side of him, that of the passionate "humanist", concerned with the issue of man's self-realization. From the start, Marx charges Hegel with overabstraction of his concept of "alienation". "The distinctive forms of alienation which are manifested are only different forms of consciousness and self-consciousness"⁽¹⁴⁾. They are "merely the thought of alienation, its abstract and hence vacuous and unreal expression"⁽¹⁵⁾. Marx wanted to bring to ^{earth} Hegel's transcendental abstractions which misrepresent the "real, corporeal man, with his feet firmly planted on the sordid ground, inhaling and exhaling all the powers of nature"⁽¹⁶⁾.

The human product which Marx calls "alienated" from the individual under certain conditions is not the "social substance"

as it had been for Hegel, it is the product of the individual's labour. This is the first crucial step Marx takes to reduce Hegel's too abstract (as Marx thought) account of "alienation" to its concrete materialistic form. Marx is adapting Hegel's concept of the alienation of the social substance in terms of the objectification of personality in the product of the individual's labour. It is important to remember that Marx does not call the product alienated from its producer merely because in it his labour becomes an object, as Hegel does, but he explicitly states that it is alienated from its producer only when "the object sets itself against him as an alien and hostile force". Marx adds,

"The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, assumes an external existence, but that it exists independently, outside himself, and alien to him, and that it stands opposed to him".⁽¹⁷⁾

Thus Marx distinguishes clearly between externalization and the alienation of the product.

Not only is the product alien to the worker, but also it is said to exert a detrimental influence on him, it "sets itself against him as an alien and hostile force". The actual source of its hostility lies in the powers which govern it, in the other man for whom it is produced. If my product is related to me, Marx argues, as an alien and hostile object, this must be because it belongs to someone who is alien to me. Its alienation from me must be attributed to my surrender of it to another person. Here Hegel's two aspects or senses of alienation have come together. The alienated product is separated from its producer because he has surrendered it to another. In Marx the separation is the result of the surrender; whereas in Hegel the separation of the individual from the social substance is overcome through the

surrender of the individual to the social substance.

Not only the product of labour but also labour itself is described by Marx as alienated. The major part of his discussion of alienation in the first "Manuscript" bears the heading "Alienated Labour". He argues that labour becomes alienated when it ceases to reflect one's own personality and interests:

"What constitutes the alienation of labour? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that, consequently, he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased".⁽¹⁸⁾

A man's labour is truly his own labour, for Marx, only when it is "spontaneous", "free and self-directed activity".

According to Marx, the alienation of product and labour has the direct consequence that "man is alienated from other men".⁽¹⁹⁾ The alienation from other men is to be understood by Marx as involving a complete absence of fellow feeling and antagonism based on a feeling of rivalry and self-centredness.⁽²⁰⁾

The expression "self-alienation" is used by Marx to characterize the alienation of labour. The point he wishes to stress is that a man's labour is his life, and his product is his life-objectified; and that, therefore, when they are alienated from him, his own "self" is alienated from him. When his "personal, physical and mental [i.e. spiritual] energy"⁽²¹⁾, as manifested in his productive activity or labour, is subjected to the direction of another, his very life is no longer his own. He is, therefore, "self-alienated".

"Self-alienation" is used by Marx also to refer to one's separation from one's truly "human" self, or essential nature.

"Alienated labour", he states, "alienates from man his own body, external nature, his mental life and his human life"(22).

Alienated labour

"does not only produce man as a commodity, the human commodity, man in the form of a commodity; in conformity with this situation it produces him as a mentally and physically dehumanized being".(23)

Marx's concept of self-alienation in The Early Writings is similar to Hegel's in The Phenomenology. In each the expression is used to refer to

- A. separation from the individual of something which is "his"; for Hegel, the social substance; for Marx, the individual's labour and particular product.
- B. disparity between individuality and "universality" for Hegel; and between individuality and "sociality" for Marx.

Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm has had a great deal to do with the popularization of the term "alienation". He was much influenced by Marx's "Early Manuscripts" and included them in his book Marx's Concept of Man. And the problem of "alienation" has been a constant theme in his writings beginning with The Fear of Freedom. Indeed, it is the central issue in what is perhaps his most important book, The Sane Society, in which he says:

"I have chosen the concept of "alienation" as the central point from which I am going to develop the analysis of the contemporary social character".(24)

Fromm speaks of alienation as though it were a single phenomenon and uses it to characterize certain possible relations

of a person to nature, other men, his society and himself.

Concerning man's relations to nature, Fromm never spells out precisely what he means by "nature". Sometimes it would appear to refer to purely physical life. At other times it seems to mean something like man's natural environment; here one would be said to exist in unity with it when one is an integral functioning part within it. This ambiguity makes it difficult for us to understand what it precisely is that man is alienated from.

The essence of the concept of alienation, according to Fromm, is that others have become alien to man. An alienated person is "out of touch with any other person."⁽²⁵⁾ Fromm speaks of alienation from others in connection with the lack of "harmony". In this context, a man is alienated who fails to relate himself to others. Relations between men are said to have the "character of alienation" in that instead of relations between human beings, they assume the character of relations between things, people "are experienced as things are experienced".⁽²⁵⁾

Fromm frequently speaks of our society and culture as alienated. He speaks of "alienation" in modern society rather than from it. When Fromm says that society is "alienated", he means that it tends to make individuals alienated from their work, their production, from themselves and from nature. Fromm follows Marx in tracing the source of man's alienation to the contemporary socioeconomic structure. Generally speaking, Fromm is strongly opposed to unity with society. Contrary to what Hegel holds, it is precisely the person who is completely at one with society whom Fromm calls "alienated": "we all conform as much or more than people in an intensely authoritarian society would"⁽²⁶⁾. This is the height of alienation from oneself. Fromm complains that modern

man "suffers from a defect of spontaneity and individuality which may seem incurable" (27), and he argues that man can realize his "self" only if he abandons conformity to society and recovers his individuality.

Perhaps the most important of these separations is that of the individual from himself. When Fromm says that the "alienated person" is "out of touch with himself" he seems to mean that "alienation from one-self" consists of something like the loss or lack of individuality or spontaneity. "By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as alien [to himself]". (28)

Not only does Fromm understand "alienation" in terms of man's relations to nature, to others, to society and to himself, but also uses it in a variety of other contexts as well. Fromm's weakness is that he uses the term so freely that the results are not very illuminating.

Karen Horney

The expression "alienation from self" is in vogue in the writings of a number of psychoanalysts, particularly those under the influence of Karen Horney. Horney distinguishes between two types or dimensions of the "self": the "actual self" and the "real self":

"I would distinguish the actual or empirical self from the idealized self on the one hand, and the real self on the other. The actual self is an all-inclusive term for everything that a person is at a given time ... The real self ... is the 'original' force toward individual growth and fulfilment, with which we may again achieve full identification when freed of the crippling shackles of neurosis". (29)

The "actual self" is further characterized in terms of one's

"feelings, wishes, beliefs, and energies" and also his past. The "real self", on the other hand, is to be conceived as "that most alive centre of ourselves", which "engenders the spontaneity of feelings" and "is the source of spontaneous interest and energies"⁽³⁰⁾. Having distinguished these two types or dimensions of "self", Horney then introduces two types of "alienation from self": "alienation from the actual self" and "alienation from the real self".

"Alienation from the actual self" is said to consist of the "dimming of all of what a person actually is or has, including even his connection of his present life with his past".⁽³¹⁾ The self-alienated person, Horney says,

"talks about his most intimate personal life experiences. Yet they have lost their personal meaning. And just as he may talk about himself without 'being in it', so he may work, be with friends, take a walk ... without being in it. His relation to himself has become impersonal; so has his relation to his whole life."⁽³²⁾

"Alienation from the real self" involves ceasing to be animated by the energies springing from his "real self" which is characterized as "that most alive centre of ourselves ... the source of spontaneity of feelings ... the original force toward individual growth and fulfilment". To be alienated from the real self is to be cut off or deprived of access to this source of energy.

The difference between the two types of "alienation from the self" is indeed too slight. Of the former type she says:

"It is the loss of the feeling of being an active determining force in his own life. It is the loss of feeling himself as an organic whole. These in turn indicate an alienation from that most alive centre of ourselves which I have suggested calling the real self".⁽³³⁾

The failure to be "an active determining force in one's own life" seems to differ very slightly from the failure to develop "a spontaneous individual self" which is characteristic of "alienation from the real self".

In spite of the fact that Karen Horney's notions of the "real self" and the differentiations she attempts are not sufficiently clear, her use of the term "alienation" does not become meaningless. She is considerably more selective in her use of the term than Erich Fromm is.

Modern Sociology

In recent years in the field of sociology and social sciences "alienation" has proved ^{an} heuristically fruitful concept. Though _X very few generalizations can be made concerning the way the concept of alienation is understood by social scientists, yet they do not use it in any of the major contexts in which Fromm or Horney do. Many sociologists understand alienation precisely in terms of some forms of separation of the individual from some aspect of society. In Fromm, conformity to society goes hand in hand with alienation. Sociologists differ from Hegel, Marx and Fromm in another respect. For almost all sociologists "alienation is a psychological state of an individual"⁽³⁴⁾. It is conceived solely in terms of the presence of certain attitudes and feelings; the question of an essential nature of man does not even arise.

The use of "alienation" in connection with some form of separation of the individual from some aspect of society is most common among the social scientists. Some writers do use the term in connection with work and interpersonal relationships; some others use it in connection with the phenomena of "powerlessness"

and "meaninglessness". This suggests that uses of the term from its different historical sources come together in its employment in the field of social sciences. Its use in connection with separation from society is reminiscent of Hegel. Marx's early writings are recalled by its uses in connection with "work", "powerlessness" and "meaninglessness". And the use of the term in connection with separation from other people has long been a common one.

Sociologists use the term in so many different connections that it cannot be viewed as designating a single phenomenon. I shall deal with the way the concept of alienation is used in sociology and social sciences in terms of alienation from others, from work and from society.

The use of the term by sociologists in connection with the relation of the individual to others can be traced to the influence of Marx or simply to the ordinary use of the term. The ordinary use of the term is clear in some writers who, for example, conceive loneliness as a type of alienation. The term is understood to refer to "the feeling of loneliness and yearning for supportive primary relationship"⁽³⁵⁾. To be alienated is to feel a lack of meaningful relationships with other people, and to feel unhappy about this lack. Some writers⁽³⁶⁾ characterize this type of alienation from others in terms of "social isolation" which is construed in the sense of dissociation from the norms, values and culture of one's society. But as long as the reference is to interpersonal relationships, the term "loneliness" is more suitable. Two types of "loneliness", however, must be distinguished. An individual who tries unsuccessfully to establish meaningful contact with others is in a different situation from one who chooses to live alone.

Jan Hajda characterizes "alienation" from others in terms of the feeling of a lack of community with others. For him, to be alienated is to feel "uncomfortably different in the presence of [others] because of one's views ... interests ... personal tastes ..."(37) Alienation, as Hajda conceives it, is an awareness of "non-belonging or non-sharing which reflects one's exclusion or self-exclusion from social and cultural participation."⁽³⁸⁾ M. Aiken and J. Hage characterize alienation from others in terms of "dissatisfaction in social relations"⁽³⁹⁾. Despite the inadequacy of the criterion for the existence of such alienation, which consists in an answer to the question of whether one is "satisfied" with those whom one associates with, it does enable one to form at least a general idea of Aiken's and Hage's concept of alienation.

Aiken and Hage conceive of "alienation from work" in terms of the existence of a "feeling of disappointment" concerning one's position of employment.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Seeman conceives of "alienated work" as "work which is not intrinsically satisfying"⁽⁴¹⁾. Similarly, Middleton considers a person "alienated" from his work if he would agree to the statement, "I don't really enjoy most of the work that I do, but I feel I must do it in order to have other things that I need and want"⁽⁴²⁾ Miller explicitly distinguishes between job satisfaction and satisfaction felt in the work done on the job, and observes that a man is considered alienated from his work if he fails to find it "self-rewarding"⁽⁴³⁾. The idea that work is to be considered alienated if it is not felt to be intrinsically rewarding recalls Marx's characterization of "alienated labour" as labour which is not performed for its own sake as an end in itself.

Some sociologists employ the term "alienation" in connection with the feeling of "powerlessness" in the face of existing economic and social structure. This type of alienation is to be conceived in terms of the inability to control and influence social, political and economic structures.

Another common type of alienation is in terms of "meaninglessness". Seeman explicates this type as "a low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of behaviour can be made"⁽⁴⁴⁾. Dean similarly considers a person to have this sense of "meaninglessness" if he feels he cannot "understand the very events upon which his life and happiness are known to depend."⁽⁴⁵⁾ Middleton uses the following statement to indicate the existence of this type of alienation: "Things have become so complicated in the world today that I really don't understand what is going on"⁽⁴⁶⁾. Such a type of alienation might better be characterized in terms of "incomprehensibility" rather than "meaninglessness".

Perhaps the most common use of the term "alienation" in modern sociology is in connection with separation from some aspects of the social or cultural life of one's society. To find a precedent for the use of the term in this sense, one must go back to Hegel's use of it in connection with the separation of the individual from the social substance. Some sociologists similarly construe "alienation" in terms of dissociation from "popular cultural standards".⁽⁴⁷⁾ These writers consider a man to be alienated from popular culture if he rejects it, or has an attitude of indifference to or detachment from it. Nettler defines "the alienated person" as "one who has been estranged from, made unfriendly toward his society and the culture it carries".⁽⁴⁸⁾

Dissociation from the popular culture of one's society must be distinguished from the fundamental values of one's society. The distinction between them is indicated by Keniston.⁽⁴⁹⁾ When he refers to the young men who are the subject of his study as "alienated" he is referring to their repudiation of American culture, to their rejection of the fundamental social values.

Anomie

A large body of modern sociological research has been devoted to discussion of the social condition of "anomie". The term "anomie" was first given sociological significance by Emile Durkheim in Suicide. Seeman employs the term "anomie" in connection with a person for whom "there is a high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviours are required to achieve given goals"⁽⁵⁰⁾. Middleton, Neal and Rettig understand "anomie" in a similar way; the last two define "normlessness" as follows:

"Socially approved alternatives are viewed as relatively ineffective, and the consequent necessity of unapproved behaviour in goal attainment is emphasised."⁽⁵¹⁾

Srole's concept of "anomia" is measured in terms of agreement with five different statements, which express feelings of

1. being ignored by those in power
2. lacking confidence in one's ability to fulfil one's life-goals
3. going downhill in life
4. despairing of life's being worthwhile
5. being unable to count on anyone.⁽⁵²⁾

When we assess the usefulness of the term "alienation", after

having reviewed the variety of ways in which it is understood in modern sociological studies, it would appear that some of the uses of the term are more helpful than others. The use of the term in connection with dissociation from popular culture and rejection of fundamental social values would seem to be quite appropriate. Such a use finds historical justification in Hegel's use of the term in connection with a discordant relation of the individual to the social substance. This is the most helpful of the many employments of the term to be found in recent social studies.

Existentialism

It is commonly believed that the idea of "alienation" occupies a position of great importance in the thought of "the existentialists". Whether this view is true or mistaken, the term is used extensively by Sartre and Tillich, less so by Heidegger. Camus's character Meursault, in The Stranger, is seen by critics as an excellent example of a man extremely alienated from the people and the society around him.

Heidegger's discussion of alienation occurs in his most famous ^obook Being and Time in which he distinguishes two fundamental ways of living, one of which he calls "authentic" and the other "inauthentic". "Authentic" existence is a self-determined existence shaped and made in full awareness of the conditions of human life (e.g. death and responsibility). "Inauthentic" existence is one which is absorbed in the present, determined by impersonal social conventions and refuses to face up to the conditions mentioned above. Each of these types of existence is characterized by Heidegger as "potentiality-for-being" for man. That is, each type of existence is a potential way of "being" for man, which each of us may or may not actualize.

"Authentic existence" is that sort of existence which is not determined by one's relations to the others, but by one's own choices. To exist inauthentically is to be divorced from one's "ownmost potentiality-for-being"⁽⁵³⁾

It is in this connection that Heidegger speaks of "alienation" to refer to a case in which one's "ownmost potentiality for being is hidden from him"⁽⁵³⁾. Heidegger's use of the term "alienation" is restricted to cases in which one does not exist in an "authentic" manner, cases in which one is cut off or separated from one's potential authentic existence. Heidegger's concept of "alienation" is quite similar to Hegel's, Marx's and Horney's concepts of "self-alienation" in the sense of a disparity between a person's essential nature and his actual condition.

Paul Tillich, in his book Systematic Theology, constantly speaks of "estrangement" in terms of a disparity between man's actual condition and his essential nature. He argues that 'estrangement' is characteristic of human existence:

"The state of existence is the state of estrangement ... Man as he exists is not what he essentially is and ought to be. He is estranged from his true being"⁽⁵⁴⁾

'Estrangement' becomes the central issue and the basic question, associated with the human situation, with which Tillich has to deal in the second part of his book.

Sartre, in Being and Nothingness, uses "alienation" in connection with what he calls "the Look of the Other". Sartre rejects the hypothesis that the Other is nothing more than an object. By recognising that the other is "another I", I experience what Sartre calls "the alienation of myself":

"... in the shock which seizes me when I apprehend the Other's look ... Suddenly I experience a subtle alienation of all my possibilities, which are now associated with objects of the world, far from me in the midst of the world ..." (55)

In Sartre's view, I am not just an object, a thing among other things. It is as an object that I appear to the other when he looks at me; and it is as an object that I now experience myself. This "object-self" which I experience is a self which seems alien to me; for it is radically different from the "self" I experience when I consider myself as subject.

My natural tendency, according to Sartre, is to reject this "alien Me", and to try to tear myself away from the relation to the other in an attempt to avoid this alien self.

"But as I choose myself as a tearing away from the other, I assume and recognize as mine this alienated Me. My wrenching away from the Other - that is, my Self - is by its essential structure an assumption as mine of this Me which the Other refuses" (56)

In my protest that that Me is not the real Me, I am acknowledging that at least partially it is me. I cannot rid myself of this alien Me which I discover in the Look of the Other.

Since it is first and foremost my body upon which the Other fixes when he looks at Me, Sartre considers the body to have "three dimensions of being": 1. my body as it is lived by me as a subject. 2. my body as it is known by the Other, as it exists for someone else as an object. 3. my body as it is experienced by me as a body known by the other (57). It is the third of these dimensions in connection with which Sartre speaks of "Alienation". My body, when I experience it as something "known by the other" is something alien to me, for it is different from my body as I subjectively experience it. This experience may have one's body as

its primary focus, or it may have oneself more generally. Sartre wants to say that true communion is an impossibility, each one is irrevocably separated from others.

In the seventeen years that passed between the publication of Being and Nothingness (1943) and Critique de la Raison Dialectique (1960), Sartre underwent what a writer has called a "radical conversion" from a non-Marxist to a strong Marxist orientation.⁽⁵⁸⁾ The context in which Sartre now speaks of alienation is the Marxian contexts of one's relations to one's productive activity and one's product. Sartre now asks a question which he explicitly acknowledges to be Marx's:

"What kind of practical organism is this [i.e. man] which reproduces its life by its work so that its work and ultimately its very reality are alienated; that is, so that they, as others, turn back upon him and determine him?"⁽⁵⁹⁾

The Marxian character of his later concept of alienation is quite evident in that he characterizes the object of his study as "the individual, alienated, reified, mystified, as he has been made to be by the division of labour and by exploitation".⁽⁶⁰⁾

Thus the term "alienation" is used by the most important existentialists, but they differ from one another in understanding it. Yet they all derive directly from Hegel and Marx.

Conclusion

The word "alienation" has become a fetish word and writers seem to delight in finding ever different uses for it. Hegel found the term helpful and discussed it in his Phenomenology. The young Marx found Hegel's use of it suggestive and employed it extensively in his Early Writings. Many writers have modified Hegel's and Marx's uses of the term to suit their own needs and

interests. In the light of the foregoing discussion in which I briefly described the career of the concept of "alienation", I shall use, in the following chapters, the term "alienation", and its derivatives, to refer precisely to the following phenomena:

1. Alienation involves some sort of separation; some relationship or connection that once existed, that is natural, desirable, or good, has been lost. The subject of separation is not always a person, and separation can be either of a person from something or of something from something else.
2. "Alienation" is used in connection with subjective states of mind and objectively determined inadequacies and disparities. Alienation exists only in so far as the individual is aware that something is alien to him.
3. Self-alienation only refers to a disparity between one's actual condition and one's essential nature, one is not as one should be. So employed, the usefulness of the term would be greater as long as no restrictions are placed on that to which the term "self" in the expression may refer.
4. Alienation is used to characterize the economic, social and political structure when that is felt to be oppressive or unrelated to one's spiritual interests or welfare.
5. Self-destruction and anomie are very important aspects of self-alienation.

Notes

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3. Keniston, The Uncommitted, p. 390.
4. Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. I, p. 219.
5. Ibid., p. 220
6. Ibid., p. 219
7. The Phenomenology of Mind, tr. J. B. Baillie, p. 509
8. Ibid., p. 790
9. Philosophy of Right, T.M. Knox, Paragraph 264, p. 163
10. Phenomenology, p. 514
11. Alienation, p. 35
12. Phenomenology, p. 535
13. Ibid., p. 517
14. Early Writings, T.B. Bottomore, p. 202
15. Ibid., p. 215
16. Ibid., p. 206
17. Ibid., pp. 122,3
18. Ibid., pp. 124,5
19. Ibid., p. 129

20. Ibid., see pp. 22-6
21. Ibid., p. 126
22. Ibid., p. 129
23. Ibid., p. 138
24. Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 110
25. Ibid., p. 120
26. Ibid., p. 138
27. Ibid., p. 24
28. Ibid., p. 120
29. Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth, p. 158
30. Ibid., pp. 156,7
31. Ibid., p. 156
32. Ibid., p. 161
33. Ibid., p. 157
34. Clark, "Measuring Alienation Within a Social System". American Sociological Review, 24(1959), p. 849.
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35. McClosky and Schaar, "Psychological Dimensions of Anomy", American Sociological Review, 30(1965), p. 30

36. Like Dean, "Alienation: Its Meaning and Measurement", American Sociological Review, 26(1961); and Struening and Richardson, "A Factor Analytic Exploration of the Alienation, Anomia and Authoritarianism Domain", American Sociological Review, 30(1965)
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40. Ibid., p. 497
41. Seeman, "On the Personal Consequences of Alienation in Work", American Sociological Review, 32(1967), p.273
42. Middleton, "Alienation, Race and Education", American Sociological Review, 28(1963), p. 974
43. Miller, "Professionals in Bureaucracy: Alienation Among Industrial Scientists and Engineers", American Sociological Review, 32(1967), p. 759
44. Seeman, "On the Meaning of Alienation", American Sociological Review, 24(1959), p. 786
45. Dean, "Alienation: Its Meaning and Measurement", Op. cit., p.754
46. Middleton, "Alienation, Race and Education", Op. cit., p. 973
47. Seeman, "On the Meaning of Alienation", Op. cit., p. 788

48. Nettler, "A Measure of Alienation", American Sociological Review, 22(1957), pp. 671,2
49. Keniston, The Uncommitted, Op. cit., p. 15
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53. Heidegger, Being And Time, p. 222
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55. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 264,5
56. Ibid., p. 285
57. Ibid., p. 351
58. Warnock, The Philosophy of Sartre, p. 135
59. Sartre, The Problem of Method, p. 177
60. Ibid., p. 133

Chapter Two

Alienation in Victorian Literature

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Alienation in Victorian Literature

Alienation, self-division, isolation, duality of experience, the deep unrest and the perplexity of nineteenth-century Britain are impressed on all who study the period. Victorian literature is to a large extent the literature of alienation. It emanated from a particular temper of mind which had grown up within a society seeking adjustment to the conditions of an increasingly changeable life. Whether the text is poetry, prose, fiction or criticism, readers find it difficult to see its life steadily and see it whole. All the eminent Victorian writers were at odds with their age. The reader who comes to study the Victorians objectively must be struck again and again by the underlying tone of estrangement which pervades so much that is generally taken as typical of the period.

In this chapter I shall be concerned with some aspects in which major Victorian writers experienced alienation, self-division and duality of vision endemic to their times and gave expression to them in their works. A writer, or his character, may not appear at all concerned with the problem, but the symptoms of alienation are quite apparent in the breakdown of unity in his work, the so-called "dissociation of sensibility". Another writer may be aware of this phenomenon and tailor specific themes to suit the experience, or may simply become outspoken about his self-alienation and create a myth or a framework or a system to argue the problem through the characters of his poem, novel or essay.

1 - Tennyson

Despair, unrest and alienation from the self and from the world appear, from the outset, as a dominant motif in Tennyson's poetry. The opening lines of his early poem, Peydidi Diem, sound a typical note:

"I never lived a day, but daily die,
I have no real breath,
My being is a vacant worthlessness,
A carcase in the coffin of this flesh,
Pierced through with loathy worms of utter Death"

Intense alienation and anguished self-division are most apparent in the poem entitled "Supposed Confessions of a ^{Sensitive} Second-Rate Mind Not in Unity with Itself". The poem contains the clearest evidence of Tennyson's agonizing sense of disunity. Forsaken by his friends and no longer confident of his ability to do anything at all, the speaker in the poem, an outcast, remembers his past when he used to have a faith. Now he feels:

"I am void,
Dark, formless, utterly destroyed.
.....
I am too forlorn,
Too shaken: my own weakness fools
My Judgement, and my spirit whirls,
Moved from beneath with doubt and fear
O weary life! O weary death!
O spirit and heart made desolate!
O damned vacillating state!"

(LL 121-190)

"The Two Voices" is a dialogue of the mind with itself and it takes literally the form of a debate, with the "I" arguing with one or another of two inner voices representing the poles of despair and hope.

The poem opens with the despairing voice asking the speaker "were it not better not to be?" The voice argues that since life

is miserable and his death is of no significance to the rest of mankind, why should he not terminate his misery? The voice adamantly insists that salvation lies only in the nothingness of death. Although the voice of faith eventually emerges triumphant, it is the voice of doubt which may well be the theme of the poem.

The strength of In Memoriam derives from the clash of an intensely alienated spirit with ideas crowding in from ^{the} nineteenth-century world, and the consequent isolation of the protagonist. Although the poem reaffirms the possibility of keeping faith, faith in a moral order, faith in the life of spirit, yet this reaffirmation of faith does not happen through any positive act, nor through intellectual conviction. There is no clear event to make this conversion, nor does the protagonist really try to reconcile science and faith. His conversion is so passive as to be almost unconvincing⁽¹⁾. However, the dissociated sensibility, the disunity of thought and feeling is superbly woven into the texture and structure of the poem.

Maud is Tennyson's perfect portrayal of an alienated person. He once thought of calling Maud "Madness". The hero undergoes violent changes of mood - disappointment, love, passion, remorse and finally goes mad. The protagonist's identity as a morbid Hamlet - "At war with myself and a wretched race,/Sick, Sick to the heart of life, am I" - is disclosed by his characterization as a tormented, self-divided and alienated young man.

The Idylls of the King symbolizes a modern wasteland art, with division and the war of "sense and soul" as a major theme. When the guilty love of the Queen and Lancelot is exposed, and doubt about the King's divinity spreads, the unity of sense and soul proclaimed at Camelot breaks down. With this disintegration the world falls apart. The destruction of Arthur's court is an

analogue to the fragmentation of the self. Lancelot is indeed a modern Everyman tormented by his self-division. In the end, he begins to lose his sense of his own identity. Lancelot may finally be a negative figure in Tennyson's moral scheme, but his anxiety, despair and alienation are quite authentic within the poem and reflect the experience of many late Victorians.

2 - Browning

Browning's earliest book "Pauline" is subtitled "A Fragment of a Confession", which describes what Wordsworth was later to call in The Prelude "The growth of a poet's Mind". The poet's unhappy retrospective journey to his earlier life causes the emergence of his self-consciousness now aggravated by a deeper understanding of his feelings of guilt. In his despair, the hero asks Pauline to go with him into the verdant wood which is evoked in one of the finest passages in Browning's poetry. However, we feel the speaker's morbidity, his attraction to the darker paths of human behaviour and his voice of the obsessive. John Stuart Mill wrote that the writer is "possessed with a more intense and morbid self-consciousness than I ever knew in any sane human being"⁽²⁾. Mill may seem to be rather exaggerating, yet there are passages in the poem that support his view. Here is one:

I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of Consciousness
Of self, distinct from all its qualities,
From all affections, passions, feeling, powers;

(LL 268-271)

Long-buried thoughts and feelings and disordered events come up to consciousness, and the ideas recorded in the poem fit more appropriately in the netherworld of the Id. This confusion of the

young man's chronicle of his past with his present is a symptom of the fears and anxieties besetting him.

Paracelsus is more than a description of "the incidents in the development of a soul", as it has been described; it is primarily a psychological study of an isolated individual, who tries in vain to fulfil himself and remains all through his life frustrated and self-alienated. If the Faustian Paracelsus opts for absolute knowledge and bitterly fails to attain it, Aprile opts for love and bitterly fails to attain it too. Their complementary natures are recognised by Paracelsus:

"Die not, Aprile! We must never part.
Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange chance unites once more? *Part? never!*"

(II, LL 633-35)

The theme of alienation remains conspicuous in Sordello. The poem, of epic length almost six thousand lines in six books, is remarkably similar to Pauline and Paracelsus. Sordello's failure is the failure of an enfeebled Hamlet more than a Faust. The poem is no mere historical exercise. It is chiefly a psychological analysis of the hero's inner life. It has been argued that Browning's Sordello anticipated Jung's Modern Man in Search of a Soul "in describing minutely, albeit poetically, the same illness and in prescribing a similar cure"⁽³⁾. Sordello goes through the spiritual malaise of alienation which Jung describes as being at the core of modern man's difficulties.

Sordello is an unusual boy, an introvert, who grows up in the seclusion of a mountain valley where his only enjoyment consists in the active working of his extraordinary imagination. Sordello's gift as a poet is thus discovered, but his audience cannot

understand him. He finally becomes disillusioned in himself and the audience, as sceptical of his power to create as of theirs to appreciate, split into Man and Poet, each aspect frustrating the other. Sordello had "lost himself" in losing faith in the immediate perfectibility of mankind, hope for an immediate utopia, love of his fellow human beings, and such insight into the nature of things as most people have through their "common sense".

"Pauline presents the picture of this state; Sordello contains a multitude of evidence of it"⁽⁴⁾. In his own summary, Browning writes to J. Milsand, "Sordello leaves the dream he may be something ... He has loved song's results, not song ... He succeeds a little, but fails more ... and declines from the ideal song. What is the world's recognition worth?, How, poet no longer in unity with man, the whole visible Sordello goes wrong with those too hard for half of him, of whom he is also too contemptuous. He pleases neither himself nor them ... his own degradation is complete"⁽⁵⁾

[My emphasis]

The man and the artist split apart:

Weeks, months, years went by,
And lo, Sordello vanished utterly,
Sundered in twain, each spectral part at strife
With each, one jarred against another life;
The poet thwarting hopelessly the Man -
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran
Here, there: let slip no opportunities
As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize
To drop on him some no-time and acquit
His constant faith (the poet-half's to wit-
That waiving any compromise between
No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen
Beyond most methods) - of incurring scoff
From the Man - portion - not to be put off
With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,
Though ne'er so bright"

(II, 655-670)

3 - Arnold

Matthew Arnold analyses and defines most explicitly that sense of alienation characteristically encountered in Tennyson and Browning. Arnold's opposition to the Zeitgeist, and his concept of culture as comprising the whole nature of man, his practice as a poet and critic indicate that his estrangement from the spirit of his era was greater than Tennyson's or Browning's. His protagonists are invariably lonely and isolated figures alienated from themselves and from their environment. The Forsaken Merman, Mycerinus, the Scholar-Gipsy, Empedocles, the author of "Obermann", Merope, Sohrab and Rustum and Iseult are all projections of their creator's own essential alienation in the Victorian world. Arnold's poetry hardly expresses a unified sensibility. "Arnold's most characteristic poetry", says Hillis Miller, "is not poetry at all by his definition. It expresses the melancholy of exile and fragmentation."⁽⁶⁾ Arnold himself understood this. In answer to his sister's criticism of Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems, he writes:

"Fret not yourself to make my poems square in all their parts, but like what you can my darling. The true reason why parts suit you while others do not is that my poems are fragments - i.e. that I am fragments, ... the whole effect of my poems is quite vague and indeterminate - this is their weakness."⁽⁷⁾

[My emphasis]

Moving to and fro between isolation and the world, nostalgia and hope, Arnold's poems try both to transcend his time and to live deeply in it. The sonnet "Written in Butler's Sermons" attacks those "unravelling God's harmonious whole", and "Rend in a thousand shreds this life of ours". The poem expresses the tension provided by Butler's analytic intellect which breaks up man's

nature into separate powers. In Resignation the poet and his sister, unlike Wordsworth and Dorothy in Tintern Abbey, take no real pleasure in natural objects which "seem to bear rather than rejoice". The poet does not so much answer his sister's scepticism as his own, and the poem is "a dialogue of the mind with itself", and there is no assurance that resignation to the general life of humanity will bring a final joy. The poem's imagery - "mute turf", "solemn hills", "lonely sky" - intensifies the unbearable loneliness of one's existence. There is only a stifled wish that man's "intemperate" prayer might "pierce Fate's impenetrable ear".

In The Forsaken Merman, Margaret is torn in the dualism of her merman family and her human parents. Arnold intensifies the conflict by bringing an increasing anxiety over the earthly life and a longing for the tranquillity of the life of the deep. The incongruous mating of the merman and the human earth-born Margaret symbolizes a deeper spiritual incompatibility. In this sense, the poem is not "a nursery poem" and its whole value as a mature comment on life is increased, not diminished. Self-Dependence begins with the speaker saying:

Wearied of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, O'er Starlit sea.

The speaker who has lost ^{his} ~~is~~ identity is advised to

Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery!

In Human Life, man sails the sea of life "by night" surrounded by "unknown powers", he is not sure at all that he will ever reach a new harbour. Our behaviour is determined in spite of our apparent

freedom and man must make his choice in the dark. The landscape of A Summer Night is a "deserted" street in which "How lonely rings the echo of my feet", and the whole poem describes the speaker's dilemma of not being able to resign to the meaninglessness of life or "Escape their prison and depart / On the wide ocean of life anew." He does not know what to do. "The Buried Life" addresses itself to the problem of self-knowledge, the "buried life", "our true original course", to know "whence our lives come and where they go".

In "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of Obermann", Arnold speaks about three poets, Wordsworth, Goethe and Senancour. In fact the poem defines Arnold's alienation from the Zeitgeist:

"Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harassed, to attain
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
And luminous view to gain"

- but follows Senancour into the wilderness of self-exile. Senancour is a symbol of the alienation of the modern artist. Arnold writes of him, "of all writers he is the most perfectly isolated and the least attitudinising"⁽⁸⁾.

Despite the differences among the critics concerning the interpretation of Empedocles on Etna, one thing is certain - Empedocles is a symbol of the Victorian intellectual alien, objectifying man's inability to make meaningful contact with his world. He is forced to the bare peak alone with no companion. There:

He hears nothing but the cry of the torrents,
And the beating of his own heart.
The air is thin, the veins swell,
The temples tighten and throb there-
Air! air

(II, 213-217)

In Scene II, which takes place in "A glen on the highest skirts of the woody region of Etna", Empedocles delivers a long lecture - three hundred and fifty lines long - which dramatizes his painful quandary. The epistemological basis for his dilemma appears in the first two stanzas of his long speech:

The out-spread world to span
A cord the Gods first slung,
And then the soul of man
There, like a mirror, hung,
And bade the winds through space impel the gusty toy.

Hither and thither spins
The wind-borne, mirroring soul,
A thousand glimpses wins,
And never sees a whole;
Looks once, and drives elsewhere, and leaves its last employ.

(I.2, 77-86)

Alienation of the self is the fundamental assumption underlying Empedocles' horror. The mirror metaphor brilliantly evokes the fragmentation of the self.

The second act of the poem begins after Empedocles has ascended almost to the summit of Etna. The setting is described, appropriately, as "charr'd, blacken'd, melancholy waste". He confronts his intolerable isolation:

No, thou art come late, Empedocles!
And the world hath the day, and must break thee,
Not thou the world. With men thou canst not live,
Their thoughts, their ways, their wishes, are not thine;
And being lonely thou art miserable,
For something has impaired thy spirit's strength,
And dried its self-sufficing fount of joy.
Thou canst not live with men nor with thyself -

(II.16-23)

Desperately, Empedocles plunges into the crater. The implicit meaning of Empedocles on Etna is that alienation can be terminated

only in death.

In Arnold's long narratives the individual is forced to learn and acknowledge his own "powerlessness". He must "either act blindly, like Holder or Rostand, and suffer the consequences or accept patiently, like Hermonde or Iseult, and endure his fate".⁽⁹⁾ Written as an illustration of Arnold's new poetic creed laid down in the celebrated Preface of 1853, Sohrab and Rostand is a study in alienation. Its story concerns two human hearts longing for union, and finally brought together only in the moment of death. The destiny which holds them apart is a blind force beyond human comprehension. Sohrab acknowledges the enigma of man's life when he says:

For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know;
Only the event will teach us in its hour.

(LL 390-397)

Fate is supreme. In his death agony, Sohrab recalls Michael Henchard or Tess or Jude and almost expresses their beliefs:

I but meet today
The doom which at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it! but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged
The strife, and hurled me on my father's spear.

(LL 708 - 715)

Rostand accepts his son's understanding of life and builds his philosophy on austere stoicism, reminiscent of Iseult of Brittany, on the necessity for submission to an unintelligible order of

things.

Balder Dead is another variation on the theme of alienation. Balder is a stranger in his environment. He is a lonely figure who lives in a society with values he does not sympathise with. "The poem sets forward through the figures of Loki and the blind Hoder," says Kenneth Allott, "something that infects the world from which not even the best and the most cherished can be saved".(10)

Dover Beach, one of those beautiful "rare objects, Victorian poems without a single weak line"(11), provides an invaluable synopsis of Arnold's major preoccupations and his favourite ways of expressing them. Arnold imperceptibly moves us from the beauty of nature evoked in the first part of the poem to the tragic fact of human experience in the second part of the poem. The sea speaks with "the eternal note of sadness". The striking image expressed by "the turbid ebb and flow / Of human misery" and in the concluding lines of the poem defines Arnold's view of human condition as one of pointless, random and inevitable collision:

And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

We finally realize the nature of the dark plain. "We are here as on a darkling plain", this is the central statement which Arnold makes about the human condition. No other Victorian man of letters except Thomas Hardy could have expressed this vision of ^{the} tragic and _x alienated condition of man. In this world void of Faith, there is only one resource left, Arnold seems to suggest: "Ah, Love, let us be true / To one another!". We observe man's need to establish abiding human relationships, to feel warmth, certainty and

consolation in face of the isolation he suffers in Victorian society. Arnold's most poignant moments of desolation occur when he feels that human beings cannot communicate and are eternally separated by the "unplumbed, salt, estranging sea".

Despite the numerous and often contradictory interpretations of The Scholar-Gipsy, most critics agree on the Scholar-Gipsy's alienation from the modern world. He is a lasting personification of the alienated artist. Kenneth Allott argues that Arnold's classification of the poem as an elegy suggests that we should read it as "a lament for youth and its wholeheartedness and energy which are sapped by life in the world".⁽¹²⁾ The second part of the poem transfigures the Scholar-Gipsy into a symbol of an alien unfit for living in the modern world. He is confronted at every turn by "the bleakness, barrenness, unpoetryness" of "the damned times". Professor Philip Drew has convincingly shown, in his treatment of The Scholar-Gipsy and Thyrsis as effectively a single poem, that Arnold "represents the plight of modern man as one of helpless suffering and an inevitable progression away from the sources of light and energy", and that Arnold in particular "embodies in the fabric of his poem the one ultimately irresistible force of destruction, Time".⁽¹³⁾

The poem moves from landscape description to the hurry, disease, aimlessness, emptiness and ennui of modern society. In the well-known passage where Arnold deplores "this strange disease of modern life, / With its sick hurry, its divided aims, / Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts", man is seen as a prey to forces beyond his control. The elegy ends on a note of despairing admonition to the scholar to pursue his quest by estranging himself from the modern world:

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfixed thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

(LL.221-230)

This series of imperatives, supported by images of disease, exhort the protagonist to avoid the "feverish contact" with the modern world.

4 - Carlyle

Carlyle's works reveal a striking expression of alienation, doubts and the dark dualities of nineteenth-century existence. His actual sense of alienation in a society deprived of certainties runs through all his work. He particularly fears the loss of religious traditions, the atomization of the individual, the alienation of man from his work and the rapidity of social and technical change. A sense of doom, restlessness, desperation and chaos pervades all his work and threatens both the individual and society with disintegration and ruin.

Carlyle's concern with the unconscious is a central concern which lies behind all his work, from the early essay "Characteristics" where he opposes the values associated with the conscious side of life to the true organic growth associated with the unconscious. The concern with the unconscious presupposes the concern with alienation, for the unconscious is that from which men are mainly alienated. Carlyle constantly uses the word "alienated" in its most modern sense, but he is also concerned with a variety of its forms and effects, both personal and social.

Among the more obvious social forms of the problem is the alienation of man from his political, social, and religious traditions. As he finds himself in the new industrial society of the nineteenth century, he focuses primarily on man's alienation from work.

Carlyle's early writings before Sartor Resartus can be considered as attempts at models after which he might shape his thought. They are not critical writings, but rather autobiographical acts of self-discovery. In his Life of Friedrich Schiller, Carlyle seems to raise the major themes that will occupy him throughout his career. Throughout the essay Schiller is as unable to communicate with society as Carlyle is and appears at ease and natural only with his private circle of friends. Carlyle's identification with Schiller is extreme. Schiller is "at war with the one half of things, in love with the other half; hence dissatisfied ... without internal rest".⁽¹⁴⁾ Goethe, on the other hand, had passed through trials and doubts and now dwelled in unity of being, harmony and peace.

Carlyle's most important two early essays are "Signs of the Times", and "Characteristics". The aim of the former essay is to warn the readers that there is

"... a mighty change in our whole manner of existence. For the same habit regulates not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force, of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions, - for Mechanism of one sort or other, do they hope and struggle. Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character.

We may trace this tendency in all the great manifestations of our time, in its intellectual aspect, the studies it most favours and its manner of

conducting them; in its practical aspects, its politics, arts, religion, morals; in the whole sources, and throughout the whole currents, of its spiritual, no less than its material activity."⁽¹⁵⁾

"Characteristics" asserts from the very beginning the dualism of man. "... nay, cry the Spiritualists, is not that very division of the unity, Man, into a dualism of Soul and Body, itself the symptom of disease; as, perhaps, your frightful theory of Materialism, of his being but a Body, and therefore, at least, once more a unity, may be the paroxysm which was critical, and the beginning of cure."⁽¹⁶⁾

Carlyle seems to think that man's alienation is indeed cosmic, "We, the whole species of Mankind, and our whole existence and history, are but a floating speck in the illimitable ocean of the All; ... A region of Doubt, therefore, hovers forever in the background."⁽¹⁷⁾ In such a picture, man can easily become the victim of a remorseless force, losing his identity as he is enslaved by time and trapped by ceaseless change. Schopenhauer saw the world in much the same light in The World as Will and Idea. For him man was a floating speck in a remorseless all-devouring nature.

Sartor Resartus is Carlyle's richest and most complex work.⁽¹⁸⁾ In novelty of style, diction and form it poses a challenge to its readers only comparable to that posed by Ulysses in the twentieth century. The unique form of Sartor Resartus has always created controversy among critics. The book truly defies classification. It is difficult to say whether the book is a novel or an essay, and Carlyle seems to have found the only way in the "no-man's-land" between fiction and life to document the contemporary condition of alienation of man. The book may best be called a complex, philosophical, Romantic essay that operates in

and through fiction.

If the formal and stylistic value of the book is a subject of dispute, the content is another matter. It appears to be a review of a German treatise on dress written by *Diogenes Teufelsdröckh*. This character is very strange; he quits his profession and place of residence and sets forth upon his travels. He falls into a kind of scepticism and tries desperately to shake it off. Carlyle describes his case in successive chapters under the titles of the "Everlasting No", the "Centre of Indifference", and the "Everlasting Yea", which may be said to constitute the kernel of the book.

The predominant motif of the "Everlasting No" is the meaninglessness, emptiness, isolation and despondency of a man torn between his love of mankind and withdrawal from it. When he goes out into the world to earn his living, he confronts the selfishness of the people whose souls have become petrified under modern conditions. We cannot fulfil our best selves under the materialism of this age. Diogenes Teufelsdröckh loses hope and begins to despair of his age and consequently of himself. He even whispers that revolt is useless, that things cannot be changed. So, his humanity and religious sense are thwarted, his spirit grows restless and turns inward upon itself. He suffers from an acute sense of alienation.⁽¹⁹⁾ The world has become to Teufelsdröckh an object of infinite pity and nothing more than a meaningless toy:

"You look on him almost with a shudder, as on some incarnate Mephistopheles, to whom this great terrestrial and celestial Round, after all, were but some huge foolish whirlgig, where kings and beggars, and angels and demons, and stars and street-sweepings, were chaotically whirled, in which only children could take interest".⁽²⁰⁾

Teufelsdröckh's extreme passivity and intellectual pride isolate him from his fellowmen. He is "everywhere buffeted, foiled, and contemptuously cast out. A feeble unit in the middle of a threatening Infinitude ... To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of volition, even of Hostility; it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. O, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death! Why was the Living banished thither companionless, conscious? Why, if there is no devil; nay, unless the Devil is your God?"⁽²¹⁾

At the 'Centre of Indifference', Teufelsdröckh recognizes the nothingness of himself, and in self-isolation he prepares for acceptance of the universe. The "first preliminary moral Act," says Teufelsdröckh, is "Annihilation of Self". He is "life-weary", indifferent now to life or death. He comes close to admitting that he is the embodiment of darkness and meaninglessness within his vision, "In every the wisest soul lies a whole world of internal Madness, an authentic Demon-Empire".⁽²²⁾ This statement recalls the central theme of "Characteristics":

"Our being is made up of Light and Darkness, the Light resting on the Darkness, and balancing it; everywhere there is Dualism, Equipoise; a perpetual contradiction dwells in us: 'where shall I place myself to escape from my own shadow?'"⁽²³⁾

Teufelsdröckh completely annihilates every atom of his individuality. What Carlyle really wanted is literally self-denial, self-annihilation, and self-murder. This was Carlyle's answer to the problems of evil: "the renunciation of the struggling self, the acceptance of suffering and wrong, and the worship of sorrow as the path to reality".⁽²⁴⁾

In an essay on John Galsworthy, D.H. Lawrence complains that the characters in Galsworthy's novels have no private but only public selves, that they had "lost caste as human beings", and had "sunk to the level of the social being".⁽²⁵⁾ Their free and "subjective" lives have been swallowed by their restrictive and "objective" allegiances. Lawrence may have been correct in characterizing the source of the essential deadness at the centre of Galsworthy's novels, yet we recognize the excess in his position. The problem of the novel has always been to distinguish between these two, the self and society, and at the same time to find suitable forms or structures that will present them together. Remove one from the other and the resulting fiction will move away from the novel into another genre. Take away the individual consciousness and we will have informal ideas; take away the social being and we will have history. The novel seems to exist in the common area between social history and individuality.

In the great nineteenth-century novels, the balance between the claims of the individual and of the social being holds successfully, but as the century progresses we notice that the balance starts to tilt in favour of the individual and his self consciousness. With Thomas Hardy, at the end of the century, the individual interest is seen as actively opposed to the social interest.

5 - Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte Brontë created an imaginative world, Angria, and lived in it for about ten years from the age of 10 to 20. At the end of that period she wrote: "I long to quit for a while that burning clime where we have sojourned too long ... the mind would cease from excitement and turn now to a cooler region where the

dawn breaks grey and sober, and the coming day for a time at least is subdued by clouds".(26) She broke free from Angria, but that opposition between the "burning clime" and the "cooler region" was to remain with her as the structural principle of her imagination. She oscillated all her life between them; at the level of literary genre, between Romanticism and Realism; at the moral level, between Duty and Desire, Reason and Imagination, Conscience and Passion.

Like so many Victorians, Charlotte Brontë experienced the sense of alienation. She suffered in her own life the feeling of fragmentation or contradiction which her novels reflect. Secluded, almost imprisoned in Haworth, she taught herself to endure estrangement and deprivation. Mrs Gaskell considered that once Charlotte began to publish she became two people - "Henceforward C. Brontë's existence becomes divided into two parallel currents - her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman".(27) The dualities which this description so clearly illustrates are intrinsic to her novels as well as to her life. Feminist critics in particular have taken Charlotte Brontë as a paradigm for the many Victorian women novelists who, they claim, express their sense of alienation through "covert" artistic techniques.(28)

Though the Brontës' novels are deeply autobiographical, their concern with alienation is central in a way unprecedented in English fiction. In these novels, particularly Jane Eyre, Villette and Wuthering Heights which I am going to deal with at some length, there is a thorough exploration of alienation from one's real character and from one's society.

The most significant aspect of The Professor is its use of a male narrator who functions as a device for expressing the author's sense of dualities. Crimsworth himself introduces the idea of duality, both sexual and psychological. He shares many of the qualities of Charlotte Brontë's subsequent heroines. He has no means of support. Oppressed by his brother's hostility and his own self-doubt, he is forced into a subordinate role. He is prey to fits of hypochondria. He is self-effacing and deliberately takes on the role of passive observer keeping his real character concealed from scrutiny. At the same time, he exhibits traditionally masculine characteristics. He can be self-assured and independent. As a teacher, he triumphs over his unruly pupils and delights in the power of his authority.

Frances Henri effectively reinforces the notion of duality. She seems a strangely inconsistent figure, sometimes conventional, sometimes subversive. She conveys Charlotte Brontë's consciousness of the complexities of the female character. The dualities of the female personality which she represents are explored more perceptively in the heroines of the later novels. Crimsworth recognizes the two sides of her character, naturally co-existing, but does not seem to appreciate the significance of her dual personality:

"So different was she under different circumstances, I seemed to possess two wives. The faculties of her nature, already disclosed when I married her, remained fresh and fair, but other faculties shot up strong, branched out broad, and quite altered the external character of the plant" (29)

This is a split in her personality. She has to be two people who are separate rather than integrated.

The originality of Jane Eyre lies in the way conflicts within

Jane herself as a suffering character are expressed, conflicts of duty and desire, assertion and restraint which are deeply embedded in the formative experiences of childhood.

The novel opens with a cheerless November night with cold winter wind that "had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating", and a correspondingly wretched emotional climate for the unloved child within, taking refuge from a hostile world behind the curtain while consoling herself with Bewick's British Birds. The book provides the child with images of storm, shipwreck, Arctic desolation, images of death and evil which seem to express her own bewildered sense of what life is like, since they correspond with her condition in the home of the Reeds, where she is cruelly oppressed *both* physically and morally and above all is suffering in her isolation from a crushing sense of injustice. We are thrust directly into the heart of a child's conflicts, rebellion, imprisonment in the Red Room, and fear of the oppressor turning into fear of the self, as Jane looks at her image in the looking-glass.

"... the strange little figure there gazing at me with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travellers"

(Ch. 2)

Jane, in the Red Room, sees her "other" and almost unrecognisable self in the mirror, and for the first time formulates her sense of being at odds with her environment where Mrs Reed and Mr Brocklehurst seek to impose false versions of the self upon her.

There is a sense of the self being shaped by forces within and without. Kathleen Tillotson suggests that the originality of Jane Eyre as a novel is due to its profound exploration of the "unlit gulf of the self - that solitary self hitherto the preserve of the poets".(30)

The form of the novel follows a psychological rather than a merely chronological progress. The theme has, very properly, dictated the form, and the theme is an exploration of how an embittered child comes to maturity in the world through her desire for a wider, richer and fuller experience in life and society. The novel, with its heroine who feels as "a wanderer on the face of the earth", is a moral and psychological investigation of Jane Eyre's self-discovery.

For most readers, the central feature of Jane Eyre is the love affair between Jane and Rochester. Rochester, with his dark Byronic features brings a larger cosmopolitan world into Jane's insular seclusion at Thornfield. Jane can accept him as her "Master", as she likes to call him, because he rises above the Gateshead-Lowood norm of money and respectability under which she had suffered. Rochester is earthly, and suggests sensuality and worldliness; Jane is spirit. He calls her a fairy elf, a sprite. Although the novel deals with Jane's education, it seems she learns nothing more about Rochester, nothing essential about her feelings for him after she leaves Thornfield than she knew before. The discovery of the mad wife prevents, or rather, delays, their marriage, but it does not alter her conviction of the rightness of her love. This is what makes their parting so painful. Jane's discovery of Rochester's past and her consequent sense of alienation result from the depth at which the self is being shaken:

"Jane Eyre ... was a cold, solitary girl again; her life was pale; her prospects were desolate. A Christmas frost had come at midsummer; a white December storm had whirled over June; ice glazed the ripe apples, drifts crushed the blowing roses; ... the woods, which twelve hours since waved leafy and fragrant as groves between the tropics, now spread, waste, wild, and white as pine-forests in wintry Norway. My hopes were all dead - struck with a subtle doom, such as in one night, fell on all the first born in the land of Egypt. I looked on my cherished wishes, yesterday so blooming and glowing; they lay stark, chill, livid corpses that could never revive. I looked at my love; that feeling which was my master's - which he had created; it shivered in my heart, like a suffering child in a cold cradle; sickness and anguish had seized it; it could not seek Mr Rochester's arms ... faith was blighted - confidence destroyed! ...

... Self-abandoned, relaxed, and effortless, I seemed to have laid me down in the dried-up bed of a great river; I heard a flood loosened in remote mountains, and I felt the torrent come: ...

... it came: in full heavy swing the torrent poured over me. The whole consciousness of my life lorn, my love lost, my hope quenched, my faith *death - struck, swayed* full and mighty above me in one sullen mass. That bitter hour cannot be described: in truth, 'the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire; I felt no standing; I came into deep waters; the floods overflowed me'.

(Ch. 26)

The handling of Jane's flight from Rochester is remarkable for its psychological truth. She inevitably reverts to the condition of the insecure and unloved child of Gateshead in the red room where she had suffered terror beyond bearing. The body-spirit dualism is at the core of her problem. "What was I? In the midst of my pain of heart and frantic effort of principle, I abhorred myself. I was hateful in my own eyes". The torment of self-reproach makes her action in abandoning Rochester compulsive rather than willed.

Jane rejects St John Rivers because he is the antithesis of Rochester. Where Rochester is fire, St John is "cold as an

iceberg"; and where Rochester is passion, St John is "a white stone". The analysis of St John Rivers is really profound, anticipating the "discoveries" of psychology that are to loom in the fiction of Thomas Hardy later in the century. Rochester loves Jane for her 'elfin' quality; she represents his "spiritual half", while St John wants her as his comrade in the service of God. St John refuses to marry because he thinks that marriage represents self-indulgence and would conflict with his plan of going to India as a missionary. Because he desperately fears ordinary human warmth, his mission must be carried out some place far away from the familiar and repugnant world he knows. It is he who completes Jane's education in spite of himself and helps to send her back to Rochester. In the last chapter, Jane summarizes the success of her married life by telling us:

"To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. We talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and an audible thinking. All my confidence is bestowed on him, all his confidence is devoted to me; we are precisely suited in character - perfect concord is the result."

Villette is a tale of loss and alienation. Like Jane Eyre, Villette portrays an emotional and spiritual quest. An emotionally starving girl is transplanted from Yorkshire to Belgium to suffer from loneliness in an alien culture. It is a novel of silent suffering that expresses the morbidity in the heroine's situation. "You say that she may be thought morbid and weak," Charlotte wrote of Lucy Snowe to her publisher, "unless the history of her life ^{may} be _x more fully given. I consider that she is both morbid and weak at times; her character sets up no pretensions to unmixed strength, and anybody living her life would necessarily become morbid. It

was no impetus of healthy feeling which urged her to the confessional, for instance; it was the semi-delirium of solitary grief and sickness".(31)

It is in this "semi-delirium of solitary grief and sickness" that the heroine's sense of dichotomies is most vividly expressed. From the start we are aware of contradictions in Lucy Snowe. On the one hand, she is passive, calm, and apparently resigned to a self-denying existence, "Loverless and inexpectant of love, I was ... safe ... in my heart-poverty, as the beggar from thieves in his destitution of purse".(32) On the other hand, she reveals an unquenchable resilience and capacity for self-reliance.

The contrast between the external and the internal is much more extreme in Villette. Lucy's division between her inner and outer being is symbolized in the series of scenes involving mirrors. On each occasion,^s Lucy sees her own reflection and perceives the discrepancy between the image and the reality. At Miss Marchmont's she sees herself "in the glass, in my mourning-dress, a faded, hollow-eyed vision. Yet I thought little of the wan spectacle. The blight, I believed, was chiefly external: I still felt life at life's sources".(33) When she has been transformed by the coiffeur in honour of the school fete, she confesses that she "could hardly believe what the glass said when I applied to it for information afterwards"(34), and likewise, unusually adorned for the concert to which she goes with the Brettons, she feels "a jar of discord" when she realizes that "the person in a pink dress and black lace mantle" in the mirror is herself. Lucy Snowe's own dualities are most strikingly revealed in the play scene. She accepts the male role while retaining her female identity.

We are told nothing of Lucy's childhood or family beyond the fact that she is an orphan and alone, and she seems much more of a spectator than an actor in her own destiny. Early in the novel Miss Charmont, the recluse, prefigures Lucy's subsequent destiny. Miss Charmont's story dramatizes the essential elements of Lucy's story, a suppression of painful feeling, unfulfilled love and neurotic self-enclosure. Lucy's readiness to identify with Miss Charmont grows steadily:

"a crippled old woman, my mistress, my friend, my all. Her service was my duty - her pain, my suffering - her relief, my hope - her anger, my punishment - her regard, my reward. I forgot that there were fields, woods, rivers, seas, an ever changing sky outside the stream-dimmed lattice of this sick-chamber"

(Ch. 4)

At the start, Lucy Snowe's position is one of an "alien" and insecurity is her normal state in as much as she has no one at all she can rely on. Her most vivid relationships tend to be with her "inner life", with its solitary consciousness of things. She is literally an alien in *Villette* to which at first she has neither social nor linguistic access. She is everywhere not-at-home. This sense of estrangement and its concomitant intense sense of isolation contributes to her psychological stress. The novel pauses again and again to present and explore an imprisoned Lucy, but the coda to Lucy's progress out of isolation is a return to her most despairing note of loneliness and self-enclosure. D.H. Lawrence once wrote that one sheds one's sickness in books. *Villette* is highly self-conscious about the sickness at its heart, and "sickness" appropriately describes the crisis that brings Lucy, in the convent, to that point of breakdown where all ties with the real world are cut off:

"Those who live in retirement, whose lives have fallen amid the seclusion of schools or of other walled-in and guarded dwellings, are liable to be suddenly and for a long while dropped out of the memory of their friends, the denizens of a freer world. Unaccountably, perhaps, and close upon some space of unusually frequent intercourse - some congeries of rather exciting little circumstances, whose natural sequel would rather seem to be the quickening than the suspension of communication - there falls a stilly pause, a wordless silence, a long blank of oblivion. Unbroken always is this blank; alike entire and unexplained. The letter, the message once frequent, are cut off; the visit, formerly periodical, ceases to occur; the book, paper, or other token that indicated remembrance, comes no more."

(Ch. 24)

Lucy Snowe is shut away from the world, imprisoned in the convent as completely by her own sensibility as by social circumstances. Such moments of retreat into the isolated self recur in Villette, in Charlotte Brontë's other novels, and indeed, in varying degrees, in the novels throughout the nineteenth century. Lucy's school teaching in Brussels subjects her to extremes of emotional and spiritual isolation no previous character in C. Brontë's novels had had to endure. During her spell in the school in the long vacation she suffers a severe depression, insomnia, a kind of paralysis and a nervous collapse. "My nervous system could hardly support what it had for many days and nights to undergo in that huge empty house". The whole chapter "The Long Vacation" is a remarkable portrayal of an extremity of alienation rarely to be found in English fiction. In an extremity of isolation and the absence of all possibilities of communication with others Lucy Snowe approaches madness. That the only other inhabitant of the school is a cretin with a warped mind probably serves to offer an extreme image of what she could degenerate into. It is in this state that she runs in her desperate loneliness to confess to a

Catholic priest.

The deserted convent holds her "crushing as the slab of a tomb" as she experiences her isolation at its most extreme point. The complete removal of social relationships entails the loss of her sense of identity:

"I really believe my nerves are getting overstretched: my mind has suffered somewhat too much; a malady is growing upon it - what shall I do? How shall I keep well? Indeed there was no way to keep well under the circumstances. At last a day and night of peculiarly agonizing depression were succeeded by physical illness, I took perforce to my bed. About this time the Indian summer closed and the equinoctial storms began; and for nine dark and wet days, of which the Hours rushed on all turbulent, deaf, dishevelled - bewildered with sounding hurricane - I lay in a strange fever of the nerves and blood. Sleep went quite away. I used to rise in the night, look round for her, beseech her earnestly to return. A rattle of the window, a cry of the blast only replied - Sleep never came!

I err. She came once, but in anger. Impatient of my importunity she brought with her an avenging dream. By the clock of St Jean Baptiste, that dream remained scarce fifteen minutes - a brief space, but sufficing to wring my whole frame with unknown anguish; to confer a nameless experience that had the hue, the mien, the terror, the very tone of a visitation from eternity. Between twelve and one that night a cup was forced to my lips, black, strong, strange, drawn from no well, but filled up seething from a bottomless and boundless sea. Suffering, brewed in temporal or calculable measure, and mixed for mortal lips, tastes not as this suffering tasted. Having drunk and woke, I thought all was over: the end come and past by. Trembling fearfully - as consciousness returned - ready to cry out on some fellow-creature to help, only that I knew no fellow-creature was near enough to catch the wild summons - Goton in her far distant attic could not hear - I rose on my knees in bed. Some fearful hours went over me: indescribably was I torn, racked and oppressed in mind. Amidst the horrors of that dream I think the worst lay here. Methought the well-loved dead, who had loved me well in life, met me elsewhere, alienated: galled was my inmost spirit with an unutterable sense of despair about the future. Motive there was none why I should try to recover or wish to live".

(Ch. 15)

Charlotte Brontë uncovers sources deep within Lucy's psyche.

The passage opens with a picture that projects Lucy's emotional hunger and frustration and closes with a dream that articulates her long-suppressed grief.

It is notable that the doctor defines her symptoms as being beyond treatment:

"Your nervous system bore a good share of the suffering?"

'I am not quite sure what my nervous system is, but I was dreadfully low-spirited.'

'Which disables me from helping you by pill or portion. Medicine can give nobody good spirits. My art halts at the threshold of Hypochondria: she just looks in and sees a chamber of torture, but can neither say nor do much. Cheerful society would be of use; you should be as little alone as possible; you should take plenty of exercise.' "

(Ch. 17)

Graham's advice for a cure - cultivate happiness and a cheerful mind - is indeed the hollow mockery that Lucy Snowe feels it to be:

"No mockery in this world ever sounds to me so hollow as that of being told to cultivate happiness. What does such advice mean? Happiness is not a potato, to be planted in mould, and tilled with manure. Happiness is a glory shining far down upon us out of Heaven. She is a divine dew which the soul, on certain of its summer mornings, feels dropping upon it from the amaranth bloom and golden fruitage of Paradise.

'Cultivate happiness!' I said briefly to the doctor: do you cultivate happiness? How do you manage?"

(Ch. 22)

The first three chapters dealing with her childhood at Bretton establish the seed of Lucy Snowe's personality. She experiences the feelings of jealousy and sees herself playing the role of "the onlooker". Lucy's oscillation between retreating from life and reaching out for it expresses her desperate need to be

loved and to belong. The disaster of her lost family buries that need deep within the psyche. Her divided personality does indeed enlarge the novel's vision of dualities:

"I seemed to hold two lives - the life of thought, and that of reality; and provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter"

(Ch. 8)

The conflict within her between Feeling and Reason shows the dichotomies of her "self", and the complexity of her personality. She delights in playing a variety of roles. She refuses to answer Ginevra's persistent questioning as to who she is, and she inwardly revels in her ability to shroud herself in various outer images, none of which represents her accurately:

"Madame Beck esteemed me learned and blue; Miss Fanshawe, caustic, ironic, and cynical; Mr Home, a model teacher, the essence of the sedate and discreet; somewhat conventional perhaps, too strict, limited and scrupulous, but still the pink and pattern of governess-correctness; whilst another person, Professor Paul Emanuel, to wit, never lost an opportunity of intimating his opinion that mine was rather a fiery and rash nature - adventurous, indocile, and audacious. I smiled at them all. ..."

(Ch. 26)

A more subtle and witty comment on Lucy's self-alienation is made by the novel's "new-gothic" use of the legendary nun. This mysterious nun works on symbolic and psychological levels. A realist reading Villette must relegate the nun to the level of Gothic machinery. In fact, the nun symbolises Lucy's loneliness and self-repression. The nun becomes a psychic reality. When Lucy inters the letters in the roots of an old tree in the garden, and

with them her hopes, the nun appears as a mute figure:

"Who are you? and why do you come to me?' She stood mute. She had no face - no features: all below her brow was masked with a white cloth; but she had eyes, and they viewed me."

(Ch. 26)

Lucy's question remains unanswered, but the nun's ambiguous status - at once real and illusory - has important implications in the novel. The nun is an expression of Lucy's self-alienation, she is the psychic double of Lucy's repressed self.

There are in the novel two memorable occasions on which Lucy Snowe, through her disordered consciousness, seems enchanted and estranged from the solid reality of the external world. The first occasion is the visit to Madame Walravens in Chapter 34 in which she is ushered in a "sort of salon", then the wall falls away to "let in phantoms". Madame Walravens looms up as some kind of shapeless malign presence and the strange surroundings seem to be "parts of a fairy tale". Similarly, on the famous night walk through the city on the occasion of the town festival when Lucy wanders through the streets in a state of intense excitement, everything loses its familiarity and becomes a "land of enchantment". Robert Heilman in his famous essay on "Charlotte Brontë's "New-Gothic" says of this scene, "This is a surrealistic, trance-like episode which makes available to fiction a vast new territory and idiom".⁽³⁵⁾ In other words, Charlotte Brontë is exploring states of mind on the extreme edge of mental disorder. In her desolation at the supposed departure of Paul, Lucy does indeed enter a world of new colours, sounds, music, and lights:

"In a land of enchantment, a garden most gorgeous, a plain sprinkled with coloured meteors, a forest with sparks of purple and ruby and golden fire gemming the

foliage; a region, not of trees and shadow, but of strangest architectural wealth - of altar and of temple, of pyramid, obelisk, and sphynx; incredible to say, the wonders and the symbols of Egypt teemed throughout the park of Villette."

(Ch. 38)

The border between illusion and reality is blurred, and familiar things rendered strange and enchanted. The novel's climax is this "phantasmagoric scenes of Lucy's drugged nocturnal expedition to the illuminated park"⁽³⁶⁾.

6 - Wuthering Heights

"When Charlotte wrote she said with eloquence and splendour and passion 'I love', 'I hate', 'I suffer'. Her experience, though more intense, is on a level with our own. But there is no "I" in Wuthering Heights."⁽³⁷⁾ Virginia Woolf's comment points to a fundamental difference between Charlotte and Emily. Jane Eyre and Villette are intensely egocentric novels, they belong to the tradition of the Bildungsroman in the nineteenth-century fiction. Emily Brontë, Virginia Woolf says, "was inspired by some general conception. The impulse which urged her to create was not her own suffering or her own injuries. She looked out upon a world cleft into gigantic disorder and felt within her the power to unite ^{it} in a book."⁽³⁸⁾ This "world cleft into gigantic disorder" which Emily tries to unite in the novel, is a world where the characters are alienated from one another and from the environment they live in. The world of Wuthering Heights is marked by the ineluctable opposition between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange on which the novel is built. Whether we talk of their alienation in terms of the contrasted relationship between two ways of life, or in terms of Lord David Cecil's distinction between "the principle

of storm" and "the principle of calm", or in terms of extremes of romanticism, it is, I believe, fundamental to the novel's conception. The unique narrative method, the use of several narrators, the skilful shifts in point of view serve to distance the reader and keep him from settling for one side or the other. The estrangement between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange is ineluctable in the world of the novel in the sense that the Grange characters are continually drawn to the Heights to complete themselves by opposites. The reader is also never certain since no fully responsive reading of the novel can side entirely with the Heights against the Grange or vice versa.

This alienation can be defined in various ways, but Dorothy Van Ghent comes close to the heart of the matter when she speaks of a "tension between two kinds of reality: the raw, inhuman reality of anonymous natural energies, and the restrictive reality of civilized habits, manners and codes".⁽³⁹⁾ It is a tension between a way of life, located in Wuthering Heights, and embodied in Heathcliff, which is powerfully instinctive, natural and in important ways uncivilized and has essential affinities with the amoral energies of nature; and the way of life represented by Thrushcross Grange and embodied in Edgar Linton, which is civilized, restrained and lacking in natural vitality. The Heights, lying exposed to the winds on high moorland, is a small isolated community where people are harsh and aggressive in their relations with one another; it is a place where there is no value set on culture. Thrushcross Grange, on the other hand, is situated in the valley and the life lived there is recognisably comfortable, cosy and, as we might nowadays say, middle-class.

Wuthering Heights is essentially a love story; but it is

extremely difficult to define that love. It is not specifically sexual, or even sensual, it lacks the ethical-social basis of most human relationships. Yet Heathcliff and Catherine insist on their oneness. Their union is not one of two distinct personalities but more like two embodiments of the same element. This union or oneness remains intact until it is divided by social traditions and institutions.

"Is Mr Heathcliff a man?", Isabella Linton asks after her marriage, "If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?"⁽⁴⁰⁾ In a sense, the whole novel asks these questions, and its complex narrative structure seems designed to prevent the reader from deciding upon too quick or easy an answer. From the start we are presented with conflicting images of Heathcliff. There is the sullen country farmer of the opening pages, and then we are taken back, in Nelly's narration, to the small dark orphan from Liverpool, the clumsy boy brutalized by Hindley, the degraded youth rejected by Catherine for Edgar Linton. The narrative present in chapter 10 reveals yet another side, an urbane landlord who comes to visit Lockwood and wins his gratitude by sitting at his bedside "a good hour, and talk on some other subjects than pills, and draughts, blisters and leeches?". This prepares us for the demon-lover who returns in the same chapter to destroy Catherine's marriage.

There is no doubt that Catherine's marriage to Edgar Linton is an act of self-contradiction and self-betrayal. Her declaration of love for Edgar is clearly ironic, a parody of passion: "I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says", the coolness of her language reflects the coolness of her feelings. Catherine is attracted to the handsome Edgar Linton and through him to the

charms of the comfortable and easy middle-class life of Thrushcross Grange which Edgar represents. The girl who roamed the heath day and night must now give part of herself to the social and economic responsibilities of her married life. She must abandon the heath and the storm - the stuff of herself, which is her common nature with Heathcliff. Her great declaration of her love for Heathcliff is justly celebrated:

"If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath - a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff - he's always, always in my mind - not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself - but as my own being ..."

(Ch. 9)

Another picture of Heathcliff is given when Catherine warns Isabella of him:

"... an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without cultivation; an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone; ... Pray, don't imagine that he conceals depths of benevolence and affection beneath a stern exterior! He's not a rough diamond - a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic; he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man ..."

(Ch. 10)

Catherine's relative happiness is immediately destroyed when Heathcliff returns. Her existence is torn in two, one part entangled in the legitimate order of family and institutions, the other in Heathcliff that is herself. She cannot choose either to leave Edgar or deny herself. In this self-destruction she has brought upon herself, her life ends.

Catherine's marriage to Edgar Linton causes Heathcliff's total loss of identity, for once alienated from her, his wholeness is destroyed. Even after his return to Wuthering Heights, his knowledge that their separation will last for ever makes happiness impossible. Heathcliff is neither a possessed soul nor a villain. Much of the contemporary criticism on the novel seems to look at Heathcliff as a villain who deserves no sympathy. As a matter of fact, Heathcliff is an alienated character, and his personality begins to disintegrate after Catherine's hasty and fatal decision to marry Edgar Linton. His passion for Catherine reaches the point of mania and his subsequent cruelty is symptom of his alienation from himself and from the world around him.

After Heathcliff has successfully carried out his scheme of revenge by annihilating his enemies and their offspring, he should have felt restful and satisfied, but this is far from being true. What Heathcliff is vainly looking for is to regain his lost integration. He tells Nelly shortly before his death:

"I have a single wish and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it will be reached - and soon - because it has devoured my existence - I am swallowed in the anticipation of its fulfilment ... O God! It is a long fight, I wish it were over!"

(Ch. 33)

7 - Dickens

Great Expectations is a remarkably profound study of an unloved child which Edmund Wilson has related to Dickens's own feeling of alienation.⁽⁴¹⁾ Once more we have a solitary orphan shuttling between his unloving sister and the loving Joe. Great Expectations, the grimmest and the best named of all Dickens's

books, is essentially an account of Pip's moral education, or what he calls in Chapter 6 "my inner self". Here is the story of a young man's ironic fall to the point at which he recognises the falseness of expectation itself: only in rejecting selfishness does he realize the nature of himself. Dickens is at pains to show that the full significance of self-fulfilment arises from one's self-consciousness. Only in himself does Pip find the power necessary for an integrated self.

The prime function of the novel is to trace the development of the narrator and main character from a sense of estrangement or alienation towards the recovery from that condition - what is often called identity. Critics have paid great attention to the younger Pip's feelings of guilt and, particularly, alienation. As an orphan, Pip is both the typical Dickens's hero and a characteristic figure of modern literature, the alienated man, a product of his civilization, detached from it, and lonely, wishing to belong but unable to feel at one with it.

The principal theme of alienation, which permeates the whole novel, is superbly established in the opening pages of the book. The first scene with the young Pip in the graveyard is one of the richest and most evocative beginnings not only in Dickens's mature novels but also in all literature. J. Hillis Miller describes Pip's alienation in this scene as follows:

"The Dickensian hero is separated from nature. The world appears to him as cold and unfriendly, as a 'wilderness' or a graveyard. In Dickens there is no Wordsworthian theory of the child's filial bond with nature ... The self is not initially the plenitude of a union with the entire universe, but is already narrowed down to 'the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry'. The Dickensian hero is also alienated from the human community. He has no familial tie. He is an orphan, or illegitimate, or both. He has no status in the community, no inherited role which he can accept with dignity ... The typical

Dickens hero, like Pip, feels guilty because he has no given status or relation to nature, to family, or to the community. He is, in everyone's eyes, in the way, superfluous." (42)

Miller is describing two types or forms of alienation here, though he goes on to discuss them as if they are one. Alienation from an indifferent nature and a world in which Pip's parents and brothers are dead and which does not care whether or not he is alive or dead. This is 'existential' alienation and the only way to overcome such alienation is to discover and accept some metaphysical explanation of existence and the world. But there is no indication in the novel that the narrator finds such a solution. Existential alienation and the kind of guilt it creates can only be lived with. However, Pip encounters another form of alienation exemplified by Magwitch, a criminal who is rejected and condemned by society. Pip and the social alien Magwitch seem to be in a similar situation, since both are isolated and shivering in the same graveyard, and Pip's connection with him is strengthened by his aiding and protecting him. It is natural that Pip should see existential and social alienation as a single condition. Magwitch becomes the objective correlative of Pip's sense of alienation. But such social alienation as Magwitch's can be overcome by acquiring a socially accepted identity. This creates the foundation of Pip's later belief that he can find identity by becoming a gentleman.

It is only by appreciating the existential aspect of the young Pip's alienation that one can understand his intense desire for identity and the ultimate failure of his attempt to find it by becoming a gentleman. His sister's inhuman treatment accentuates his existential alienation. When he first meets Estella at Satis House she treats him with contempt as someone whose existence has

no importance or necessity. His insignificance for her is a consequence of low social position. These experiences strengthen Pip's belief that ascending the social scale will make his existence significant and guarantee him identity. Therefore when Jaggers announces that he has great expectations and is to be brought up as a gentleman, he sees this as his "destined" chance. Before Jaggers's revelation he had felt ashamed of his own class and longed to escape from the forge; after it he comes to believe that he is destined to become a gentleman and feels sorry for those who are destined to remain in the village.

The return of Magwitch shocks Pip. Some critics have found it difficult to understand the violence of Pip's reaction when the ex-convict reveals himself as his benefactor. But Pip's reaction is easily understood if one realises that Magwitch had been the very image of the sense of alienation he had believed he had overcome by being transformed into a gentleman. The original form of alienation he suffered from in the graveyard has not been overcome in spite of his becoming a gentleman. He must now face the guilt of his social ascent since this was not "destined" to happen, was not an act of providence. He must now accept the responsibility of rejecting Joe and his former life. Magwitch's return as his benefactor proves that his social identity as a gentleman is not a cure for existential alienation.

Some critics of the novel have accused Pip of snobbery for his acceptance of money from Miss Havisham and his refusal to take Magwitch's honestly earned money. Q.D. Leavis is right to defend Pip against such accusations:

"Pip now realises that he has been bought and paid for and that he is merely a valuable property to Provis ... Magwitch desired to own a real gentleman, one brought

up in London, the capital ... Pip is to be his puppet ... It is natural that Pip should now feel that he is bound to a compact he never voluntarily or knowingly assented to, forever to be linked to a monster"⁽⁴³⁾

A better defence, in my view, is that Pip saw Miss Havisham's money as merely the means of fulfilling his destiny to be part of a class which he associates with identity, a destiny which seems to show that his life is not contingent and that he has nothing in common with the social alien outcast, Magwitch.

When Magwitch returns, he exposes Pip once again to alienation since the order he believed was controlling his life has now broken down. There is no answer to the existential problem that he faced initially in the graveyard. The novel suggests that he is able to live with guilt as an inevitable part of life, both the guilt of being undeservedly alive while others are dead and the guilt created by his ambition and his previous behaviour to Joe. The beginning of Pip's recognition that alienation must be lived with and that identity in the fullest sense cannot be achieved by acquiring a socially accepted role is his acceptance of the connection between himself and the ex-criminal Magwitch, formerly the embodiment of everything he had tried to separate himself from, and his decision to try to help him to escape.

Q.D. Leavis is right to defend Pip's desire to ascend the social scale and escape the social situation into which he is born. Of course Pip is not wrong to wish to improve himself, but the novel seems to imply that there is no solution other than mental transcendence to the contradiction between the fact that Pip's desire to break free from the limitations of the forge is a valid one and the fact that this desire implies a negative judgement on those among whom he lives and must therefore cause pain to Joe. Pip's adjustment to alienation is a Hegelian solution

to the problem. The first sense of Hegel's two senses of alienation is similar to Pip's state of mind at the beginning of the novel and is a consequence of a breakdown in the individual's identification with the 'social substance' and the formation of a discordant relation. For Hegel, this form of alienation can embrace the relation between consciousness and the world in general. To overcome this form of alienation, Hegel argues, it must be transcended by a mental process of surrender or renunciation. A sense of relation between self and world is recreated by adopting a new mental attitude to that discordant relation.

Hegel's concept of "alienation" can be applied to other novels of Dickens. In Little Dorrit, for example, several alienated characters see their relation to their social world as one of discordance and they assert their opposition to a society which they regard as external and oppressive. Miss Wade is an obvious example. Little Dorrit's relation to the social world is more discordant than that of any other character since she has been born and brought up within the Marshalsea prison. But through surrender and renunciation Little Dorrit achieves a "positive" kind of alienation which enables her to transcend her situation. She neither asserts her will in order to gain social acceptance nor despairs at the injustice of her position. She accepts her situation but dissociates herself mentally from society's attitude towards it. She does not feel ashamed of her life in the Marshalsea as her father and the rest of her family do.

What makes Great Expectations a particularly remarkable work is that it contains an indirect critique of Hegel's second sense of alienation as depicted in Pip. The narrator, the older Pip has

lost any vital or energetic engagement with life. The final pages of the novel strongly suggest that Pip experiences no great happiness, only a neutral contentment with life. Even the published ending, with its ambiguous reconciliation between Pip and Stella who meet in the ruins of Satis House, reflects a sense of a half-hearted/relationship between a woman 'bent and broken' and a man who expects little joy from life. In this revised ending, Dickens was trying to do two things: to satisfy the reading public who liked novels to have happy endings, and to suggest to more sophisticated readers by the use of ambiguity that the relationship might not last.

8 - George Eliot

In chapter 34 of Middlemarch, Dorothea Brooke looks down from her upper window at Featherstone's funeral. This, we are told, is to become one of the scenes that defines for Dorothea a turning point in her own history:

"The dream-like association of something alien and ill-understood with the deepest secrets of her experience seemed to mirror that sense of loneliness which was due to the very ardour of Dorothea's nature. The country gentry of old time lived in a rarefied social air: dotted apart on their stations up the mountain they looked down with imperfect discrimination on the belts of thicker life below. And Dorothea was not at ease in the perspective and chilliness of that height."

What is "mirrored" in Dorothea's imagination is not the scene itself, but the significance given to it by her own isolation, an isolation due as much to the strong demands of her "ardour" as to the social conditions by which she is held aloof from a larger world beyond the provincial. In Lowick, as in Rome, it is the poignancy of what seems lifeless and unintelligible "other" that affects Dorothea in reflecting the inner sorrows of her life with

Casaubon. As in Villette and Great Expectations and the other novels which I have been discussing, these solipsistic moments display most clearly the individual sensibility and the need to explore its limits. Dorothea's struggles to reach her identity constitute a major theme in Middlemarch.

In terms of action, Dorothea's part in the novel is relatively inconsequential as Henry James rightly observes.⁽⁴⁴⁾ That is, after all, George Eliot's conception of her. Imprisoned in her "envelope of circumstances", she takes her leading role in the novel's moral drama. The misconceived reality she lives in is progressively destroyed forcing her to look outward. Dorothea's main problem is that inward needs are not in harmony with outer life. Her most serious temptation is that form of idealism which longs for belief in an external order and meaning which one can serve with complete devotion because one believes utterly in its truth and value. She desires a form of knowledge and sense of truth which will be superior to subjective feeling. Dorothea longs for "a binding theory which could bring her own life and doctrine into strict connection with that amazing past, and give the remotest sources of knowledge some bearing on her actions" (Ch. 10). Dorothea in her early idealistic stage desires a theory which will prove that there is a religious meaning in reality itself. The world Dorothea is living in is an alien world resulting from the collapse of public faith. The metaphor embracing the whole novel is that of St Theresa.

It is natural then that she should be drawn to Casaubon. The aim of his "key to all Mythologies" is to counteract the fragmentation of man's knowledge and to provide the foundation for the coherent social faith and order which a new St Theresa would

require to give direction and purpose to her life. There are many factors that must be taken into account in understanding why Dorothea chooses to marry Casaubon. She is an orphan who has never known a father's influence and therefore is drawn to Casaubon as a kind of father figure. If his work had no relation to her idealism, it would be hard to accept her determined resolution to marry him. Casaubon's great work, "Key to All Mythologies" is very suggestive at a time when there was an unprecedented increase in knowledge which led to its fragmentation.

George Eliot calls Middlemarch "A Study of Provincial Life". Like Chekhov or Ibsen, she sees the essence of provincialism as including a yearning for a larger life with social and imaginative limitations that must thwart such a yearning. Dorothea's urgent need for a connection with the world beyond herself is tragically repressed by her marriage. Far from establishing such a connection, her marriage to Casaubon isolates her still further. In choosing Casaubon, and the task of amanuensis to his sterile scholarship and the social environment of the country manor house, Dorothea finds herself far removed from her "real self".

In chapter 28, Dorothea, who has recently returned from her honeymoon journey to Rome, is seen at her bow-window experiencing the full meaning of her alienation:

"Her blooming full-pulsed youth stood there in a moral imprisonment which made itself one with the chill, colourless, narrowed landscape, with the shrunken furniture, the never-read books, and the ghostly stag in a pale fantastic world that seemed to be vanishing from the daylight.

In the first minutes when Dorothea looked out she felt nothing but the dreary oppression; then came a keen remembrance, and turning away from the window she walked round the room. The ideas and hopes which were living in her mind when she first saw this room nearly three months before were present now only as memories:

she judged them as we judge transient and departed things. All existence seemed to beat with a lower pulse than her own, and her religious faith was a solitary cry, the struggle out of a nightmare in which every object was withering and shrinking away from her. Each remembered thing in the room was disenchanting, was deadened as an unlit transparency, till her wandering gaze came to the group of miniatures, and there at last she saw something which had gathered new breath and meaning: it was the miniature of Mr Casaubon's aunt Julia, who had made the unfortunate marriage - of Will Ladislaw's grandmother. Dorothea could fancy that it was alive now - the delicate woman's face which yet had a head-strong look, a peculiarity difficult to interpret. Was it only her friends who thought her marriage unfortunate? or did she herself find it out to be a mistake, and taste the salt bitterness of her tears in the merciful silence of the night? What breadths of experience Dorothea seemed to have passed over since she first looked at this miniature! She felt a new companionship with it, as if it had an ear for her and could see how she was looking at it. Here was a woman who had known some difficulty about marriage. Nay, the colours deepened, the lips and chin seemed to get larger, the hair and eyes seemed to be sending out light, the face was masculine and beamed on her with that full gaze which tells her on whom it falls that she is too interesting for the slightest movement of her eyelid to pass unnoticed and uninterpreted. The vivid presentation came like a pleasant glow to Dorothea: she felt herself smiling, and turning from the miniature sat down and looked up as if she were again talking to a figure in front of her. But the smile disappeared as she went on meditating, and at last she said aloud - 'Oh, it was cruel to speak so! How sad - how dreadful!'

The first part of this passage, like the opening paragraphs of the chapter, has been widely discussed as exemplifying the "moment of disenchantment" in George Eliot's novels.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The passage is to consider the ways in which Dorothea's disillusionment, in part self-made, 'makes itself one' with a frozen world. It also gives the vision of Dorothea as pathetic victim. The contrast between the hopefulness with which Dorothea has first seen the room and the dreary oppression which looks back at her now challenges her own sense of reality. Her distress is caused by the utter failure of Casaubon to answer her idealism, but it lies deeper than that. Alienation from the self reflects

larger or cosmic alienation. Isolation in a meaningless universe is registered in physical sensations - in the cold, the claustrophobia. Feelings shape perception into a vision in which every object seems "shrunken" and "vanishing". The room becomes an image of the mind, its images, objects, memories, unlit by hope. Most characters in Middlemarch - Casaubon, Bulstrode, Lydgate - undergo despair of destroyed hope; but Dorothea most fully feels that despair. Despair shapes her disenchanting world.

Dorothea's long struggle against self-alienation is most clearly expressed in chapter 42:

"She went up to her boudoir. The open bow-window let in the serene glory of the afternoon lying in the avenue, where the lime-trees cast long shadows. But Dorothea knew nothing of the scene. She threw herself on a chair, not heeding that she was in the dazzling sun-rays: if there were discomfort in that, how could she tell that it was not part of her inward misery?"

She was in the reaction of a rebellious anger stronger than any she had felt since her marriage. Instead of tears there came words:

'What have I done - what am I - that he should treat me so? He never knows what is in my mind - he never cares. What is the use of anything I do? He wishes he had never married me.'

She began to hear herself, and was checked into stillness. Like one who has lost his way and is weary, she saw and saw as in one glance all the paths of her young hope which she should never find again. And just as clearly in the miserable light she saw her own and her husband's solitude - how they walked apart so that she was obliged to survey him. If he had drawn her towards him, she would never have surveyed him - never have said, 'Is he worth living for?' but would have felt him simply a part of her own life. Now she said bitterly. 'It is his fault, not mine.' In the jar of her whole being, Pity was overthrown. Was it her fault that she had believed in him - had believed in his worthiness? - And what, exactly, was he? - She was able enough to estimate him - she who waited on his glances with trembling, and shut her best soul in prison, paying it only hidden visits, that she might be petty enough to please him. In such a crisis as this, some women begin to hate."

The "serene glory of the afternoon" becomes a "miserable light". Dorothea sees nothing beyond her own despair. Dorothea is a human being after all. Anger burst^s/out of her as immediately as tears, and the passage notes the relationship between aggression and emotional frustration. Dorothea is oppressed not by boredom, but by complete psychological isolation within her marriage. The desire for physical tenderness, emotional and sexual, so subtly explored in the disillusionment of Dorothea's honeymoon, is by now scarcely more than an idea. "If he had drawn her towards him, she would never have surveyed him ...". Without physical closeness which might break down the barriers of the "self", each becomes an "object", a "thing" to the other. It is tempting to believe that George Eliot suggests that Dorothea's experience of Casaubon's physical impotence leads to an awareness of his intellectual impotence. She eventually realises that the fragments he is trying to put together disintegrate again in his hands. Her main problem now is how to confront life without that idealistic 'binding theory' she had hoped for.

Dorothea's capacity to transcend her alienation is signalled by her looking out from her boudoir to the world stirring below her:

"She opened her curtains, and looked out towards the bit of road that lay in view, with fields beyond, outside the entrance-gates. On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving - perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining".

(Ch. 80)

This transcendence and surrender make tremendous changes in her own life and the lives of those close to her. The large web woven by the novel as a whole translates Dorothea's experience into a significant and lasting achievement. Essential to George Eliot's rendering of the web of provincial life is her detailed study of that web within the inner private world of individual sensibility.

Another two characters in Middlemarch in whom the theme of alienation is most clearly exemplified are Lydgate and Rosamond. Lydgate is the closest example, in the novel, to the modern counterpart of traditional tragedy. Though he does possess 'intellectual ardour' and his scientific research, his quest for "the primitive tissue" is the most important aspect of his work, yet his "vulgarity of feeling" is most fatal. His pride, arrogance and "vulgarity of feeling" alienate him from people, allow him to think he can use Bulstrode for his own purposes, and, most important, lead him into his fatal marriage with Rosamond, the woman who destroys him. He lacks a strong sense of continuity of self to resist his impulses. The experience of such impulses and of a sense of self-division is clear in his passion for the French actress Madame Laure:

"He knew that this was like the sudden impulse of a madman - incongruous even with his habitual foibles. No matter! It was the one thing which he was resolved to do. He had two selves within him apparently, and they must learn to accommodate each other and bear reciprocal impediments. Strange, that some of us, with quick alternate vision, see beyond our infatuations, and even while we rave on the heights, behold the wide plain where our persistent self pauses and awaits us".

(Ch. 15)

The novel seems to imply the confusion and contradiction in the personality of Lydgate by drawing an ironical contrast between

Lydgate's scientific approach in his intellectual life, and his unscientific subjectivism in his personal relationships. In his relationship with Rosamond, he is guided by subjective feelings alone. He is strongly attracted by Rosamond's charms and fatally misinterprets her as a woman of warm, affectionate and submissive character who would suit his needs. Rosamond turns out to be "little used to imagining other people's states of mind except as a material cut into shape by her own wishes". (Ch. 78)

Alienation is a well-established theme that prevails in almost all the works of George Eliot. Silas Marner, to take one more example, is a tragic figure in so far as his narrow piety prevents an adequate response to the evident injustice done him, and in so far as his response is a feeling of utter alienation. Silas's alienation goes much further back than his arrival in Raveloe. His whole life has been a series of disconnections. An orphaned impoverished artisan living in a squalid alley in the heart of a Northern industrial town, his opportunities for social participation have been restricted to a Dissenting Sect separated by its narrow principles from both the religious Establishment and the surrounding secular world. His narrow beliefs, poor education, and ignorance of human nature conspire to make him preeminently vulnerable to the misfortunes that suddenly befall him. In devastating succession, he is bereft of friendship, love, faith in divine justice, home, native town - everything, in fact, that has meaning for him. The disaster is especially overwhelming because his loss is not so much material as spiritual. Silas must learn to live not only in an entirely different region but with an entirely new set of values.

With the advent of Silas in Raveloe, we see a person living with the wreckage of ardent spiritual ideals in an unambitious

society. The important thing is that George Eliot is here studying "the mutual relationship of an indigenous society and an outsider".⁽⁴⁶⁾ The village itself is appropriately situated for its function in the Midlands away from the broader life of England. We are presented ^{with} "two units of roughly comparable narrative weight – a compact social organisation and an alienated individual"⁽⁴⁷⁾.

9 - Oscar Wilde

The Eighteen-Nineties is one of the most difficult and confused periods in the history of English literature. In it critics recognise a multitude of trends and movements – Decadence, Aestheticism, Naturalism, Impressionism, Symbolism, Neo-Romanticism, Late Victorianism, Modernism, and a host of other isms. It is difficult to agree on a general label that really fits a period in which there are so many overlapping trends. They seem to overlap in three general areas: (1) the relationship of artist to the audience, (2) the relationship of the work of art to the traditional concepts of truth, sincerity and reality, and (3) the relationship of the work of art to the mood of the time.

First, all these movements assert the authority of the artist and his superiority to his audience. The tendency to divorce morality from art is significant. Art proclaimed itself independent of morality, politics, religion and science. Artists preferred to keep apart from society and withdraw into their ivory towers. The negative, sometimes aggressive, attitude towards society may be said to have its roots in the increasingly growing consciousness of personality and speaks of a certain rebellion against life itself. "Freedom" and "break with tradition" were

frequently sounded tunes. The result, as often in a period of experimentation, was the increased alienation of the artist from his society.

Second, all these movements attempted a reassessment of what constitutes truth in art and life. Imaginative writers from 1880 onwards insisted on reinterpreting objective, external truth; others insisted on revealing subjective and psychological truth. Robert Louis Stevenson and Oscar Wilde insist that no art can be expected to compete with life. The writers of the nineties believe that a work of art cannot be exact reproduction of "reality". Art leads a life of its own, with the consequence that the artist can employ in his art whatever he finds suitable, however irrational or inexplicable it may be.

Third, there is a note of melancholy. It is the melancholy that results from the co-existence of the sense of ending and beginning, from the regret for the passing aristocratic leadership and the hope for the leadership of the common man. We may, therefore, speak of the last Victorians, but in the same breath we must also speak of the first moderns.

Lionel Trilling pays tribute to Oscar Wilde and says, "with each passing year the figure of Wilde becomes clearer and larger", and attributes "the magnitude" of "his intellectual significance" to "a close affinity between Wilde and Nietzsche. Certainly in one respect the two men are close to each other: both expressed a principled antagonism to sincerity, both spoke in praise of what they call the mask."⁽⁴⁸⁾

Oscar Wilde is obsessed with the idea of the mask. It appears constantly in his plays and he says in the concluding sentences of his essay, "The Truth of Masks",

"... in art there is no such thing as a universal truth. A truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true. And just as it is only in art-criticism, and through it, that we can apprehend the Platonic theory of ideas, so it is only in art-criticism, and through it, that we can realise Hegel's system of contraries. The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks."

If the mask hides the truth of the face from exposure, as Richard Ellmann convincingly argues, the mirror, on the other hand, exposes it.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The mirror is also a recurrent image in Victorian literature. We find it in the Brontës, in Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Wilde. For most of the earlier Victorian writers, this self-consciousness was to be suppressed, whereas the writers of the nineties gave themselves to introspection and looking at the mirror. In The Picture of Dorian Gray the portrait is "the most magical of mirrors" duplicating the corruption of Dorian's soul, while his ageless handsome face is a mask hiding the soul's evil.

In order to understand the prevalence of the mask-motif in Victorian literature, we must first reflect on the underlying split of man's imaginative view of his place in the world; the subjective world of man's inner life seemed to have lost its relationship with the objective, phenomenal world; the spiritual world was cast away from the material; the unconscious broke sharply away from the conscious, and seemed often in conflict with it; intuition seemed to contradict the intellect. It is apparent that a schizophrenia of the human sensibility afflicted the age. A similar dichotomy had already taken place in the Romantics' vision of an ideal behind the real. But in the nineties the schizophrenia pervades all sides of life. Schopenhauer says that the essence of things is not accessible to our consciousness; all things appear "as in a mask, which allows us merely to assume what is concealed

beneath it, but never to know it".⁽⁵⁰⁾

The door opens upon the widely pervasive motif of the double in the literature of the period. "Daily life," wrote E.M. Forster, "whatever it may be really, is *practically* composed of two lives - the life in time and the life by values - and our conduct reveals a double allegiance."⁽⁵¹⁾ Such imagination was reinforced by the psychical speculations into the co-existence of an unseen world beyond the seen. Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, whose mask of youthful beauty faced the world while, locked away from worldly view, his other self, the portrait, exhibited the ugliness and bestiality which lay behind the mask. Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* may not be the most profound exploitation of the duality of character, but Dr Jekyll spoke at least a decade in advance of Freud when he said "that man is not truly one, but truly two".

The Picture of Dorian Gray, certainly one of the great achievements of the nineteenth century in the realm of prose fiction, claims to be a genuine variation both of the Faust theme, with Lord Henry Wotton as a very witty Mephistopheles, and the split-personality theme. The novel is a very subtle account of the complex relation between Life and Art. Dorian's portrait reflects the evil which Dorian has committed in Life in the name of Art. When Dorian Gray lives the life recommended by Lord Henry, accepting the argument that self-restraint is a form of cowardice, he discovers that his life of sin does not affect his appearance, but it does affect his portrait, painted when he was at the height of his youth and beauty, which becomes heavily marked by old age and corruption.

In an interesting article, Jacob Korg has suggested that Wilde is working here in the *fin-de-siècle* tradition of stories

about the Double, and concludes that Dorian Gray is an attempt to present the sense of the fluidity of personal identity.⁽⁵²⁾ Korg sees the notion of the double self as a device to prevent the self from vanishing under the pressure of personal introspection. He says, "The monstrous notion of a double is a product of the rage of Caliban. It was the last, desperate holding operation of the romantic ego, individualism in another, heretical form". Philip Drew does not accept this view and says, "The picture is not a double, or a genuine alter ego, but a scapegoat, an invention for satisfying the condition in the question 'If the physical consequence to himself of his action can be escaped, is there any reason why a man should not do precisely what he pleases, thus acting from his authentic self, and not as a vehicle for the moral ideas of other people? ... the agency of Dorian's degeneration is the doctrine which Lord Henry implants'⁽⁵³⁾ Whether Dorian's picture is a device, a "product of the rage of Caliban" or an "invention" induced by Lord Henry's evil promptings, Dorian's disintegration of personality is not disputed.

The disintegration of Dorian Gray's personality is apparent in his deep involvement in two antithetical lives; in one he practises "the worship of the senses", the new Hedonism whose aim "was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience", and in the other ugliness becomes 'the one reality'. At length Dorian, by now a murderer, finds the picture that bears the guilt an intolerable burden. "It had been like conscience to him". Determined to obliterate even this "transferred consequence" of his profligate life, he takes up a knife. "As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past". He stabs the picture, a horrible

cry is heard, and the servants eventually force their way into the room. The book ends.

"When they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognised who it was".

One point remains to be made. In spite of Lord Henry's and Oscar Wilde's own assertions of the ethical neutrality of art, the novel inculcates a forthright moral lesson. Wilde is more than a "playboy of the nineties".⁽⁵⁴⁾ He reflects quite faithfully the predicament of man in late Victorian period, and the suffering that springs from a genuine agony of the human condition. Wilde not only talks about man in a way that challenges the definition of self held by earlier Victorians, "He used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceive the Ego in man as a thing simple, permanent, reliable, and of one essence. To him, man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion, and whose very flesh was tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead", (Ch. 11)⁽⁵⁵⁾, but he is also candid and balanced in his presentation of the painful difficulty of reconciling what a man owes to society with what he owes to himself. The whole of Dorian Gray is designed to show the shallowness of such epigrams as "All art is quite useless", and "Art never expresses anything but itself" and "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all".

Conclusion

Alienation in Victorian literature is not held to be inherent in man's being in the world, but rather in his being in a particular historical epoch which asserts itself with special force whenever certain social and cultural circumstances fail to satisfy the people in a given society. It appears when a particular generation faces structures, cultural, social or religious, whose permanent features are indifferent to that generation's desires and aspirations. All the major Victorian writers, with Arnold as their representative spokesman, have been aware of the philosophical, cultural, social and economic changes and how these helped to bring about and reinforce man's sense of alienation. In his analysis of "alienation" in Victorian society, Arnold writes:

"Modern times find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules, which have come to them from times not modern. In this system their life has to be carried forward; yet they have a sense that this system is not of their own creation, that it by no means corresponds exactly with the wants of their actual life ... The awakening of this sense is the awakening of the modern spirit. The modern spirit is awake almost everywhere; the sense of want of correspondence between the forms of modern Europe and its spirit ... almost every one now perceives". (56)

At the same time, the entire edifice of the Victorian society threatens to collapse under the weight of contradiction, dualism and division. "The calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared, the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already of the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and ^{of} Faust." (57) This is the central intellectual characteristic of the Victorian age which envisages the emergence of the split man

in a kind of nineteenth-century "dissociation of sensibility".

The image, in The Woodlanders where Hardy refers to Grace Melbury's equivocal social status, of her hanging "as it were in mid-air between two storeys of society", is a characteristic image of being helplessly stranded between two worlds, belonging to neither, yet connected tenuously to both. The problem which the Victorian writers face is, broadly speaking, the possibility of healing the schism between what is loosely conceived as "private" and "public" areas of experience. All the Victorians, and particularly Hardy and late Victorians, express a strong sense of opposition between the inner, personal, subjective and outer, public and objective.

This dichotomy in the immediate consciousness between the finite, articulate, objective world and the inarticulate, subjective world goes back to the Renaissance in which man gradually became aware of himself as an individual against 'the state and all the things of this world'. These keen dichotomies bear witness to an unprecedented anxiety about the relationship between Self and Other. The late years of the century saw an enormous expansion of imaginative perspective, social and psychological, spatial and temporal. As Max Weber noted, our age is "characterized by rationalization and intellectualization, and above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world'"⁽⁵⁸⁾. This is to say that the objective world has become merely material, empty of effective prestige. D.H. Lawrence's conception of life, evoked in chapter 15 of The Rainbow, as "a oneness with the infinite ... a supreme gleaming triumph of infinity", is driven in on itself. With the Victorians, we can see, as Weber says, "the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life."⁽⁵⁹⁾

Something like this is often to be observed in the most diverse departments of Victorian culture.

In Victorian imaginative writers one finds on the whole a double movement away from the world and towards the personal and against the world. This appears in the preoccupation with social criticism in the novel. The central achievement of Victorian novelists is that they reflect how disillusioning and frustrating is the discrepancy between the intuitive knowledge of the individual and the mysterious opacity of objective reality. Dickens's novels, generally, for example, stress the total divergence between the individual's inner struggle and the intractable society. The increasing difficulty of reconciling spatial and temporal perspectives will become a major theme for Hardy and other late Victorians; for the inner space and inner time of particular individuals no longer interact with historical and social space and time.

On the other hand, one finds that the spiritual side of man is most expressed in the substitution of personal relationships for "faith". All Hardy's lovers testify to this; Clym, Jude, Angel, Giles and Boldwood - all idealize, almost deify their beloved, and the shattering of their illusions by contact with the objective frustrating reality constitutes a major theme in Hardy's entire fiction.

This, then, in its mere outlines, is the world into which Hardy was born, grew up, and lived. It is a bifurcated sort of existence. The time is out of joint, owing to the dislocation of life from Form; and the problem proposes itself as this: to procure realisation and integration in a disintegrated world. Hardy aspired to see a society in which man's faculties are developed to

a totality and whose conflicting elements are held in harmonious balance. (60)

Notes

1. Carlisle Moore, "Faith, Doubt, and Mystical Experience in In Memoriam, VS, 7 (1963-64), 155-169
2. Quoted in Ian Jack, Browning's Major Poetry, p. 15
3. Stewart Walker Holmes, "Browning's Sordello and Jung", PMLA, 56(1941), 758-796
4. Ibid., p. 786
5. Dated June 9, 1863
6. Disappearance of God, p. 224
7. Arnold Whitridge, ed., Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold, p.18
8. Quoted in Allott, ed., The Poems of Matthew Arnold, Second Edition, 1979, p. 135
9. Philip Drew, "Matthew Arnold and the Passage of Time", in Isobel Armstrong, ed., The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations, p. 200.
10. The Poems of Matthew Arnold, op. cit., p. 111
11. Philip Drew, op. cit., p. 201
12. The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 356
13. "Matthew Arnold and the Passage of Time", p. 222
14. Thomas Carlyle, Life of Friedrich Schiller, p.79
15. Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times" in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays in Five Volumes. Vol. II. Centenary Edition, 1831, pp. 62-3

16. Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol 4, 1872, p. 4
17. Ibid., pp. 22-23
18. John Holloway describes the style of the book as "disorderly and even chaotic ... there is little of sustained or close-knit argument demanding concentrated, dispassionate study", The Victorian Sage, pp. 26,7
19. Lionel Trilling calls it "the history of his [Carlyle's] own experience of disintegration", Sincerity and Authenticity, p.48
20. Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 25
21. Ibid., pp. 132,3
22. Ibid., p. 207
23. Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol IV, 1872, p. 24
24. Charles Frederick Harrold, Carlyle and German Thought: 1819-1834, p. 220
25. Bruce Steele, ed., Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays, p. 210
26. Quoted in Tillotson, Novels of The Eighteen-Forties, p. 273
27. Mrs Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Brontë, Ch. 26, p. 242
28. See Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own
29. The Professor, Thornton Edition, 1924, Ch. 25, p. 352
30. Novels of The Eighteen-Forties, p. 261

31. Mrs Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Brontë, Ch. 25, p. 366
32. C. Brontë, Villette, Penguin Edition, 1986, ch. 13, p. 186
33. Ibid., Ch. 4, p. 96
34. Ibid., ch. 14, p. 199
35. Robert Heilman, "Charlotte Brontë's 'New' Gothic in Jane Eyre and Villette" in Miriam Allott, ed., Charlotte Brontë. Jane Eyre and Villette. A Casebook, p. 201
36. Mary Jacobus, "Villette's Buried Letter", Essays in Criticism, 28(1978), p. 240
37. Virginia Woolf, "Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights", in The Common Reader, quoted in Miriam Allott, ed., Wuthering Heights. A Casebook, p. 122
38. Ibid., p. 122
39. The English Novel: Form and Function, p. 157
40. Wuthering Heights, Penguin Edition, 1987, Ch. 13, p. 173
41. "Dickens: The Two Scrooges", in The Wound and the Bow, pp. 1-93
42. Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels, pp. 251-2; also Pritchett in The Living Novel says, "The people ... of Dickens are out of touch and out of hearing of each other, each conducting its own inner monologue, grandiloquent or dismaying", p. 78
43. Dickens The Novelist, pp. 316-17
44. He says, "With all its abundant and massive ingredients, Middlemarch ought somehow to have depicted a weightier drama.

Dorothea was altogether too superb a heroine to be wasted, yet she plays a narrower part than the imagination of the reader demands. She is of more consequence than the action of which she is the nominal centre", ^{David Carroll, ed.,} George Eliot: The Critical Heritage, p. 355
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45. Some of these are discussed in Barbara Hardy, The Novels of George Eliot; D.R. Carroll, "An Image of Disenchantment in the Novels of George Eliot", Review of English Studies, 11 (1960), 29-41
46. Fred C. Thomson, "The Theme of Alienation in Silas Marner", N C E, 20 (1965-66), p. 77
47. Ibid., p. 77
48. Sincerity and Authenticity, p. 119
49. Ellmann points out that the motif of exposure is almost always the focal point in Wilde's plays. See "Romantic Pantomime in Oscar Wilde", Partisan Review, 30 (1963), 342-355
50. The World as Will and Idea, Book II, Ch. 18
51. Aspects of the Novel, p. 19
52. "The Rage of Caliban", University of Toronto Quarterly, 37 (1967-68), 75-89
53. The Meaning of Freedom, pp. 336-7
54. Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties, p. 86
55. Wilde's views here are exactly similar to Strindberg's, expressed in his Preface to Miss Julie which is a classic

modernist assault on the idea of stability of character and the confidence in our ability to interpret it. Strindberg says:

"The word 'character' has, over the years frequently changed its meaning. Originally it meant the dominant feature in a person's psyche, and was synonymous with temperament. Then it became the middle-class euphemism for an automation; so that an individual who had stopped developing, or who had moulded himself to a fixed role in life - in other words, stopped growing - came to be called a 'character' - whereas the man who goes on developing, the skilful navigation of life's river, who does not sail with a fixed sheet but rides before the wind to luff again, was stigmatized as 'characterless' (in, of course, a derogatory sense) because he was too difficult to catch, classify and keep tabs on. This bourgeois conception of the immutability of the soul became transferred to the stage, which had always been bourgeois - dominated since they are modern characters, living in an age of transition more urgently hysterical at any rate than the age which preceded it, I have drawn my people as split and vacillating, a mixture of the old and the new ...", August Strindberg, The Father, Miss Julie, The Ghost Sonata, tr. Michael Meyer (London, 1976), pp.94-5

56. "Heinrich Heine", in The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, ed., R.H. Super, Vol III (Ann Arbor, 1962), p.109
57. "Preface, 1853", *ibid.*, Vol I, p. 1
58. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation", in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, trans. and ed. by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, 1947, p. 155
59. *Ibid.*, p. 155
60. I acknowledge my indebtedness in the foregoing paragraphs to Dr R.A.D. Grant's first chapter of his L.H. Myers (1881-1944), A Critical Account with a Study of Some Sources and Influences, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1972

Part II

Alienation in the Major Novels of
Thomas Hardy

Chapter Three

"Far from the Madding Crowd"
(1874)

Chapter Three

Far from the Madding Crowd

Although Far from the Madding Crowd is a conventional Victorian fiction, and contains no major technical innovations, yet its literary affinities with twentieth century fiction are noticeable. Without awareness of these affinities, the novel's emotional power and artistic complexity would not be duly appreciated. Each of the five major characters - Bathsheba Everdene, Gabriel Oak, Farmer Boldwood, Fanny Robin and Sergeant Troy - suffers from isolation, desolation and loneliness. These characters are isolated not only by their unhappiness but also by their inability to understand and respond to one another. Three of the major characters of FFMC - farmer Boldwood, Fanny Robin and Sergeant Troy - end their lives in madness or death. Recent critics have discussed the novel as Hardy's contribution to the pastoral tradition⁽¹⁾, but they have largely ignored one of its central themes, equally prominent in Hardy's entire works, the predicament of human isolation and alienation.

As a matter of fact, the major characters of FFMC are not all alienated in the same degree, but they form a group in which Hardy explores different kinds and degrees of alienation. At one extreme stand Farmer Boldwood and Fanny Robin, who are completely destroyed, one mentally and the other bodily. Farmer Boldwood is apparently alienated from his farm and from himself through his obsessive pursuit of Bathsheba and ends up as a murderer declared insane by the law. Before the receipt of Bathsheba's valentine he is, as Liddy says, "a hopeless man for a woman". Boldwood makes himself a hermit living in severe conditions because he is unaware

of the complexity of his own nature. When he receives Bathsheba's valentine, he suddenly perceives his self-estrangement and in his insistence on altering the circumstances which he has hitherto accepted, he loses all sense of proportion. Bathsheba might be justified in sending her thoughtless valentine as an answer to his indifference and lack of interest in her at a time when she is admired by all farmers, but Boldwood's reaction to this valentine can hardly be described as "natural". This shattering effect of the valentine on Boldwood's outwardly tranquil existence is dealt with in the first twenty three chapters until the appearance of Sergeant Troy in chapter 24.

The character of Boldwood marks an important early stage in Hardy's development as a novelist. The treatment of this character shows Hardy's increasing interest, already demonstrated in Desperate Remedies and A Pair of Blue Eyes, in complex, disturbed and alienated personalities. It is simply a study of the development of insanity. The treatment is sometimes inconsistent and inadequate to present the psychological complexities; but by the time of Jude the Obscure Hardy found more effective ways of exploring his insights into neuroses. In Boldwood we have an attempt, though of less magnitude, at a similar theme.

Boldwood becomes obsessed by a woman whose strongest sentiment for him cannot go beyond respect:

"I feel [he says] - almost too much - to think ... My life is not my own since I have beheld you clearly ... My life is a burden without you"

(Ch. 19, p.159) (2)

Instead of expanding his universe, love paradoxically limits it. Boldwood comes to define his own existence in terms of a single emotion; and when his love is frustrated by Bathsheba's

marriage to Troy, his entire universe collapses. In despair he murders his rival, but he has already destroyed himself. Boldwood's apparent self-discipline is a characteristic of a twentieth-century man, whose calm and even dull surface conceals the possibility of turbulent life. He appears in the early part of the novel a saddened, somewhat embittered and lonely figure.

"The phases of Boldwood's life were ordinary enough, but his was not an ordinary nature. That stillness, which struck casual observers more than anything else in his character and habit, and seemed so precisely like the rest of inanition, may have been the perfect balance of enormous antagonistic forces - positives and negatives in fine adjustment. His equilibrium disturbed, he was in extremity at once. If an emotion possessed him at all, it ruled him; a feeling not mastering him was entirely latent. Stagnant or rapid, it was never slow. He was always hit mortally, or he was missed".

(Ch. 18, p. 153)

On receiving Bathsheba's message, he moves rapidly and suddenly from one extreme to another, the intensely reserved ascetic becomes the intensely passionate lover.

Furthermore, his love for Bathsheba as a stable, constant and reliable condition is doubtful compared to Oak's. Oak's declaration of his love for Bathsheba and his proposal to her, despite her discouraging reaction, reveal his powers of endurance and constancy, unlike Boldwood in terms of utter weakness and dependence. Boldwood, in fact, is torn between an idealized passion nourished by isolation and ignorance on the one hand and sensual preoccupation with the details of her body on the other; the very structure of jealousy which he later suffers is the physical obsession:

"He saw her black hair, her correct facial curves and profile, and the roundness of her chin and throat. He

saw then the side of her eyelids, eyes, and lashes, and the shape of her ear. Next he noticed her figure, her skirt and the very soles of her shoes"

(Ch. 17, p. 149)

This aspect of his personality is of utmost importance to an understanding of Boldwood. He is a man who has fiercely repressed his sexual instincts; Hardy calls him "the bachelor", "the celibate" and stresses the rigidity of his behaviour as he passes Bathsheba on the road after the market:

"The farmer had never turned his head once, but with eyes fixed on the most advanced point along the road, passed as unconsciously and abstractedly as if Bathsheba and her charms were thin air"

(Ch. 12, p. 126)

The character of Boldwood is a study of repression and Freud's general accounts of repression are similar to Hardy's description of Boldwood. Commenting on the tremendous impact of Bathsheba's message on Boldwood, a recent critic says that,

"Boldwood is originally fascinated by an anonymous message rather than a woman; he becomes infatuated with an image rather than a person; he insists on feeling confirmed in hope by the most reluctant and slender of promises. His downfall, then, demonstrates not woman's maliciously exercised power over men but rather the power of the mere idea of women over men. It shows men's capacity for destroying themselves by their own volatile and irreconcilable impulses"⁽³⁾

Even before Boldwood knows that it was Bathsheba who had sent the letter, he is fascinated and mystified by it and does his best to analyse its origin and motive. The reserved and solemn farmer is transformed into a romantic visionary unable to sleep because of his infatuation with the letter and the ubiquitous presence of its unknown writer.

"When Boldwood went to bed he placed the valentine in the corner of the looking-glass. He was conscious of its presence, even when his back was turned upon it. It was the first time in Boldwood's life that such an event had occurred ... The mysterious influences of night invested the writing with the presence of the unknown writer ... The vision of the woman writing ... had no individuality. She was a misty shape, and well she might be, considering that her original was at that moment sound asleep and oblivious of all love and letter-writing under the sky. Whenever Boldwood dozed she took a form, and comparatively ceased to be a vision; when he awoke there was the letter justifying the dream"

(Ch. 14, p. 133)

The view that says Boldwood embodies the extremity of Romanticism against which Hardy inveighs seems untrue. A better view, I think, is that Boldwood's impressions of reality are in the form of dreams or visions. Hardy's treatment of Boldwood shows that he was on the point of suggesting that his unbalanced state of mind derives from repressing a traumatic sexual experience in the unconscious. Admittedly, Hardy does not say this with any clarity, but he clearly saw the relevance of a person's past to his emotional development. Hardy is indecisive about that, in Boldwood's case, sometimes saying that his early years were wholly uneventful, sometimes hinting at catastrophic experiences. This uncertainty is raised almost as soon as Boldwood makes his appearance, in the conclusive discussion about him between Liddy and Bathsheba.⁽⁴⁾ Liddy says that "he met with a bitter disappointment when young", but Bathsheba replies, "People always say that". Hardy is intentionally ambivalent about Boldwood's past.

Just before Boldwood proposes to Bathsheba for the first time, Hardy gives us a clearer analysis of the disturbance in Boldwood's life:

"There was a change in Boldwood's exterior from its former impassibleness; and his face showed that he was now living outside his defences for the first time and with a fearful sense of exposure. It is the usual experience of strong natures when they love"

(Ch. 18, p. 154)

The imagery, as so often in Hardy, plays an important part in establishing in a visual way the nature of the character. The images of a "stronghold", of a man "living outside his defences", of "violent antagonistic forces" help to make visible Boldwood's interior struggle ~~—————~~ and the strength of the barriers he has built around his emotions. Hardy had understood what Freud later explained in detail. Hardy's attempts to show Boldwood's mind at work, after receiving the valentine, indicate a profound insight into the conscious. It is significant that in the midst of his visions about the unknown woman, Boldwood studies himself closely in the mirror. Hardy always stresses the characteristic self-absorption of neurotic people; here, Boldwood seems to be afraid that he is fading away - he sees himself as "wan", "insubstantial", with vacant eyes. This is in complete contrast with the simple vanity which Bathsheba shows when she, too, contemplates herself in a looking-glass. Later, Hardy emphasizes Boldwood's self-absorption more strongly when he and Gabriel are in despair over the marriage of Bathsheba and Troy. Gabriel is a stable, well-balanced man, even at times of utter misery. Boldwood remains totally wrapped up in himself, oblivious of all externals. By this technique of contrast, so characteristic of Hardy's structuring of his novels, Hardy is able to stress the neurotic nature of Boldwood.

Watching Bathsheba trade with a dashing young farmer, Boldwood's first impulse was "to go and thrust himself between

them." "Boldwood grew hot down to his hands with an incipient jealousy" (Ch. 17, p. 150). It is this jealousy which makes him shoot Sergeant Troy at the end of the novel. Thus even before Boldwood speaks to Bathsheba, he has taken the first step on his way toward self-destruction:

"The insulation of his heart by reserve during these many years, without a channel of any kind for disposable emotion, had worked its effect. It has been observed more than once that the causes of love are chiefly subjective, and Boldwood was a living testimony to the truth of the proposition. No mother existed to absorb his devotion, no sister for his tenderness, no idle ties for sense. He became surcharged with the compound, which was genuine lover's love"

(Ch. 18, p. 154)

Boldwood's first words to Bathsheba when he went to propose to her during the sheep-washing scene reveal his anomie and his sense of the pain of existence without her.⁽⁵⁾ It is clear that Bathsheba rejects his proposal, but he still chases her and as his hope for union with her waxes and wanes, his anomie intensifies because she becomes the sole purpose of his existence. Boldwood's hopes are frustrated when Bathsheba becomes fascinated by Sergeant Troy. This pattern of hope and despair is repeated in the novel after the apparent drowning of Troy.

" 'O Bathsheba - have pity upon me!' Boldwood burst out. 'God's sake, Yes - I am come to that low, lowest stage - to ask a woman for pity! Still, she is you - she is you' ... I am beyond myself about this, and am mad ... I am no stoic at all to be supplicating here; but I do supplicate to you. I wish you knew what is in me of devotion to you; but it is impossible, that. In bare human mercy to a lonely man, don't throw me off now!"

(Ch. 31, p. 233)

After begging Bathsheba's pity, he mourns the loss of his self-respect and public standing, then curses Sergeant Troy. He

seems to experience the world as wholly alien, he first despairs and considers his own death.

"Now the people sneer at me - the very hills and sky seem to laugh at me till I blush shamefully for my folly. I have lost my respect, my good name, my standing - lost it, never get it again. Go and marry your man - go on. You may as well. I have no further claim upon you. As for me, I had better go somewhere alone, and hide - and pray. I loved a woman once. I am now ashamed. When I am dead they'll say, Miserable love - sick man that he was. Heaven - heaven - if I had got jilted secretly, and the dishonour not known, and my position kept! But no matter, it is gone, and the woman not gained. Shame upon him - shame'. His unreasonable anger terrified her, and she glided from him, ..."

(Ch. 31, p. 236)

Boldwood is unable to see anything outside himself. On two occasions, by a mixture of bullying and pleading, he extracts promises from her. She is reluctant and obviously does what he asks out of pity and guilt. His reaction to this unhappiness of the woman he so passionately loves is to say "I'm happy now". Such self-absorption is almost total.

Hardy shows brilliantly, through the disaster to his stacks, how Boldwood's alienation restricts his ability to cope with the normal demands of life. Boldwood had been a highly competent farmer, but as his balance becomes more and more disturbed, he becomes less able to grapple with external problems. His neglect of the stacks, dramatically contrasted with Gabriel's fight to save Bathsheba's, shows effectively his mental derangement, loss of interest in the outside world and inhibition of all activity.

On numerous occasions before the shooting of Troy, Boldwood's tendency to self-destruction is markedly shown. After he fails in his efforts to bribe Troy into leaving Bathsheba, he realizes it would be a mistake to kill his rival, as he had threatened; then

he considers it far better to kill himself.

"things have gone wrong with me lately ... I was going to get a little settled in life; but in some way my plan has come to nothing ... I daresay I am a joke about the parish ... I am weak and foolish, and I don't know what, and I can't fend off my miserable grief! ... I had some faint belief in the mercy of God till I lost that woman. Yes, He prepared a gourd to shade me, and like the prophet I thanked Him and was glad. But the next day He prepared a worm to smite the gourd and wither it; and I feel it is better to die than to live"

(Ch. 38, p. 286)

The reappearance of Troy to reclaim Bathsheba only moments after Boldwood has gained her promise only means death to Boldwood. What follows is quite expected:

"When Bathsheba had cried out in her husband's grasp, Boldwood's face of gnashing despair had changed. The veins had swollen, and a frenzied look had gleamed in his eye. He had turned quickly, taken one of the guns, cocked it, and at once discharged it at Troy"

(Ch. 53, p. 401)

Before he could turn the second barrel on himself, Samway interferes:

" 'Well, it makes no difference!' Boldwood gasped. 'There is another way for me to die'. Then he broke from Samway, crossed the room to Bathsheba, and kissed her hand. He put on his hat, opened the door, and went into the darkness, nobody thinking of preventing him."

(Ch. 53, p. 401)

Thus ends Boldwood's tragic journey towards self-destruction. But there still remains the central question of the farmer's moral responsibility for shooting Troy and his attempt to kill himself. That Boldwood was insane when he shot Troy was generally believed:

"The conviction that Boldwood had not been morally responsible for his later acts now became general. Facts elicited previous to the trial had pointed

strongly in the same direction, but they had not been of sufficient weight to lead to an order for an examination into the state of Boldwood's mind. It was astonishing, now that a presumption of insanity was raised, how many collateral circumstances were remembered to which a condition of mental disease seemed to afford the only explanation - among others, the unprecedented neglect of his corn stacks in the previous summer"

(Ch. 55, p. 407,8)

But Gabriel Oak, whose judgement is known for its correctness throughout the novel, tells Smallbury that he cannot honestly say that he believes Boldwood was out of his mind when he shot Troy. Whatever the answer, Hardy certainly succeeds in creating a sense of what it is like to be alienated.

In Boldwood's case love destroys the mind; in that of young Fanny Robin it destroys the body. Boldwood's life ends in the loneliness of insanity or suicide, that of Fanny in the loneliness of death. Fanny's acute suffering is caused by her isolation from society represented by Sergeant Troy, in the first place. Fanny's prime aim was to get united with Troy, when she failed, she suffered until she died. If Boldwood's tragedy lies in his anomic nature, Fanny's ^{lies} in a cruel society represented by Troy. Whereas Fanny tried to "connect", Troy tried to "disconnect". Fanny is presented chiefly as a victim of Sergeant Troy's infidelity. Our sympathy is guided towards her in each of her brief appearances. When Gabriel Oak first meets her, we are told:

"Gabriel's fingers alighted on the young woman's wrist. It was beating with a throb of tragic intensity. He had frequently felt the same quick, hard beat in the femoral artery of his lambs when overdriven"

(Ch. 7, p. 87)

After he left her standing motionless by the tree, Gabriel "fancied that he had felt himself in the penumbra of a very deep

Fanny Robin becomes an exile from the little world of Weatherbury, wandering between Casterbridge and Melchester in the vain hope that Troy will marry her. Her few appearances in the novel are characterized by her utter solitude. Until she breaks down on the steps of Casterbridge Union-house, she is never presented in the context of human society. At the Barracks, she remains outside in the snow and darkness, separated by the river.

Fanny's painful isolation culminates in her superhuman efforts to reach Casterbridge Union-house without assistance. Fanny on Casterbridge Highway is reminiscent of King Lear raging on the heath. Some critics are dissatisfied with Hardy in this scene for "he comes dangerously close to heavy handed sentimentality, and might be justly accused of toadying to the Dickensian bathos for which many of his readers craved".⁽⁶⁾ The scene indeed affects us because it is so powerful an expression of the theme of the human isolation with which the novel, and Hardy's works in general, is chiefly preoccupied. Fanny's terrible isolation gives her a larger significance: it makes her an unforgettable image of suffering humanity. As she drags herself along Casterbridge Highway accompanied only by a benevolent dog, her sense of loneliness is heightened by the absence of human society of which she is in great need. The distant lights of the town, the crutches and the milestones are symbols of the human world which is tantalizingly far. The point that Hardy brilliantly drives home is that Fanny's struggle, in her desperate trip through the night to reach the Casterbridge Union-house before she collapses, succeeds only because a dog strangely appears to help her. The description of the dog is generalized, separating him from any particular breed and elevating him to something near the

force of nature.

"He was a huge, heavy, and quiet creature, standing, darkly against the low horizon, and at least two feet higher than the present position of her eyes. Whether Newfoundland, mastiff, bloodhound, or what not, it was impossible to say. He seemed to be of too strange and mysterious a nature to belong to any variety among those of popular nomenclature. Being thus assignable to no breed, he was the ideal embodiment of canine greatness - a generalization from what was common to all. Night, in its sad, solemn, and benevolent aspect, apart from its stealthy and cruel side, was personified in this form"

(Ch. 40, p. 295-6)

The significance of the dog appears at the end of the journey when the attendant at the Union-house stones away the only friend that nature has given Fanny.

What is more agonizing is that human society deserts Fanny in death as well as in life. The driver of her funeral cortege, Joseph Poorgrass, leaves the dead girl alone in the foggy wood while he goes to drink in the Buck's Head Inn. The description of the natural setting through which Fanny's body was passing gives the impression of sympathy with Fanny.

"It was a sudden overgrowth of atmospheric fungi which had their roots in the neighbouring sea, and by the time that horse, man, and corpse entered Yalbury Great Wood, these silent workings of an invisible hand had reached them ... The air was an eye suddenly struck blind ... There was no perceptible motion in the air, not a visible drop of water fell upon a leaf of the beeches, birches, and firs ... The trees stood in an attitude of intentness ... A startling quiet overhung all surrounding things ..."

(Ch. 42, p. 310)

This description, reminiscent of The Woodlanders, reaches its climax with the condensed fog dropping from the trees onto the coffin:

"The fog had by this time saturated the trees, and this was the first dropping of water from the overbrimming leaves"

(Ch. 42, p. 311)

Fanny's coffin scene represents the emotional climax of the novel, for it is here that a new turn in Bathsheba's moral education takes place. The shocking discovery that the coffin contained Fanny and her child causes her final isolation from Troy. Bathsheba, at the height of her pride, begins to perceive the bitter truth about her husband, and her compassion for Fanny turns to self-pity. She even contemplates suicide. Bathsheba's rise to humility starts from this scene. From this hour forwards, Bathsheba is no longer the proud, over-confident girl of her youth.

Troy enters. The husband and wife confront each other. He kisses the dead Fanny. It is at this crucial point that Bathsheba's feelings are defined:

"At the sight and sound of that, to her, unendurable act, Bathsheba sprang towards him. All the strong feelings which had been scattered over her existence since she knew what feeling was, seemed gathered together into one pulsation now. The revulsion from her indignant mood a little earlier, when she had meditated upon compromised honour, forestalment, eclipse in maternity by another, was violent and entire"

(Ch. 43, p. 326)

Troy turns on Bathsheba in feigned fury; the arguments he proffers are deeply-rooted in hypocrisy and deception:

"Ah! don't taunt me, madam. This woman is more to me, dead as she is, than ever you were, or are, or can be. If Satan had not tempted me with that face of yours, and those cursed coquetries, I should have married her ... but it is all too late! I deserve to live in torment for this ... You are nothing to me - nothing ... A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage. I am not morally yours"

(Ch. 43, p. 327)

Troy, as a matter of fact, is a deceiver. He deceived Fanny and Bathsheba. Even if he seems to make amends to Fanny by planting the flowers on her grave, we are made to believe that these efforts are thwarted when the pouring of the cloudburst through the gargoyle washed away the flowers. In this particular scene, Troy is actually as isolated from human sympathy as any of his three victims - Fanny, Boldwood and Bathsheba.

"He stood and meditated - a miserable man. Whither should he go? ... A man who has spent his primal strength in journeying in one direction has not much spirit left for reversing his course ... To turn about would have been hard enough under the greatest providential encouragement; but to find that Providence, far from helping him into a new course, or showing any wish that he might adopt one, actually jeered his first trembling and critical attempt in that kind, was more than nature could bear.

He slowly withdrew from the grave. He did not attempt to fill up the hole, replace the flowers, or do anything at all. He simply threw up his cards and forswore his game for that time and always."

(Ch. 46, pp.343,4)

Troy is far from being the conceited, careless and opportunist sergeant who disturbs and corrupts the pastoral world of Weatherbury and survives his relations with Bathsheba unharmed. He is quite as much the victim of his own complexities as Boldwood. He is even engaged in destroying himself as Boldwood was. Hardy sees the paradoxes in Troy's character from the start. One is that his love of women is mingled with fear of them. "He had been known to observe casually that in dealing with womankind the only alternative to flattery was cursing and swearing. There was no third method. 'Treat them fairly, and you are a lost man', he would say". (Ch. 25, p.199). In the novel, he both flatters and curses women, and he does finally become a lost man, though not through treating them fairly.

The tensions in his character, and to some extent in Bathsheba's character as well, are indicated in his conversation with her in chapter 26, The 'Scene on the Verge of the Hay-mead'. This scene has Biblical associations that suggest her in the part of Eve and him in the part of the tempting devil. In the process of flattering, tempting her, he makes the argument that the beautiful woman, because of her power to disrupt the lives of men who would otherwise have lived contentedly, is "hardly a blessing to her race". There is no doubt that Bathsheba succumbs both to Troy's "winning tongue" in this scene and to his sexual appeal symbolised in the sword display scene.⁽⁷⁾ She is completely enchanted by Troy, and is so totally under his spell that she cannot see the truth around her. Whether Hardy is more interested in concentrating on Bathsheba's vulnerability to temptation or on Troy's villainy in presenting the illusory and the deceitful, is not, to my mind, important. What is important, particularly in these two scenes, is that both, in different ways, are estranged from reality. Soon after Bathsheba commits the folly of marrying Troy, for which she pays a high price, and returns to Weatherbury, she becomes a listless, desolate and disenchanting victim.

Hardy's awareness of Troy's isolation is indicated by his sense of time. Instead of the continuity of the past, present and future, Hardy tells us, Troy is committed to a present discontinuous with the past or with the future.

"His outlook upon time was as a transient flash of the eye now and then: that projection of consciousness into days gone by and to come, which makes the past a synonym for the pathetic and the future a word for circumspection, was foreign to Troy. With him the past was yesterday; the future, tomorrow; never, the day after"

(Ch. 25, p. 197)

Because he is so completely trapped in an isolated present, he can have no sense of an act's result. Nowhere in the novel is he governed by anything except impulse. Troy's insular short-sightedness and concern with the present, disconnected with the past or the future, appear quite clearly in the Harvest Supper scene and the storm scene that follows. Troy is celebrating his wedding with the workmen by drinking brandy and water, and the wedding feast turns into a drunken revel so that no one except Oak is capable of saving the ricks from the storm.

Between the two extremes of conscious and almost unconscious destructive isolation represented by Boldwood, Fanny and Troy, stand two characters for whom isolation ultimately becomes creative force, Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everdene. Instead of sapping their energies, their loneliness ultimately becomes a source of strength.

The opening image of the solitary shepherd, typically Hardian, is one of the most memorable scenes of the novel:

"He stood still after looking at the sky as a useful instrument, and regarded it in an appreciative spirit, as a work of art superlatively beautiful. For a moment he seemed impressed with the speaking loneliness of the scene, or rather with the complete abstraction from all its compass of the sights and sounds of man. Human shapes, interferences, troubles, and joys were all as if they were not, and there seemed to be on the shaded hemisphere of the globe no sentient being save himself; he could fancy them all gone round to the sunny side"

(Ch. 2, p. 50)

This is majestic loneliness, the reader cannot fail to feel Oak's happiness in loneliness. This happy solitude on Norcombe Hill is troubled by the light from Bathsheba's lantern. Oak becomes aware of his isolation:

"It was an artificial light, almost close at hand. To find themselves utterly alone at night where company is desirable and expected makes some people fearful; but a case more trying by far to the nerves is to discover some mysterious companionship when intuition, sensation, memory, analogy, testimony, probability, induction - every kind of evidence in the logician's list - have united to persuade consciousness that it is quite in isolation"

(Ch. 2, pp.50,1)

Oak meets numerous occasions on which crushing isolation and fatal adversities befall him and could have destroyed him completely. Oak does not know the idealism of Boldwood nor the indifference of Troy. He overcomes the fatal misfortunes and their ensuing desolation and isolation by two things; first, he observes nature well, understands it, accepts it, and does not rebel against it emotionally; second, he tries to amend the evil, happening to anybody anywhere, as much as he can when he sees it. With these two things, Oak can adapt himself to hostile situations and achieve his aims in the end.

The contrast of Gabriel Oak with Farmer Boldwood is particularly striking. Oak is perhaps Hardy's most impressive portrayal of a well-balanced personality. He is imperturbable in the face of catastrophe, yet he is not insensitive: he is highly sensitive to music, to nature, he can feel his whereabouts in the dark by the nature of the ground underfoot. He is an almost idealised figure, with his responsibility and trustworthiness. Though he perfectly understands Bathsheba's "prescriptive infirmity", he falls in love with her and goes to propose to her. But she does not become the centre of his universe. When he is rejected by her, it is not the end of the world. After the loss of his sheep, a terrible catastrophe to a shepherd, he is poorer, but never inferior. He never loses his integrity or curses a jeering

Providence, but works hard and uses his intellect to produce the desired effect.

Not only does Oak understand his world well and patiently amend its unalterable evil to achieve his goals but also he manages to keep his sobriety and self-possession in the face of the obstacles he comes across from beginning to end. Some critics,⁽⁸⁾ in their analyses of Oak's success, mention his sense of the value of work. Ian Gregor, for instance, says, "It is the impersonality of work ... which Hardy uses as the counterpoint to the isolating self-absorption of passion"⁽⁹⁾. Oak is a hard worker, but he is not alienated from his work, for he enjoys its product. He extinguishes the fire and saves the ricks, he treats the bloated sheep and saves them, he protects the farm during the storm, etc.

Oak's philosophy is summed up succinctly in a remark he makes while munching a piece of bacon that had fallen on the ground "I never fuss about dirt in its pure state, and when I know what sort it is" (Ch. 8, p. 91). Roy Morrell has rightly described this statement as "a precise metaphor of what Oak has been doing in the wider sphere of life"⁽¹⁰⁾

Bathsheba succumbs to Troy's physical attraction and marries him. Soon after, she feels suspicious when she finds a woman's curl of hair in his case:

"She was conquered ... Her pride was indeed brought low by despairing discoveries of her spoliation by marriage with a less pure nature than her own. She chafed to and fro in rebelliousness, like a caged leopard; her whole soul was in arms, and the blood fired her face. Until she had met Troy, Bathsheba had been proud of her position as a woman ... She hated herself now ... O, if she had never stooped to folly of this kind ... and could only stand again, as she had stood on the hill at Norcombe, and dare Troy or any other man to pollute a hair of her head by his interference."

(Ch. 41, pp.303,4)

Her despairing reaction to Troy's infidelity reveals one of Hardy's most profound psychological insights, the power of love to cause desolation even if it is not mutual. The view that says that "Bathsheba is presented almost entirely from the 'outside', she is not a likely candidate for psychological probing"⁽¹¹⁾ is certainly mistaken. What is revealed from her many-sided character in her relationships with Troy only qualifies her for a penetrating psychological study. Following the gruesome coffin scene, Bathsheba spends the night outdoors, under a tree, the counterpart of Fanny's Casterbridge Highway. A revulsion against passionate love drives her into estrangement, however temporary, from the human world. Bathsheba's sudden realization of the nature of her relationship with Troy and consequently the reality of her existence, was so dazzling that she was not able to see it and must hide for sometime until she regains balance to divert her course. "She could think of nothing better to do with her palpitating self than to go in here and hide" (Ch. 44, p. 328). But Bathsheba's hiding lasted only for a short period, after which she welcomes the appearance of humanity, in the form of her faithful maid, Liddy Smallbury, so important to her recovery. "Bathsheba's heart bounded with gratitude in the thought that she was not altogether deserted" (Ch. 44, p. 330).

Another factor which should not be forgotten in talking about Bathsheba's desolation is her sense of guilt for Boldwood and her attempt to atone for her injury to him. At the news of Troy's alleged death, Boldwood seeks to renew his courtship of her. Bathsheba remembers her previous folly of the valentine and admits that:

"My treatment of you was thoughtless, inexcusable, wicked! I shall eternally regret it. If there had been anything, I could have done to make amends I would most gladly have done it - there was nothing on earth I so longed to do as to repair the error"

(Ch. 51, p. 376)

Like Sue Bridehead deciding by remarriage to Phillotson to punish herself for the death of her children, Bathsheba almost makes up her mind to marry Boldwood as a self-imposed punishment for a rash message. Boldwood encourages, even exploits, her moral masochism by always reminding her of the message. The attempt to make reparation to Boldwood was of course thwarted by Troy's return.

After the violent death of her husband, Bathsheba becomes a profoundly desolate, listless and isolated widow. Liddy describes her, "Her eyes are so miserable that she's not the same woman. Only two years ago she was a romping girl, and now she's this" (Ch. 55, p. 409).

The beginning of Bathsheba's changing course towards Oak is suggested very cleverly when she visits the grave of Troy and hears the children singing "Lead, Kindly Light". From crushing loneliness and isolation a new love is born in the heart of Bathsheba. Newman's hymn suggests, upon Oak's appearance on the scene, that Bathsheba hopes that he will forget the past, "Pride ruled my will: remember not past years", and that she is ready to forget Troy, "Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile,". The whole chapter, 56, entitled "Beauty in Loneliness" deals with Bathsheba's isolation, particularly after Gabriel announces he will give up the management of the farm because he is thinking of leaving England:

"Her life was becoming a desolation. So desolate was Bathsheba this evening, that in an absolute hunger for pity and sympathy, and miserable in that she appeared to have outlived the only true friendship she had ever owned, she put on her bonnet and cloak and went down to Oak's house..."

(Ch. 56, pp. 415,6)

When Bathsheba and Gabriel finally unite, and their isolation comes to an end, through the most intimate form of human companionship, marriage, Bathsheba and Gabriel share not passion, but

"that substantial affection which arises ... when the two who are thrown together begin first by knowing the rougher sides of each other's character, and not the best till further on, the romance growing up in the interstices of a mass of hard prosaic reality. This good-fellowship - camaraderie - usually occurring through similarity of pursuits, is unfortunately seldom superadded to love between the sexes"

(Ch. 56, p. 419)

Although the novel ends happily, yet when we think of a novel in which three of its main characters are completely destroyed, and the remaining two suffer most of the time, we have to think again. It has been argued that the novel can be read as "an idyllic celebration, a passport to Arcadia", with Gabriel Oak, holding his flute and crook, herding his sheep in the beautiful rural areas of Norcombe Hill and Weatherbury Farm. But the true spontaneous happiness, the original harmony and the absence of anxiety and unrest, essential characteristics of ancient pastorals, are quite obviously missing in FFMC. For Douglas Brown, Hardy's Wessex is a simple rural world, invaded by the sophistication of nineteenth-century urban life.⁽¹²⁾ Raymond Williams distinguishes two versions of pastoral; he calls the first "neo-pastoral" which developed from the sixteenth to the

eighteenth centuries in England and represented a bucolic world of innocence. The second he calls 'counter-pastoral' in which the countryside is seen as disrupted by money-seeking and luxury emanating from the court and the city.⁽¹³⁾ This version of the pastoral located the origins of rural problems in a world seen as external to the rural community. It has often been identified with Hardy.

Hardy's beautiful description of the great barn, the sheep-shearers, the hollow amid the ferns, the storm, etc. cannot prevent the reader from feeling a sense of disharmony, unrest and discomfort. This sense of disharmony is also noticed by Ian Gregor when he says, "As the description of the Barn fades away ..., the harmony it represents seems suddenly very limited and at the least precarious ... For instance, a sentence like 'the barn was natural to the shearers, and the shearers were in harmony with the barn' may be true to a mood in FFMC, but the form the novel finally takes will reveal it as a sentiment lying only on the edge of Hardy's concern".⁽¹⁴⁾ One of the most powerful forces in the novel is the sense that there is a lack of identity between agricultural workers and their continuing cycle of labour similar to the alienation between industrial workers and their daily toil. Far from the Madding Crowd is a class-conscious novel; in it an impassable social gulf exists between workers and farmers. Seen from the rustics' point of view, Wessex is no timeless Arcadia. Small farmers disappear and estates are consolidated into enormous properties. Bathsheba's house had "once been the memorial hall upon a small estate around it ... Now merged in the vast tract of a non-resident landlord, which comprised several such modest demesnes" (Ch. 9, p. 106). Traditional village life has begun to vanish. The rustics withdraw to voice their real thoughts in pubs.

But the note of irony about their superiors is unmistakable to anyone who reads their words:

"Seems her old uncle's things were not good enough for her. She've bought all but everything new. There's heavy chairs for the stout, weak and wiry ones for the slender ... pictures, for the most part wonderful frames.

And long horse-hair settles for the drunk ...
Likewise looking-glasses for the pretty, and lying
books for the wicked"

(Ch. 15, p. 138)

The pastoral glow is qualified by an underlying irony and a withholding of full, joyful celebration, and the pressures of modern consciousness have advanced still further. By the end of the novel two great farms have been united into one and the social gulf between the married pair and the rustics has widened. Bathsheba's marriage to Gabriel has further polarized the community. Gabriel, who once regarded himself as occupying "that vast middle space of Laodicean neutrality which lay between the communion people of the parish and the drunken section" (Ch. 1, p. 41), has now definitely gone over to the communion people. He, now under suspicion in the village as feathering his own nest, has lost his reputation as a man dedicated to the "defence and salvation of the body by daily bread".

That is what makes me understand the title of the novel, Far from the Madding Crowd, derived from Gray's Elegy, as ironic. Gray describes the innocent, happy, contented and ordinary country people of his day:

Far from the madding Crowd's ignoble Strife,
Their sober Wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool Sequestered Vale of Life
They kept the noiseless Tenor of their Way.

At least four main characters in FFMC are destroyed by their "ignoble strife"; their "wishes" are not "sober", and they lead astray; Weatherbury Farm is no longer "the cool sequestered vale of life" after the terrible chain of catastrophic events has taken place; the people of Weatherbury no longer keep "the noiseless tenor of their way", are not far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife; they are in the heart of it.

Notes

1. Lawrence Jones, "George Eliot and Pastoral Tragicomedy in Hardy's FFMC", Studies in Philology 77(1980), pp. 402-425; Richard C. Carpenter, "The Mirror and the Sword", NCF, 18(1963-64), pp.331-345; Michael Squires, "FFMC as Modified Pastoral", NCF, 25(1970-71), pp. 299-326
2. All page citations throughout the text refer to The New Wessex Paperback Edition, Macmillan (London, 1974)
3. Ian Ousby, "Love-Hate Relations: Bathsheba, Hardy and the Men in FFMC", The Cambridge Quarterly, 10(1981-82), p. 36.
4. in Ch. 12
5. see Chapter 19, pp. 159-161
6. Marlene Springer, Hardy's Use of Allusion, p. 68
7. The phallic symbolism of Troy's sword-play has often been remarked, but there are many other similarly erotic images which R.C. Carpenter has pointed out in his essay "The Mirror and the Sword", NCF, 18(1963-64), 331-345
8. Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy; Ian Gregor, The Great Web; Raymond Williams, The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence
9. The Great Web, p. 56
10. Thomas Hardy, The Will and The Way, p. 63
11. Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, p. 55
12. Douglas Brown, Thomas Hardy

13. Raymond Williams, The Country and The City

14. The Great Web, p. 69

Chapter Four

"The Return of the Native"

(1878)

Chapter Four

The Return of the Native

All Hardy's novels deal with the problems both of adjusting to changes in society and of coping with its failure to change in response to the individual's needs. His treatment of character emphasizes that individuals as well as society are in a process of change and that novelists' methods of exploring character must change in order to reflect this and to take into account new insights. Clym, Knight, Fitzpiers, Angel, Sue and Jude are all examples of the problems of "advanced" thinkers in a world which adamantly resists any challenge to its attitudes and preconceptions. These "advanced" thinkers are themselves hampered by these same preconceptions which they share, often unconsciously, with the society they criticise. In them Hardy finds scope for examining the psychological, social and cultural effects of being ahead of one's time while at the same time attacking "the inert mass of crystallized opinion"⁽¹⁾, which he tried to undermine in all his writing.

From Far from the Madding Crowd, or even earlier, to Jude the Obscure, we can see Hardy's interest in complex, tormented, maladjusted and alienated beings. Irving Howe suggests that in The Return of the Native, "a new kind of sexuality, neurotically wilful but also perversely exciting makes its appearance".⁽²⁾ This vividly describes the quality of Eustacia's passions, but it is not true to say that such passions appear here for the first time; the sentence could be applied to Boldwood, and even to Miss Aldclyffe in Desperate Remedies. In this respect, The Return of the Native is not a new departure, but a continuation in the line of Hardy's development which was to culminate in Jude the Obscure.

Howe continues: "A thick cloud - the cloud of modern, inherently problematic consciousness - falls across the horizon of Wessex".⁽³⁾ It is certainly true that Hardy sees Clym as "a modern problematic consciousness", but I would deny that this is an innovation for Hardy since we see glimpses of similar problems in Knight in A Pair of Blue Eyes. In The Return of the Native, Hardy is following up some lines of thought about psychology and about sexual relationships which he has already tentatively introduced in earlier novels.

The famous opening chapter of the novel, "A Face on which Time Makes but Little Impression", initiates the theme of alienation even before the appearance of man in the novel. Most critics think highly of this remarkable chapter, and one compares it to "the entry of the gods in Wagner",⁽⁴⁾ it is the prelude to a sad symphony dealing with the pathetic fate of man. This barren and dreary waste called Egdon Heath seems to symbolise the indifference of nature to man and his activities. The sense one gets from contemplating the ideas that Hardy evokes, both by his description and by his allusions, is similar to that evoked by T.S. Eliot in The Waste Land, even darker and clearer. Egdon Heath is not just a stage for a handful of characters to strut and fret, nor is it background or a setting for the novel. Egdon Heath is portrayed as a gigantic living creature. It is "every thing man is not, as well as what he is".⁽⁵⁾ The heath actually binds the structure and the theme and encompasses all other elements of the novel. Every thing ultimately relates to this nodal point. Within the heath, Hardy unfolds his vision of reality. The heath is the world.

Though Hardy has created the world of Wessex in fiction -

almost all his novels take place in that rural environment in the South West of England - he creates a special landscape for each novel to suit the theme. The commercial world of Casterbridge, the agricultural world of The Weatherbury Farms, the social life of the village in the woodlands are all different landscapes portrayed carefully to suit the different themes of their respective novels. The Return of the Native is the world of Egdon Heath.

Hardy intentionally tries to give us a limitless picture of the Heath, we do not know where it is situated, or where its outer limits are. Hardy does his best to obfuscate the picture of the Heath to maximize its psychological influence on the readers as well as on the characters of the novel. Even the three or four buildings on the Heath are not described in any detail. Hardy, considering that he was an architect before he took to writing, does not tell much about Mistover Knap, or Blooms-End or The Quiet Woman Inn, or Clym's cottage. He excludes detailed description of all these buildings to concentrate on the Heath itself, with its insects, moths, kinds of plantations, valleys and hills. The Heath is an entity pulsing with life and whose voice is the wind:

"Gusts in innumerable series followed each other from the north-west, and when each one of them raced past the sound of its progress resolved into three. Treble, tenor, and bass notes were to be found therein. The general ricochet of the whole over pits and prominences had the gravest pitch of the chime. Next there could be heard the baritone buzz of a holly tree. Below these in force, above them in pitch, a dwindled voice strove hard to a husky tune, which was the peculiar local sound alluded to. Thinner and less immediately traceable than the other two, it was far more impressive than either. In it lay what may be called the linguistic peculiarity of the heath; and being audible nowhere on earth off a heath, it afforded a shadow of reason for the woman's tenseness, which continued as unbroken as ever"

(I, 6, 81)(6)

It is a self-contained, powerful, awesome, influential landscape that makes man feel small and petty. The Heath "was found to be the hitherto unrecognized original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster" (I, 1, 35). This identification of the heath with the unconscious at the beginning of the book establishes its significance in Hardy's portrayal of the human psyche. Through his use of the heath, Hardy suggests great depths in his characters; the unconscious remains unknown, though we are aware of its existence. Eustacia's affinity with the heath, and her antagonism to it, gives complexity and depth to her character. Whole areas of her consciousness remain mysterious, unanalysed, but we are made aware that they exist. In this, as in so many other things, Hardy is going in the same direction as Lawrence.

This remarkable life that Hardy gives the Heath made some critics believe that Egdon Heath is the most important character in the novel, others think it "overpictorialised". In The Return of the Native, and indeed in all his novels, Hardy is much more intimately concerned with the portrayal of human dilemmas than with the documenting of social conditions. The importance of Egdon Heath in the novel lies mainly in the way Hardy uses it to enlarge our concept of human nature. D.H. Lawrence voiced the classic view that Egdon Heath is the most important character in the book. He attributes the whole tragedy to the great power of Egdon "whose dark soil was strong and crude and organic as the body of a beast ... the deep, black source of tragedy. Egdon Heath matters more than the people who move upon it".⁽⁷⁾ William Rutland follows Lawrence in asserting that Egdon Heath is the principal character of the novel for "we are made to feel its vast impassivity as a

living presence".⁽⁸⁾ Such views as Lawrence's and Rutland's exaggerate the influence exercised by Egdon Heath. These views regard Hardy's characters as puppets, totally insignificant against an overwhelming background; these views imply that the characters are purely physical beings and ignore the importance Hardy gives to their inner existence. Certainly, Hardy saw man as dwarfed by the universe, but at the same time he showed him as a central feature of it. Hardy subjects both his characters and landscape to subtle and sensitive scrutiny. By observing meticulously the external manifestations of emotion, Hardy wants to suggest that these observable "expressions" reveal only the surface, and that there are vast and invisible depths of the psyche; he is thus moving towards the view that human beings are inexplicable. This is the beginning of Hardy's exploration of that aspect of human beings which D.H. Lawrence felt was his central concern as a novelist. Hardy made a small, cautious advance to the edge of an area into which Lawrence boldly plunged.

The unascribed title page motto draws the attention of the reader. It seems to introduce the theme of the novel. This motto reads as follows:

"To sorrow
I bade good morrow,
And thought to leave her far away behind;
But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly;
She is so constant to me and so kind.
I would deceive her,
And so leave her
But ah! She is so constant and so kind."

One wonders why Hardy left these lines from Keats's Endymion unascribed. By citing this motto Hardy strikes the key-note of a novel in which sorrow is constant to its main characters. The

English Romantic poets' influence on Hardy is immense and Keats's influence is particularly obvious in the portrayal of the character of Eustacia in the celebrated chapter "Queen of Night" (I, 7). The motto from Endymion and the impact of Keats on Hardy may have tempted some critics to force a parallel between Endymion and The Return of the Native. To say that The Return of the Native is a "highly illuminating use of Keatsian themes" is far-fetched and twisting the novel to fit into an imposed frame. It is not only Keats who influenced Hardy's creation of Eustacia Vye, but tens of authors, from the Greeks to the Victorians, contributed to Hardy's portrait of her. It is true that Eustacia is a romantic character, and that her romanticism is a major cause for her alienation. What seems, to my mind, more appropriate to say is that Hardy, in all his major novels and especially in The Return of the Native, reflects more the influence of Matthew Arnold than that of Keats. Hardy's sombre outlook and his cautious pessimism echo nineteenth-century thought, particularly Arnold.

Hardy lived sixty years in the nineteenth century and twenty eight years in the twentieth. A cursory look at the chronological tables of the second half of the nineteenth and the first three decades of the twentieth makes it abundantly clear that Hardy's problem is that he lived in two widely different worlds. Hardy was brought up in Victorian England. Hardly had he begun to imbibe the Victorian outlook in matters of religion, thought and politics when the earth began to collapse under his feet. Hardy felt a sense of bewilderment and melancholy brought on by the ebbing of the Sea of Faith, a sense of being stranded between epochs -

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born ... (9)

Hardy's work could be interpreted as a serious attempt to find his balance in a world that was violently shaking before him. The dilemma which Hardy found himself in is correctly diagnosed as "the emotional price of modernism: the sense of psychic dislocation and alienation, of wandering in an unmapped no man's land 'between two worlds'".⁽¹⁰⁾ These two worlds seem to be symbolised in a passage in which Hardy describes Egdon Heath:

The heaven being spread with this pallid screen and the earth with the darkest vegetation, their meeting-line at the horizon was clearly marked. In such contrast the heath wore the appearance of an instalment of night which had taken up its place before its astronomical hour was come: darkness had to a great extent arrived hereon, while day stood distinct in the sky ... The distant rims of the world and of the firmament seemed to be a division in time no less than a division in matter"

(I,1,33)

The bright sky and the dark heath seem to be bold images of two sharply distinguished worlds. The glowing sky stands for the hope, the dark heath for the forces of character and fate that defeat them. The Return of the Native and, indeed, Hardy's other novels, oscillate between these two worlds. Put in another way, "Hardy's double-visioned universe emerges from a reconciliation of two major Victorian concepts - the Darwinian world of mechanical science and natural law, and Arnold's world of culture and poetry - both of which Hardy admits with a kind of dialectical tension throughout the novel"⁽¹¹⁾

In The Return of the Native Eustacia Vye is a beautiful woman with higher demands for happiness. She is "the raw material of divinity. On Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passions and instincts which made a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman"

(I,7,93). Her appearance suggests the utter zest for existence at its brightest. But she has been living in suppression because she has to live in a place that does not harmonize well with her longings. Eustacia's first appearance on Egdon Heath clearly represents the elemental urges of human consciousness which have broken harmony with Nature. She moves upon the immobile heath, cries for happiness and turns herself into an exile. Hardy stands detached in helpless compassion while he observes her little might at strife with her inexorable Fate.

"Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto. Her appearance accorded well with this smouldering rebelliousness and the shady splendour of her beauty was the real surface of the sad and stifled warmth within her."

(I,7,94)

Eustacia could not be reconciled with Egdon Heath. She had not learnt, was not even willing to learn, to temper her longings. Upon the heath where "she was forced to abide", revolting against her situation, dreaming of her imaginary home-land symbolized by Paris, 'she felt like one banished'.

"To dwell on a heath without studying its meaning was like wedding a foreigner without learning his tongue. The subtle beauties of the heath were lost to Eustacia; she only caught its vapours. An environment which would have made a contented woman a poet, a suffering woman a devotee, a pious woman a psalmist, even a giddy woman thoughtful, made a rebellious woman saturnine."

(I,7,97-8)

She saw in love her deliverance:

"To be loved to madness - such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover"

(I,7,96)

She had learnt that "love was but a doleful joy. Yet she desired it, as one in a desert would be thankful for brackish water". Eustacia was hardly aware that love was only a small part of the sensuous luxuries she wanted. She had looked upon her would-be lover as a means to ~~material~~[†] happiness and conductor into the realms of Parisian splendour. She fell in love with Clym at first hearing about his expected arrival and soon forgot inconstant Wildeve. But she was mistaken about Clym, he had decided never to return to Paris. He had even explained to her plainly during their period of courtship that he was determined to live out his ethical system and teach it to others upon the heath. Yet she cherished the fond hope that somehow he would be prevailed upon to return. So she married him, only to be disillusioned soon that he was not to be prevailed upon, that he loved his ideas far more than he loved her, and that she herself did not love him so much as she loved her dream of Paris. Clym sees her agony later and says:

"I suppose when you first saw me and heard about me I was wrapped in a sort of golden halo to your eyes - a man who knew glorious things, and had mixed in brilliant scenes - in short, an adorable, delightful distracting hero?"

'Yes', she said, sobbing"

(IV,3,278)

She confesses this still more clearly to Wildeve, while at the same time justifying her desires and also appreciating Clym's worthiness:

"But do I desire unreasonably much in wanting what is called life - music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world? That was the shape of my youthful dream; but I did not get it. Yet I thought I

saw the way to it in my Clym'

'And you only married him on that account?'

'There you mistake me. I married him because I loved him, but I won't say that I didn't love him partly because I thought I saw a promise of that life in him''

(IV,6,303)

Hardy is of course sympathetic with her spontaneous urges for "what is called life". Of rebellious Eustacia, resolved to shake off gloom, Hardy observes:

"To an onlooker her beauty would have made her feelings almost seem reasonable. The gloomy corner into which accident as much as indiscretion*led even a moderate partisan to feel that she had cogent reasons for asking the Supreme Power by what right a being of such exquisite finish had been placed in circumstances calculated to make of her charms a curse rather than a blessing."

(IV,3,279-80)

But Hardy, in spite of his sympathy, does not approve of her thoughtless force of longing which proves destructive. It is clear in the passage quoted above that her feelings would "almost seem reasonable". There is no reason why the desires of such a beautiful girl languishing upon the heath should not be satisfied. But the universe is irrational, and her condition is irremediable. In view of this, her struggle for an escape amounts to sheer madness. The disharmony of existence grows in exact proportion to the intensity of our impossible demands from the world. Eustacia fails to understand that her own frantic quest for the homeland after heart's desire has alienated her in the only place where she is condemned to live. Her self-alienation blinds her to the right way of establishing harmony by turning the bitter divorce of existence into a peaceful co-existence with Nature. However, her "grandeur of temper" is truly heroic in the tragic sense. She

* had brought this woman might have led →

conceives, like a pagan, "some indistinct, colossal Prince of the World, who had framed her situation and ruled her lot", and moans:

"O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all.

(V,7,372)

Presented largely from an external viewpoint, Hardy creates a passionate, fascinating, yet neurotically maladjusted personality. Even when she is seen in close-up, it is stressed that the view is that of an outsider only able to guess at what is taking place in her mind. Yet, while emphasizing that the view of her is external, Hardy creates an intense interest in what is going on in her mind. Hardy's position of critical detachment in describing "The Queen of Night" creates mixed feelings in the reader and contributes to our sense of her tortured and conflicting emotions.

Eustacia is an isolated character, rarely seen in company with other people. The reader hardly forgets the "lonely figure" on the Rainbarrow when he is first introduced to Eustacia. She is "Queen of Night", "Queen of Solitude", "Queen of Love"; her associations are with loneliness, alienation, despondency, desperation, despair, imprisonment, isolation, depression, anxiety, uneasiness, gloom, desolation, suicide, drowning, frustration, rebelliousness, etc. The list of associations could be extended. We acknowledge the ultimate irreconcilability of the contradictory forces in Eustacia's nature. Her family conditions seem to have aggravated her excruciating sense of isolation. With both parents dead, she is living without brothers or sisters with her old grandfather in "the loneliest of lovely houses" on Egdon

Heath, an isolated "vast tract of unenclosed wild". What intensifies her sense of isolation is that she does not love the people of Egdon and always keeps away from them. She confesses to Clym, "I have not much love for my fellow-creatures. Sometimes I quite hate them" (III,3,209). This social isolation deepens her non-conformity to society.

To emphasize Eustacia's disharmony with society, Hardy surrounds her with an air of witchcraft and represents her not as one of the local inhabitants of Egdon heath, but rather as a mysterious supernatural creature. Susan Nunsuch tells us "she is very strange in her ways" (I,3,57) and tries to kill her by traditional magic rites. Eustacia herself offers Johnny Nunsuch a "crooked" sixpence for his wages. The numerous classical, Biblical and cultural references to her show that Hardy, under the influence of Arnold, seems to intend Eustacia to represent partially Arnold's idea of Hellenism. But in view of the futility of her ambitions, implied in her tragic suicide at the end of the novel, Hardy may suggest the inadequacy of Hellenism in the modern world. Eustacia failed "to see things as they really are," the gist of Arnold's Hellenism.

Eustacia's daily existence reiterates the pattern of long periods of melancholy and rebelliousness caused by her loneliness, and then short bursts of passionate and imaginative idealizing in an effort to dispel her gloom. The dualities and the split nature observed in Eustacia's character are due to the complex nature of Eustacia as a self-alienated character. A recent critic has observed that Eustacia's becoming a mummer involves her assumption of "the heroic masculine role to which she is always aspiring. She wants to alter her essential human conditions, to change her sex. A dissatisfaction so thorough-going amounts to a denial of life

itself"(12). Though this is put in a rather strong way, it is not far from the truth. In the first meeting ever to take place between Clym and Eustacia, Clym asks why girls often play as mummers.

"To get excitement and shake off depression,' she said in low tones.

'What depressed you?'

'Life! That's a cause of depression a good many have to put up with'"

(II,6,169)

Eustacia's self-division and bifurcation of character is clearly noticed in the contradictory perspectives of her view of life. It has been argued that "Hardy's total picture of Eustacia involves two quite different perspectives and implies two quite different estimations of the validity of her view of life: Hardy suggests that she possesses a godlike awareness of time and change and at the same time that she has a schoolgirl's warped and distorted notions of the life about her"(13).

This split in Eustacia's character, making her appear as a Janus-like figure, has drawn the attention of another critic who sees her double personality as "Eustacia Regina", and the "Other Eustacia". Eustacia Regina is "the Eustacia of Hardy's rhetoric - goddess, woman, witch, beauty, who rebels in high Promethean fashion against the gods and fate opposing to them a will as fierce and proud as theirs". The Other Eustacia is ^{an} "emotionally unstable adolescent girl given to self-pity and unhealthy melancholy, basically cold and selfish, a first cousin to Hedda Gabler, interested in others as a means to gratify her ambition and desire".(14) These contradictions that appear in the character

of Eustacia are not ascribed to Hardy's "technical fail[ure] to fuse the two Eustacias into one"⁽¹⁵⁾, but to the complex nature of such an alienated character as Eustacia. Hardy sees and understands her character very clearly and portrays her honestly. Eustacia Vye is not "pasteboard of rhetoric".⁽¹⁶⁾ She is a convincingly and genuinely tragic character.⁽¹⁷⁾

Eustacia's marriage to Clym may be the unhappiest event in her life. This marriage certainly shows absolute rashness on the part of both of them. They see each other as instruments and opportunities for realizing their dreams. The moment Eustacia realised her marriage would not fulfil her dreams of living in Paris, she becomes an intensely alienated character, alienated from herself, her husband and from Egdon Heath. Nothing is actually in common between them to substantiate a happy or even an ordinary marriage. Clym's over-spirituality and lack of sexuality, which is understood in Eustacia's words, "He's an enthusiast about ideas, and careless about outward things. He often reminds me of the Apostle Paul ... but the worst of it is that though Paul was excellent as a man in the Bible he would hardly have done in real life" (IV,6,302), might have been a contributing factor in her alienation from him.

In a state of utter despair and frustration after the disappearance of enchantment, Eustacia contemplates suicide. "To Eustacia the situation seemed such a mockery of her hopes that death appeared the only door of relief if the satire of Heaven should go much further" (IV,3,279). When Charley saw her holding the pistols and contemplating them, he took them away and furtively locked them up in the stable away from her. She blamed him:

"'Why should I not die if I wish?' she said tremulously. 'I have made a bad bargain with life, and I am weary of it - weary. And now you have hindered my escape. O, why did you, Charley! what makes death painful except the thought of others' grief? - and that is absent in my case, for not a sigh would follow me!'"

(V,4,354)

Just before this scene in which she blames Charley for hiding the pistols away from her, we see Eustacia in the utmost degree of frustration and despair. She pours her wrath on Clym:

"O, you are too relentless - there's a limit to the cruelty of savages! I have held out long - but you crush me down. I beg for mercy - I cannot bear this any longer - it is inhuman to go further with this!"

(V,3,348)

Almost mad she wanders through the storm. Just as Boldwood's murder of Troy and Tess's murder of Alec are treated dramatically, so here Eustacia's drowning is a dramatic occurrence, shown from a distance in a scene of great dramatic power. In this episode, Hardy combines the psychological and the dramatic, and its effectiveness derives from the explorations of her tormented mental state which lead up to this moment. All we know of the fall into the water is what Clym knows. We are left to speculate whether it was accidental or suicidal. This question of Eustacia's ambiguous death has long been a subject of discussion among critics. Some critics, crediting Diggory Venn's guess that Eustacia fell into the weir, insist that she died accidentally, while others follow Clym, Captain Vye, and Charley that she committed suicide.⁽¹⁸⁾

Clym is the earliest of Hardy's "modern" characters, who suffer from the "ache of modernism". There are complexities and inner contradictions that confront us in the character of Clym.

Hardy states clearly that Clym's mind is not "well-proportioned". In the course of the novel he shows how he veers towards madness on several occasions - during his nervous breakdown, after his mother's death, when he is overwhelmed by feelings of guilt, in his insane rage with Eustacia after discovering about the closed door, and in his preaching at the end. But Hardy does not present Clym simply as an unbalanced personality, but chiefly as a representative of the problems of "modern" man's difficulties in adjusting to new ways of thinking and feeling, especially those arising from the loss of religious faith. These difficulties of adjusting to new intellectual insight occur in A Pair of Blue Eyes, where Knight's intellectual development is seen as emotionally inhibiting, and later in Angel, Jude and Sue. Clym is portrayed as a modern tragic hero, whose convictions lead him to renounce the pleasures of civilization and return to his native heath, only to be ultimately defeated by Nature's indifference to man's idealism. The idea of Clym as a modern man, with the ravages of profound thinking on his outward appearance, is the driving force in his character. Clym is the central character of The Return of the Native, and in conceiving him, Hardy seems to have allowed a certain "bifurcation" of character to mar his aesthetic sensibility.⁽¹⁹⁾ Clym's dissatisfaction with the diamond business, his hope of improving the minds of the dwellers of Egdon Heath and his conversations with his mother suggest a philosophical turn of mind. That Clym embodies modern man's alienation is the central issue of the novel. This is how Clym first appears in the novel:

"... it was really one of those faces which convey less the idea of so many years as its age than of so much experience as its store ... the age of a modern man is to be measured by the intensity of his history ... The beauty here visible would in no long time be ruthlessly overrun by its parasite, thought, ... Had Heaven

preserved Yeobright from a wearing habit of meditation, people would have said, 'A handsome man'. Had his brain unfolded under sharper contours they would have said, 'A thoughtful man'. But an inner ~~st~~venuousness was preying upon an outer symmetry, and they rated his look as singular ... He already showed that thought is a disease of flesh, and indirectly bore evidence that ideal physical beauty is incompatible with emotional development and a full recognition of the coil of things."

(II,6,162)

The strain of prolonged thought which had originated in anguish at the perception of disharmony of existence, has told upon his handsome face. Yet he still continues the struggle against the tendencies drawing him towards despair. All this is shown clearly in his look:

"As for his look, it was a natural cheerfulness striving against depression from without, and not quite succeeding. The look suggested isolation, but it revealed something more. As is usual with bright natures, the deity that lies ignominiously chained within an ephemeral human carcass shone out of him like a ray."

(II,6,163)

The opening chapter of Book Third is very important in understanding the character of Clym. The chapter bears the significant title, "My Mind to me a Kingdom is", which is the first line of a poem by Sir Edward Dyer. Hardy's bitter irony in citing this line cannot escape the reader. It alludes to Clym's insistence on educating the heathmen. Hardy describes Clym as he is now or as he surely will be:

"In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the typical countenance of the future. Should there be a classic period to art hereafter, its Pheidias may produce such faces. The view of life as a thing to be put up with, replacing that zest for existence which was so intense in early civilization, must ultimately enter so thoroughly into the constitution of the advanced races that its facial expression will become

accepted as a new artistic departure. People already feel that a man who lives without disturbing a curve of feature, or setting a mark of mental concern anywhere upon himself, is too far removed from modern perceptiveness to be a modern type. Physically beautiful men - the glory of the race when it was young - are almost an anachronism now; and we may wonder whether at some time or other, physically beautiful women may not be an anachronism likewise"

(III,1,191)

Clym registers in his face the cost of self-awareness, and for Hardy, this is an inescapable part of the evolution of human consciousness. Hardy seems to be saying further that it is the artists who have helped to make us aware of this: each age needs its own Pheidias. But Clym's face is not a passive register recording endurance of 'life as a thing to be put up with', it seeks to shape life, to give it meaning. Hardy observes of Clym further:

"The truth seems to be that a long line of disillusioned centuries has permanently displaced the Hellenic idea of life, or whatever it may be called. What the Greeks only suspected we know well; what their Aeschylus imagined our nursery children feel. That old-fashioned revelling in the general situation grows less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws, and see the quandary that man is in by their operation"

(III,1,191)

This passage is of crucial importance in the novel; the "disillusioned centuries" are hostile to the "Hellenic view of life" largely because of "the quandary that man is in" by reason of the operation of "natural laws". "The zest for existence", the Hellenic spirit has had to yield to the "view of life ^{as} a thing to be put with with". Clym is a product of these "disillusioned centuries" and has learnt "to put up with" the conditions of existence, replacing by resignation and surrender both the pagan zest for, and a vain revolt against the general situation.

Clym is principally an idealist who found himself misplaced in the flourishing diamond business in Paris. Hardy observes:

"That waggery of fate which started Clive as a writing clerk, Gay as a linen-draper, Keats as a surgeon, and a thousand others in a thousand other odd ways, banished the wild and ascetic heath lad to a trade whose sole concern was with the especial symbols of self-indulgence and vainglory"

(III,1,192)

As Ian Gregor says, of all Hardy's novels, with the exception of Jude the Obscure, The Return of the Native is "the most preoccupied with a social consciousness".⁽²⁰⁾ He returns home in order to teach his people "knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence" (III,2,196), and self-discipline that could ease the anguish of the human situation. Clym explains his decision to remain in Egdon and not return to Paris by saying,

"my business was the idlest, vainest, most effeminate business that ever a man could be put to. That decided me: I would give it up and try to follow some rational occupation among the people I knew best, and to whom I could be of most use. I have come home ... I shall keep a school ...

'He'll never carry it out in the world,' said Fairway.
'In a few weeks he'll learn to see things otherwise'

"'Tis good-hearted of the young man', said another.
'But, for my part, I think he had better mind his business"

(III,1,195)

It is clear why Clym should find his work in Paris an idleness and an affront to his notion of what is fitting for a man of education. And it is not difficult to see that coming home to extend the awareness of 'the Egdon eremites' in the way of the world is fitting in a way that his work in Paris can never be. Nevertheless, Fairway has a sharper perception of the gulf that separates Clym from them than he has. The rustics have a firmer

grasp of social realities than their teacher, in the sense that they feel his aim, 'I shall keep a school', less potent in effecting change than he does.

When Clym wants to teach his people "knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence", he wants his class to learn how to raise themselves above others ethically rather than materially. Clym could not see the importance of material prosperity as the first stage towards spiritual development. His notion that what Egdon needs, above all, is knowledge is Clym's real limitation hinted at by the chapter's title "My Mind to me a Kingdom is". Hardy comments:

"In passing from the bucolic to the intellectual life the intermediate stages are usually two at least, frequently many more; and one of these stages is almost sure to be worldly advance. We can hardly imagine bucolic placidity quickening to intellectual aims without imagining social aims as the transitional phase. Yeobright's local peculiarity was that in striving at high thinking he still cleaved to plain living - nay, wild and meagre living in many respects, and brotherliness with clowns ... A man who advocates aesthetic effort and deprecates social effort is only likely to be understood by a class to which social effort has become a *stale* matter."

(III,2,196-7)

Clym does not understand that knowledge, 'aesthetic effort', is not something that can ever be aimed at in isolation, that intellectual development goes hand in hand with social and moral development, that knowledge is itself part of the total consciousness of the age. The people of Egdon are not yet ripe for him because of the domination of the Heath over them:

"In consequence of this relatively advanced position, Yeobright might have been called unfortunate. The rural world was not ripe for him. A man should be only partially before his time ..."

(III,2,196)

Clym is trapped between two experiences, his insistence to 'keep a school' and his fellow-countrymen's negative response, and when he is made to feel the conflict between them, he becomes radically self-estranged. To the extent that Clym lives immoderately far ahead of his times, he is a prophet misunderstood by his people. When Clym pursues his chosen course of action, Hardy describes his mind as ill-proportioned:

"Was Yeobright's mind well-proportioned? No. A well-proportioned mind is one which shows no particular bias; one of which we may safely say that it will never cause its owner to be confined as a madman, tortured as a heretic, or crucified as a blasphemer ... Its usual blessings are happiness and mediocrity ... enabling its possessors to find their way to wealth ... It never would have allowed Yeobright to do such a ridiculous thing as throw up his business to benefit his fellow-creatures"

(III,2,197)

That his philosophy is not intelligible to Egdon people or that he gets no fame or serious following, does not minimize the greatness of his scheme. Clym's reading impairs his vision, and almost blinds him. This is an added disturbance to his wife's distress of confinement upon the heath. But his own reaction to the situation is apparently sane:

"Clym was very grave at the intelligence, but not despairing. A quiet firmness, and even cheerfulness, took possession of him. He was not to be blind; that was enough. To be doomed to behold the world through smoked glass for an indefinite period was bad enough, and fatal to any kind of advance; but Yeobright was an absolute stoic in the face of mishaps which only affected his social standing; and, apart from Eustacia, the humblest walk of life would satisfy him if it could be made to work in with some form of his culture scheme"

(IV,2,271-2)

Estranged first from his mother and then from his wife, Clym retreats into himself, so that he becomes virtually inseparable from the Heath:

"This man from Paris was now so disguised by his leather accoutrements, and by the goggles he was obliged to wear over his eyes, that his closest friend might have passed by without recognizing him. He was a brown spot in the midst of an expanse of olive-green gorse, and nothing more ... His daily life was of a curious microscopic sort, his whole world being limited to a circuit of a few feet from his person. His familiars were creeping and winged things, and they seemed to enroll him in their band."

(IV, 2, 273)

Despite the harmony Clym finds himself in with the natural life of the Heath - bees, strange amber-coloured butterflies, tribes of emerald-green grasshoppers, dell-snakes, huge flies, and litters of young rabbits, all flock fearlessly around him - yet he remains morose, morbidly self-righteous and self-pitying. Nowhere in the novel do we see a spectacle of the struggle for existence, of life feeding upon life, of mutual hostility in the realm of Nature which anticipates The Woodlanders.

It has been argued that this collapse of Clym's is only a stage in his progress and that, after the tragic deaths of his mother and wife, he recovers. This is, of course, true. He does overcome that impassivity that the Heath induces in him and emerges from the life of a furze-cutter to become an itinerant preacher. Despite the uncertainty in the final stages of Clym's career, it seems to me the important point that Hardy wants to stress is that Clym should continue living as an embodiment of evolving contemporary consciousness of the "ache of modernism".

Not only should we understand Clym as the embodiment of modern man's predicament in a hostile world, also the presentation of

personal relationships probes his personality at considerable depth. It is in this area that we see the effects of the "not well-proportioned mind". Hardy describes Clym's personal relationships with his mother and Eustacia thus:

"Three antagonistic growths had to be kept alive: his mother's trust in him, his plan for becoming a teacher, and Eustacia's happiness. His fervid nature could not afford to relinquish one of these, though two of the three were as many as he could hope to preserve. Though his love was as chaste as that of Petrarch for his Laura, it had made fetters of what previously was only a difficulty. A position which was not too simple when he stood whole-hearted had become indescribably complicated by the addition of Eustacia. Just when his mother was beginning to tolerate one scheme he had introduced another still bitterer than the first, and the combination was more than she could bear"

(III,4,223)

When Eustacia has lost all hope of Paris and her disillusionment with her marriage is complete, she bursts out crying when she finds him singing:

"I deserve pity as much as you ... I think I deserve it more. For you can sing! It would be a strange hour which should catch me singing under such a cloud as this! ... Even had you felt careless about your own affliction, you might have refrained from singing out of sheer pity for mine. God! if I were a man in such a position I would curse rather than sing."

(IV,2,276)

Their attitudes are thus contrasted. She imagines and curses God for His heartlessness, evokes our pity and assumes the grandeur of a tragic heroine. She deserves the fulfilment of her wishes, and yet she perishes for want of wisdom. Clym, on the contrary, only sings, but would neither pray nor curse. He has realized the futility of revolt and surrenders to all the workings of Fate. His answer to Eustacia fully reflects his resignation:

"Now, don't you suppose, my inexperienced girl, that I cannot rebel, in high Promethean fashion, against the gods and fate as well as you, I have felt more steam and smoke of that sort than you have ever heard of. But the more I see of life the more do I perceive that there is nothing particularly great in its greatest walks, and therefore nothing particularly small in mine of furze-cutting. If I feel that the greatest blessings vouchsafed to us are not very valuable, how can I feel it to be any great hardship when they are taken away? So I sing to pass the time"

(IV,2,276-7)

His contrast with the rebellious characters is clear, he has known revolt and overcome it. Temperamentally, they are poles apart, and Clym has blundered seriously in deciding to marry her. Mrs Yeobright could clearly see his folly and advised him against the marriage.

It is from his relationship with his mother that violent and unbalanced emotions arise. Hardy depicts very powerfully the intensity of their relationship and the close affinity between them that Clym's breakdown after his mother's death is almost inevitable. There is something unusually morbid about this relationship. Some critics interpret Clym's decision to leave Paris and return to Egdon as being not so much for humanitarian and altruistic purposes as for the desire to be near his mother. This seems true, for her influence on Clym is incalculably great. The crucially formative influences on him are his mother and Egdon Heath. Mrs Yeobright secretly supports him over the diamond business. She has criticised his abandoning his job in Paris particularly when he was "doing well", but she is forced to ease her criticism when she fails to answer his question "Mother, what is doing well?". The dissension between them is entirely on account of Eustacia. To a person like Clym, to whom his mother is everything, the decision to go against her and marry Eustacia is

almost self-destruction.

Mrs Yeobright is not only a doting and domineering mother but jealous as well. She wants to impose herself on her son's choice of a career and a wife, her opposition to his choice of a wife is greater than her opposition to his choice of a career. When he decided to marry Eustacia, the jealous mother felt directly threatened and was "prepared to challenge the fitness of any woman to usurp her place"⁽²¹⁾. Because she is a self-assertive and possessive woman, she is the main source of her son's problems. Mrs Yeobright's possessive jealousy is such that she would have been antagonistic to any woman who interested her son. Clym's response to this is very violent:

"... whenever any little occurrence had brought into more prominence than usual the disappointment he was causing her it had sent him on long and moody walks; or he was kept awake a great part of the night by the turmoil of spirit which such a recognition created"

(III,4,223)

Mrs Yeobright's death is tragic⁽²²⁾, she is a victim of human cruelty.⁽²³⁾ There is a parallel between King Lear with his fool in the wilderness and Mrs Yeobright with Johnny Nunsuch on Egdon Heath, and Hardy succeeds in drawing this parallel to which he refers in the 1895 preface to the novel. Feeling superior to other people, and living in isolation, Mrs Yeobright also dies in isolation without no body around her except Johnny Nunsuch who reported later to Clym that "she said I was to say that I had seed her, and she was a broken hearted woman and cast off by her son" .
(IV,8,323)

After her death, neither Eustacia nor the Heath could save Clym from a life-in-death existence. In her life, she was a main cause of his miseries, now in her death, she has become a

harrowing nightmare reminding him constantly of a sense of guilt.

Clym adequately rises up to the lofty status of Oedipus:

"Cast off by my son! No, by my best life, dear mother, it is not so! But by your son's, your son's --- May all murder~~s~~esses get the torment they deserve!"

With these words Yeobright went forth from the little dwelling. The pupils of his eyes, fixed steadfastly on blankness, were vaguely lit with an icy shine; his mouth had passed into the phase more or less imaginatively rendered in studies of Oedipus"

(V,2,342)

After his mother's death, Clym tortures himself with guilt, and Hardy very effectively indicates that he is now grossly disturbed and on the edge of insanity. Hardy is creating a picture of an obsessional neurotic, Clym now becomes wholly possessed by the idea of his mother as "a sublime saint". Clym's personality shows many of the qualities which Freud, in Civilisation and its Discontents, associates with the Oedipus complex. Freud emphasises the part played by a strong sense of guilt in ^{the} Oedipus complex. Generally, Hardy, in a theoretical as well as an imaginative way, is concerned with the psychological effects of "civilisation and its discontents" by showing the changes which he felt were occurring in modern man.

There are many conflicting views on Wildeve; he has been described as a "victim", "an adult philanderer", "a villain", "a quixotic young man", and "a masochist". Hardy describes him thus:

"To be yearning for the difficult, to be weary of that offered; to care for the remote, to dislike the near; it was Wildeve's nature always. This is the true mark of the man of sentiment. Though Wildeve's fevered feeling had not been elaborated to real poetical compass, it was of the standard sort. He might have been called the Rousseau of Egdon"

(III,6,237)

Wildeve cannot be acquitted of his dubious way in handling the affair of the licence of his marriage to Thomasin. Most critics see him guilty of something more serious than a naive failure to get the right licence. This assumed failure looks, in fact, more intentional than accidental. This "man of sentiment" with "fevered feeling" must have understood that he was jeopardizing Thomasin's reputation and the whole Yeobrights. Mrs Yeobright's angry reaction and the unfriendly attitude she took towards him during the rest of her life are understandable.

Wildeve is specifically guilty of another moral failure when, in the gambling scene, he was informed that at least half the money he had won was not his own. Had it not been for Diggory Venn's intervention, Wildeve would have taken all the money for himself. Wildeve's presence in the novel undoubtedly intensifies the unhappiness which most of the characters suffer from. His presence, for example, with Eustacia in Clym's house at the time Mrs Yeobright has come to seek reconciliation with her son, is a main reason behind Eustacia's refusal to open the door.

John Holloway reads in Hardy's major fiction the unfortunate passing away of 'the old rhythmic order of rural England'. Of The Return of the Native he writes:

"... throughout the book, the stress falls on the revitalizing power of rural life, and on how its vitality is intrinsically greater than that of modernity. Eustacia and Wildeve, and at first Clym too, are alienated from it: indeed, this very alienation lies behind their ostensible successes (the marriages, for example). But because of the alienation, the successes are ill-placed and precarious, they are the successes of those who have lost the soundness, the inner strength, the power to choose and to achieve wisely which belongs to men whose life is in harmony with their world"⁽²⁴⁾

The rural-urban conflict as one of the legitimate readings of Hardy is sound enough. But it is not the only theme, nor the theme of principal importance in any of Hardy's novels. Admittedly, Hardy belonged to the soil of Wessex, and he naturally chose the details of his drama from within its narrow province. The industrial invasion of the country mode of life, therefore, could not escape his observation. The renegades who flee from the isolated hamlets to the buzzing townlife, suggest not only the disappearance of the rural order as Holloway makes out, but also, in a wider significance, an alienation from the earth which is symbolised by Egdon Heath. It is in this sense that Wildeve is essentially an alienated character.

Holloway continues to contrast the character of Venn with Eustacia, Wildeve and Clym:

"By contrast, Venn the reddleman suffers reverses, but they do not impair his integrity; his vitality runs submerged, but it runs with the tide of life ... the whole rural ambience can ultimately assert a greater vitality than the city life from which Clym has come" (25)

I do not think it is true to assume as Holloway does that Venn's integrity and vitality spring from faithfulness to "the tide of life", the culture of Wessex. Boldwood in Far From the Madding Crowd and Mrs Yeobright in The Return of the Native, though in harmony with the country soil like Venn himself, die miserably. The fact is that Venn, Elizabeth-Jane in The Mayor of Casterbridge and Thomasin belong to Hardy's lovers who are so devoted to the beloved that even her or his marrying someone else does not deeply disturb them. The devotion is so strong that it leaves no room for other desires to crop up and conflict with the world. Town or country has nothing to do with it.

Ian Gregor calls The Return of the Native "the dialogue of the mind with itself", and so it is; the problems of Egdon Heath emanate from the ache of modernism. In introducing Clym, Hardy has introduced a contemporary consciousness into Wessex, and it is this which takes The Return of the Native beyond the range of anything in Far From the Madding Crowd. When Hardy goes on from here to explore his Wessex world, by presenting varieties of modes of being and making discoveries about ways of feeling and behaving, consequently extending our awareness and our acceptance of human diversity, he will explore it rather more deeply than extensively.

Notes

1. F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928, p. 284
2. Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, p. 58
3. Ibid., p. 58
4. A. Stanton Whitfield, Thomas Hardy: A Lecture, quoted in W.R. Rutland, Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and their Background, p. 179
5. Penelope Vigar, The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality, p. 125
6. References are to the New Wessex Paperback Edition (London, 1974). The three figures that appear in parentheses following each quotation refer to Book, chapter and page respectively.
7. D.H. Lawrence, Study of Thomas Hardy, quoted in R.P. Draper, ed., Hardy: The Tragic Novels, pp. 64-72
8. W.R. Rutland, Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and their Background, p. 179
9. Matthew Arnold, "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse"
10. David J. De Laura, "The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels", ELH, 34(1967), pp. 380-81.
11. M.A. Goldberg, "Hardy's Double-Visioned Universe", Essays in Criticism, 7(1957), p. 375
12. Leonard W. Deen, "Heroism and Pathos in The Return of the Native", in R.P. Draper, ed., Hardy: The Tragic Novels, pp. 123,4

13. Robert C. Schweik, "Theme, Character, And Perspective in Hardy's The Return of the Native", Philological Quarterly, 41(1962), p. 762
14. Robert Evans, "The Other Eustacia", Novel, 1(1968), pp. 253,257
15. Ibid., p. 257
16. Ibid., p. 259
17. David Eggenschwiler, in his article "Eustacia Vye, Queen of Night and Courtly Pretender", NCF, 25(1970-71), says, "presenting Eustacia through two sets of opposed literary traditions show her to be both a tragic Queen of Night and a comic and morbid courtly pretender", p. 454
18. Among the critics who defend Eustacia's suicidal death are Frank R. Giordano, Jr., "Eustacia Vye's suicide", Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 20(1980), pp. 504-521; Ken Zellefrow, "The Return of the Native: Hardy's Map and Eustacia's Suicide", NCF, 28(1973-74), pp. 214-220. Among critics who defend Eustacia's accidental death is J.I.M. Stewart, Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography, pp. 91-107
19. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p. 108
20. Ibid., p. 99
21. Eleanor McCann, "Blind Will or Blind Hero: Philosophy and Myth in Hardy's The Return of the Native", Criticism, 3(1961), p. 151
22. The best analysis of Mrs Yeobright's death scene is in Ian

Gregor, The Great Web, pp. 90-110

23. John Paterson, in The Making of 'The Return of the Native', sees that she is a victim of "a cosmic rather than a merely human cruelty", p. 70

24. John Holloway, "Hardy's Major Fiction", in Albert J. Guerard, ed., Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 53,4

25. Ibid., p. 54

Chapter Five

"The Mayor of Casterbridge"

(1886)

Chapter Five

The Mayor of Casterbridge

As we move from The Return of the Native to The Mayor of Casterbridge, 'the dialogue of the mind with itself' rather disappears into self-recognition taking place within an individual consciousness fatally divided against itself. Although Hardy says in the preface to the novel "The story is more particularly of one man's deeds and character than, perhaps, any other of those included in my Exhibition of Wessex life", The Mayor of Casterbridge, like all Hardy's novels, is principally preoccupied with a social consciousness, and we do not feel, as we move from one novel to the other, any narrowing of scope. When we read the title of the novel, The Life and Death of The Mayor of Casterbridge: A Story of a Man of Character, we are made aware of the tension between the public circumstances and the individual response. We cannot think of Henchard apart from his work, his work apart from the town, the town apart from the age.

Since The Mayor of Casterbridge was published in 1886, it has met with a variety of critical responses. Laurence Lerner succinctly summarizes the main critical approaches to the study of the novel by saying that there have been two main tendencies among Hardy criticism, which may be called the universal and the particular, or the cosmic and the social. In the one, the novels are seen as making statements about man's place in nature, about human destiny and human limitation, about the place of the individual life in a hostile or indifferent world - timeless and unchanging issues. In the second, they are seen as emerging from a particular time and place, the product of historical conditioning - the south-west of England at a time of considerable social and

economic change, the Dorset in which Hardy grew up and which he knew so intimately.⁽¹⁾

In fact, we can see The Mayor of Casterbridge as a historical novel concerned with the effects on people's lives of changes in agriculture, as a novel about the persistence or destruction of ancient traditions, as a traditional, ballad-like tale; all these are valid ways of responding to it. This diversity and multiplicity of interests is an important characteristic of Hardy's novels. It is indicative of the breadth of his vision that offers to the reader the possibility of so many ways of responding. The mistake is to insist on a single interpretation from one point of view.

Although Hardy confines his novel to "one man's deeds", we cannot feel that Henchard inhabits his imagination, nor ours, only as a complex psychological figure. 'One man's deeds' in this novel can contain the exploration of a whole community. Hardy has created a multidimensional character; he is The Mayor of Casterbridge, with power and authority, but within the Mayor there is the hay-trusser, the man who sold his wife at a fair in a drunken rage, who later deceived a father about the existence of his child. For Hardy, to explore the "volcanic stuff beneath the rind" in Henchard, is to explore the whole area of conflict which so preoccupied him in The Return of the Native: the division of consciousness within the alienated man whereby his energies become directed towards his self-destruction, and the relation of that divided consciousness to the ineluctable processes of change in society. If we see Henchard as an exclusively psychological case study, or a tragic hero, or as the last representative in a changing agrarian order, we fail to do justice to the novel.

However, the novel has been described as "Aeschylean Tragedy"; and Henchard has been regarded as "a modern Oedipus", or as a figure subject to the same retribution as Oedipus or Lear for an act, the selling of his wife and child, which constitutes "the violation of a moral scheme more than human in its implications".⁽²⁾ It would indeed be wrong to deny that The Mayor of Casterbridge resembles, in many ways, Greek or Shakespearean tragedy. Most critics have observed that Henchard possesses some characteristics of an Aristotelian hero in that he is neither so good as to seem undeserving of his downfall, nor so bad as to lose the reader's sympathy. But the fact that analogies exist between Henchard and Oedipus or Lear does not mean that The Mayor of Casterbridge is a traditional tragedy. Nor does it completely justify the assumption that since a classical tragedy demands recognition of a moral power superior to man, "The M C, as an example of traditional tragedy, testifies to the operation of some superhuman agency governing the destinies of mankind".⁽³⁾ Regardless of being a tragedy with a traditional basis, The M C is a work modern in its orientation and Henchard's ordeal, just as Clym's or Angel's or Jude's, is, in many ways, a nineteenth-century one even though Hardy carefully drew attention to its Greek counterparts.

Although Hardy grapples with the problems of nineteenth-century pre-Freudian world of Darwin and Spencer, some critics have noticed that "his characters and plots move in a sphere unknown to his contemporaries, an area that no other Victorian ... had attempted to define".⁽⁴⁾ Michael Henchard is driven by an inexplicable force that makes him unable to help himself. The kind of forces that are to destroy him are, as Freud indicated, too deep in the unconscious to manifest themselves in easily

recognizable form. Henchard is a man obsessed by self-destructive aggressiveness, and therefore, doomed in a world that rewards flexibility. Henchard recalls Conrad's Lord Jim and Camus's Meursault, each of whom is obsessed by demons that remain unrecognizable, although all perceive that "there is something within they must control. When control, nevertheless, becomes impossible, they commit actions which directly or indirectly injure others while also laying the groundwork for their own destruction." (5)

As in all Hardy's novels, character is not exclusively fate. A lot of confusion has been caused by Hardy's quotation from Novalis: "Character is Fate". Hardy does not mean that our character shapes our destinies, but the form our Fate takes is that of our character "which directs us inevitably from our birth onwards". (6) Character alone rarely determines destiny. If Michael Henchard is "a man of character", it is only because his character reinforces those forces which destroy him, and bring about his destiny. This ambivalent phrase can be interpreted as the basis of reconciling the concept of determinism with that of free will. In describing the mayor as "a man of character", Hardy seems to reject the idea of the inevitability of Fate. The phrase, then, suggests a tragedy of the will. Yet, our sense of a strong moral order is intensified through Henchard's experience of it as a force of opposition. It is always the man of will who is brought most vividly to realize his limitations and the strength of the power that rules the universe. This problem of the paradox of tragedy in a chance-governed universe is, indeed, intricate; but Philip Drew has interesting views on the tragic value of Hardy's novels, I shall quote him at some length:

"[Hardy's] tragic novels draw their power from his ability to present simultaneously the individual's sense of his will as a personal quality thwarted by circumstance, and a view of the cosmos in which individual wills are of no consequence. When he offers this double perspective on human suffering we are able to receive it with the double response of pity and understanding ... If human choices are illusory and if in addition the governing principle of the Universe, however sorely it afflicts mankind, does so as 'no aimful author' but casually and unconsciously, if, that is, the First Cause works, as Sue Bridehead thought, 'automatically like a somnambulist, and not reflectively like a sage', then if Hardy wishes to represent the human condition faithfully he will be confronted by the traditional difficulty of containing a world of random events within the necessary constraints of a work of art.

What is distinctive in Hardy is the way in which he puts before us the paradox of an artist using non-random forms to express his intuitions of a random world: it is an image of the whole paradoxical situation of humans trying to make sense of a chance-governed universe by imposing on it their own categories of order. Logically both ought to give up the vain attempt, but neither does. Therefore to agree that there is a struggle raging in Hardy's work, and no doubt generating much of the roughness and rusticity and unevenness of tone to which critics point, is not to admit that the work is thereby crucially damaged. The endeavour to express the 'intolerable antilogy of making figments feel' is what gives his poems and novels their power to hurt, as truth hurts"⁽⁷⁾

Chance also plays a significant part in determining the form of action in which character can express itself. Thus, for example, Henchard's innate rashness and impulsiveness account for the selling of his wife and child and his taking such a sudden liking to Farfrae, but it is chance which brings the latter to Casterbridge exactly at the moment when Henchard needs a manager; and it is chance which causes Henchard to learn that Elizabeth-Jane is not his real daughter at the very moment when he has persuaded her to take his name.

In general, however, the balance between character and chance is well kept, and Henchard's downfall is felt as something to

which he himself has very largely contributed. When he finally leaves Casterbridge no less disgraced than he first entered it twenty years earlier after the sale of his wife, he acknowledges the justice of events, "I - Cain - go alone as I deserve - an outcast and a vagabond. But my punishment is not greater than I can bear!" (Ch.43, p.334).⁽⁸⁾ His character prompts his self-destructive actions, and in these words he declares an acceptance of those actions, which gives him tragic stature of an existentialist kind. But the tragic climax of the novel is revealed in the semi-literate document headed "Michael Henchard's Will". The wish for annihilation which this communicates is actually prefigured in the first chapter where Henchard nearly drags his wife and child, as animals, to the fair and sells them for five guineas. His insistence on the elimination of all the means by which family and society normally commemorate a man's death, indicates most obviously his rejection of the world and life. He "had no wish to make an arena a second time of a world that had become a mere painted scene to him" (Ch. 44, p. 340). His final signature makes the tragic effect more powerfully tragic in that it comes from a man who has filled the world with noise to achieve his position as The Mayor of Casterbridge. Henchard's wish for the utter extinction of all signs of his past existence after his death recalls Schopenhauer's view which sees tragedy as an expression of the lapse of the will to live,

"What gives to all tragedy, in whatever form it may appear, the peculiar tendency towards the sublime is the awakening of the knowledge that the world, life, can afford us no true pleasure, and consequently is not worthy of our attachment. In this consists the tragic spirit: it therefore leads to resignation"⁽⁹⁾

Arnold Kettle and Douglas Brown both see Hardy's tragic

novels as concerned with a clash between agricultural and urban modes of life, and the conflict in The Mayor between the old-fashioned Henchard and the New Man, Farfrae, as a reflection of this. There is some truth in such a view. In the preface to the Wessex edition of his novels, written in 1912, fifteen years after the last novel was published, Hardy reveals that at least one of his motives for detailing the habits, customs and vocations of his Wessex characters was "to preserve for my own satisfaction a fairly true record of a vanishing life" (p. 379). Furthermore, in his preface written for 1895 edition, Hardy writes:

"The incidents narrated arise mainly out of three events, which chanced to range themselves in the order and at or about the intervals of time here given, in the real history of the town called Casterbridge and the neighbouring country. They were the sale of a wife by her husband, the uncertain harvests which immediately preceded the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the visit of a Royal personage to the aforesaid part of England"

(p. 33)

These prefaces written by Hardy to the novel, though they are important, have influenced the way the novel has been read as a whole. The ~~second~~ factor which Hardy draws attention to in his 1895 preface, the repeal of the Corn Laws, shapes the kind of reading offered by Douglas Brown. This "sociological approach", as J.C. Maxwell calls it, can easily distort the whole truth of the novel.⁽¹⁰⁾ When we concentrate too directly on the historical implications of the novel, so that we see a precise agricultural crisis constituting its "centre", we move further and further away from its imaginative and aesthetic truth. I think that the novel shows little interest in economic forces and that Hardy has the eye of a sociologist, or even of an anthropologist, rather than that of an economist. Hardy was sensitive to the tremendous cultural

upheaval that was taking place in rural England in the later half of nineteenth century. The old way of life, with its slow rhythms of agricultural work, fixed relationships, manual skills, legends, folk tales and superstitions, was going out before a new way that involved scientific work processes. This sense of change is always present in Hardy's novels. In Far from the Madding Crowd it is diffused and its function is mainly to sharpen the perceptiveness with which the old way is apprehended. As Hardy's novels came out one after another, until in Jude the Obscure the modern world itself provides the setting, with a sense informing it that an older world has been left behind. It is in the light of this perceptible change to modernity that we better understand and appreciate Hardy's novels.

It has now become a commonplace that Hardy is obsessed with history, and the publication of The Dynasts in the first decade of this century comes at the climax of this lifelong obsession. The opening of The M C is typical of its historically-minded author who never leaves us in any doubt where we are:

"One evening of late summer, before the nineteenth century had reached one-third of its span, a young man and woman, the latter carrying a child, were approaching the large village of Weydon-Priors, in Upper Wessex, on foot".

Hardy's preoccupation with the past, with history and memory, and his use of settings and remains of ancient civilizations and the remote past to allude to continuities or discontinuities between past and present, have their most concentrated expression in The M C. The crucial single event round which the novel revolves is the bizarre event of Michael Henchard's actual selling of his wife Susan and child Elizabeth-Jane, who died a few months after the

sale, for five guineas cash. This event takes place in the first chapter, nineteen years before the actual plot of the novel begins with chapter 3. So, according to the main structure of the novel, the first two chapters form a prologue to the tragedy, and the sale of the wife and child occurs in the past of the now mayor of Casterbridge.

That Henchard is held responsible for his crime and that he acts from his free will is made clear when the narrator records that Henchard persists in making his offer to sell Susan and the child and, at one point, waits ten minutes before repeating the offer. His seriousness of purpose is confirmed by Susan's remark:

"Michael, you have talked this nonsense in public places before. A joke is a joke, but you may make it once too often, mind!

'I know I've said it before; I mean it. All I want is a buyer"

(Ch. 1, p. 41)

Henchard willingly and intentionally sold his wife and child and chose to live in isolation from his family for the sake of his future prosperity. When the swallow entered the tent, it caused all the eyes to follow it and provided a chance that could have made Henchard change ^{his} ~~is~~ mind:

"In watching the bird till it made its escape the assembled company neglected to respond to the workman's offer, and the subject [of the sale of Susan and child] dropped"

(Ch. 1, p. 41)

Henchard is always reminded of his disgraceful past everywhere he goes. When the furmity woman reveals in the court that Henchard had sold his wife, implying that the judge should himself be tried, the narrator noticed the effect of the past on Henchard,

especially when that past is made public, and said:

"Small as the police-court incident had been in itself, it formed the edge or turn in the incline of Henchard's fortunes. On that day - almost at that minute - he passed the ridge of prosperity and honour, and began to descend rapidly on the other side. It was strange how soon he sank in esteem. Socially he had received a startling fillip downwards; and having already lost commercial buoyancy from rash transactions, the velocity of his descent in both aspects became accelerated every hour"

(Ch. 31, p. 242)

The associations of the past are too strong for him; he finds it impossible to refuse Lucetta's request for the return of her letters because the place she has chosen to meet him, the Ring, is filled with the memory of his wronged wife and her return.

This remarkable use of setting to make the readers and characters of the novel recollect and make connections is developed in many scenes of the novel. For example, when Henchard spies on Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae from the prehistoric fort of Mai Dun (Ch. 43), the reader is reminded of the Ring and Henchard's relationship to his own past. Looking through his glass, Henchard sees a male figure approaching:

"It was one clothed as a merchant captain; and as he turned in his scrutiny of the road he revealed his face. Henchard lived a life-time the moment he saw it. The face was Newson's"

(Ch. 43, p. 331)

"lived a lifetime" is precisely expressive. The reader shares Henchard's shock of recognition, sees Henchard's past coming at him irresistibly, and with it the destruction of his relationship with Elizabeth-Jane. That evening, Henchard leaves Casterbridge.

The history of Casterbridge has layers, from the ancient city

to the present life of this busy early Victorian town in the streets and market-place. "Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley, and precinct" (Ch. 11, p. 100). Most critics have stressed the significance of the description of the Amphitheatre and other prehistoric settings to the action of the novel. (11)

Lucetta also carries her history with her and is constantly seen in terms of her past. She has her own firmity woman figure in the person of Jopp, who knows her past with Henchard. Jopp is as important for Lucetta's future as the firmity woman is for Henchard's. The threads of both Henchard's and Lucetta's past are pulled together in Peter's Finger when Jopp and the firmity woman meet and she persuades him to read Lucetta's letters to the crowded pub, which results in the skimmity ride and Lucetta's death.

There is in the novel a remarkable passage which points out the sense in which history is deeply meaningful in The M C, a passage that "captures with some of the intensity of lyric poetry a basic apprehension about the passage of time".(12) Elizabeth-Jane has been sitting up through the night looking after her dying mother:

"the silence in Casterbridge ... was broken in Elizabeth's ear only by the time-piece in the bedroom ticking frantically against the clock on the stairs; ticking harder and harder till it seemed to clang like a gong; and all this while the subtle-souled girl asking herself why she was born, why sitting in a room, and blinking at the candle; why things around her had taken the shape they wore in preference to every other possible shape. Why they stared at her so helplessly, as if waiting for the touch of some wand that should release them from terrestrial constraint; what that chaos called consciousness, which spun in her at this moment like a top, tended to, and began in. Her eyes fell together; she was awake, yet she was asleep"

(Ch. 18, p. 147)

The 'subtle-souled girl' is caught between two levels of reality, so that she becomes the subject and object of her own perceptions. Withdrawing from the particularities of her surroundings the girl experiences a moment of heightened consciousness and then it subsides into the forgetfulness of sleep.

Throughout the novel time is continually stretched and the effect of this is to give the events of the novel a much wider and fuller sense of their meanings. This gives the novel depth and space which make it more than its subtitle, 'A Story of a Man of Character'. Hardy's eye is on change, a flux and reflux wrought by time, and it is that feeling that his sense of time is there to release. Hardy vividly realized "the pulse of time, the power that ultimately constrains all men"; to him, "Time is at once the medium in which the Immanent Will works its eternal artistries and the current in which mankind is carried helplessly along".⁽¹³⁾

Hardy's interest in history does not mean that his novels are significant only as contemporary documents. Nor should we see Hardy as centrally concerned with social, economic or agrarian change. The Mayor of Casterbridge is, above all, a tragedy dealing with a timeless cosmic human issue, that of Michael Henchard, his relationships with the people around him, and his interaction, with its ramifications, with his world; Casterbridge and its historical reality remains only a back-cloth. The paramount importance should be given to the timeless grandeur of Michael Henchard and to the fact that the novel, or any such great works of literature, offers constant parallels, structural and emotional, to very different works about very different societies. We need not shut our ears to ^{the} actuality of Casterbridge, nor to the _x marvellous rendering of particulars, but we should, like Hardy

himself, look beyond the particular to the general and the universal.

Although title pages are not always significant, Hardy's invariably are. The novel is "A Story of a Man of Character". Hardy clearly wants us to notice that this is to be a book dominated by one man, and that the centre from which the action derives is that man's highly individual personality, and his tendency to impose himself on the world. The subtitle to The Mayor is a true guide and corresponds to the experience of reading the novel.

Michael Henchard is a man of character. With his audacious sale of his family, with his physical strength and aggressive energy, Henchard dominates the novel until he dies and leaves his will on the last page but one of the novel. The other main characters find their purpose and meaning in their relationships to Henchard, and the novel takes its structure from this series of relationships. No other character compares with him in stature or the amount of attention he receives. He thus occupies the centre of the stage very much like a figure in classical tragedy.

In pursuing his own fancies, Henchard violates the moral and social code. Though he tries to conceal his crime, Henchard is always confronted by his past errors which refuse to remain buried. When they are revealed, he tries to make amends, but his reparations are never adequate, and in fact isolate him socially and hasten his spiritual decline. Henchard loses his social position, his worldly possessions, the company and affection of loved people whom his impulsively passionate nature had driven from him. Ultimately, Henchard, alienated and emotionally isolated, falls a powerless prey to his characteristic

melancholia. His original crime and the consequent sense of guilt cause his complete destruction. The penalty for Henchard's sin is his alienation. His separation from society, particularly from the family he might have had, parallels the irresponsible economic individualism which has been his ruling principle. "Dispossessed of his wealth and power and having no sympathies to sustain him, he becomes the Lonely Man, the Outcast. But his exile is both punishment and the means by which he achieves self-understanding. His illumination increases with wretchedness".(14)

The first two chapters of The Mayor are justly celebrated. They present the main outline of Henchard's character and his self-destructive behaviour in all of his important relationships. The opening sentence introduces us to "a young man and a woman, the latter carrying a child" and places Henchard at once within a family context. Shabby, "plainly but not ill-clad", coated with "the thick hoar of dust" after a long journey, and wearing "a dogged and cynical indifference", Henchard seems unlikely ever to become mayor of Casterbridge. But what stands out is the couple's complete silence. Henchard's peculiar behaviour, pretending to read a ballad sheet while walking, allows him "to escape an intercourse that would have been irksome to him":

"... his taciturnity was unbroken, and the woman enjoyed no society whatever from his presence. Virtually she walked the highway alone, save for the child she bore. Sometimes the man's bent elbow almost touched her shoulder, for she kept as close to his side as was possible without actual contact, but she seemed to have no idea of taking his arm, nor he of offering it; and far from exhibiting surprise at his ignoring silence she appeared to receive it as a natural thing. If any word at all were uttered by the little group, it was an occasional whisper of the woman to the child"

(Ch. 1, p. 36)

This straightforward, matter-of-fact-style conveys the doom

awaiting the couple. The general mood of these opening pages is one of deep estrangement. About the family, there is an "atmosphere of stale familiarity", and in nature too, life has faded, the leaves are "doomed" and "blackened green", the "grassy margins of the bank" are "powdered by dust". It is difficult to make a living in the world Henchard is living in, it is an alien world where houses are pulled down and people have nowhere to go.

They walk along the road, together yet alone, and their isolation here signifies their inability to connect personally, even though later they remarry. Henchard's peculiar treatment of his family and his unnatural withholding of his affections from them foreshadow his ultimate self-alienation, his total loss of all human relationships and his complete disintegration. From the very first lines in the novel, we watch Henchard will his alienation from those who are dependent upon him. Susan and Henchard walk to the fairground only to be separated even further by his bizarre act of selling her and the child. Later, the isolated Henchard enters Casterbridge, establishes a business alone, tries unsuccessfully to win a friend in Farfrae, unsuccessfully woos Lucetta, remarries Susan, who is dutiful but unloving, tries unsuccessfully to win Elizabeth-Jane as his daughter, and gradually loses each in turn, leaving Casterbridge a solitary man as when he entered it. Towards the end of the novel, we know about Henchard that:

"His mood was no longer that of the rebellious, ironical, reckless misadventurer; but the leaden gloom of one who has lost all that can make life interesting, or even tolerable. There would remain nobody for him to be proud of, nobody to fortify him; for Elizabeth-Jane would soon be but as a stranger, and worse. Susan, Farfrae, Lucetta, Elizabeth - all had gone from him, one after one, either by his fault or by his misfortune"

(Ch. 41, p. 317)

When Henchard gets drunk and offers to sell his family for a second chance at freedom and wealth, he takes the first step towards self-destruction. Although the sale is portrayed as almost casual, yet it will chase the young hay-trusser into his unconsecrated grave. The least that could be said about this unnatural scene is that a human being is relentlessly reduced to a commodity. The sight of the horses, "crossing their necks and rubbing each other lovingly" serves as a brilliant contrast to the inhuman act of wife-selling.

To an inexperienced reader, who does not take "willing suspension of disbelief" as an artistic tenet, this wife-selling scene, and indeed many others in Hardy's novels, would seem absurd. But in The M C, Hardy is consistent with his own dictum that the unreality should be in plot rather than in character:

"The writer's problem is, how to strike the balance between the uncommon and the ordinary so as on the one hand to give interest, on the other to give reality. In working out this problem, human nature must never be made abnormal, which is introducing incredibility. The uncommonness must be in the events, not in the characters" (15)

Hardy argues for the risk of incredibility in plot in order to insure credibility in character. His actual practice seems to correspond to this argument, and Henchard emerges from The M C with overwhelming conviction.

A recent critic points out that the Fair scene, with its auctions of animals, with this hag-like furmity woman, who, like the witch in Macbeth, stirs her large pot, is a timeless symbol of man's irrational quest for pleasure.⁽¹⁶⁾ At a fair, normal behaviour is no longer adhered to, and eccentricity can itself become the norm. The Fair assumes its traditional significance, a

place where people are liberated from personal cares and freed from their daily burdens. Like the swallow, Henchard is to fly from the tent alone. Escape itself becomes, ironically, a form of isolation that Henchard can never avoid; and the sordid act of wife-selling becomes the terms of both his freedom and his thralldom.

The second chapter begins on the morning after Susan is sold, when Henchard returns to his senses. His first words reflect his essential egoism: "I must get out of this as soon as I can". As he leaves the fair, he is relieved to go away unnoticed, and he convinces himself that he did not reveal his name last night. He thinks only of himself and his reputation. When finally he remembers Susan, he blames her for bringing him into disgrace, "why didn't she know better than bring me into this disgrace?" But Henchard is too honest to deceive himself, and later

"When he was calmer he turned to his original conviction that he must somehow find her and his little Elizabeth-Jane, and put up with the shame as best he could. It was of his own making and he ought to bear it"

(Ch. 2, p. 49)

Before he sets out on his search, the superstitious man, pricked by conscience and laden with guilt, enters the sacrarium of a church and swears a solemn oath:

"I, Michael Henchard, on this morning of the sixteenth of September, do take an oath before God here in this solemn place that I will avoid all strong liquors for the space of twenty-one years to come, being a year for every year that I have lived. And this I swear upon the book before me; and may I be strook dumb, blind, and helpless, if I break this my oath"

(Ch. 2, p. 49)

Henchard spends all his money in search for Susan until he believes she has emigrated with Newson and Elizabeth-Jane. Then he heads southwest and settles in Casterbridge, leaving the unfinished episode to work itself out to its fated conclusion.

Henchard's failure to find his wife and daughter is not simply bad luck, it is attributed to "a certain shyness of revealing his conduct prevented Michael Henchard from following up the investigation with the loud hue-and-cry such a pursuit demanded to render it effectual" (Ch. 2, p. 50). His egoism and arrogance prevent him from rectifying the wrong he has done, and having lost his chance to bring back his family, Henchard is left to chance and his self-destructive impulses to assure his tragic fate.

Albert J. Guerard suggests, in a valuable study, that Henchard's temper and drunkenness are not the causes but the symptoms of his self-destructive tendencies. In drawing a character obsessed by guilt and committed to his own destruction, "Hardy recognised that the guilty not merely flagellate themselves but also thrust themselves in the way of bad luck; create what appear to be unlucky accidents"⁽¹⁷⁾.

All of Henchard's crucial relationships are with members of his family or people whom he treats as such. Almost invariably, the break in a relationship takes place when Henchard is "not in his senses". In a fit of jealousy, he dismisses Farfrae whose popularity in the town and success in his work have become increasingly irksome. Elizabeth-Jane is treated with reserve when Henchard recovers from the shock of learning he is not her father. But his desire to repair his wrong exceeds the tendency to exonerate himself and conceal his past errors. Nothing so clearly reveals Henchard's ambivalent nature than his "three large

resolves" when, twenty years after he sold his family, Elizabeth-Jane and Susan reappear:

"... one, to make amends to his neglected Susan; another, to provide a comfortable home for Elizabeth-Jane under his paternal eye; and a third, to castigate himself with the thorns which these restitutory acts brought in their train; among them the lowering of his dignity in public opinion by marrying so comparatively humble a woman"

(Ch. 13, p. 112)

None of these "restitutory acts" can erase his past or remove his guilt.

A close examination of Henchard's relationship with Farfrae shows his human isolation and self-destructive behaviour. Henchard is impressed by Farfrae's appearance not only because of the young Scot's cooperation in solving the corn problem, and his promise to bring modern knowledge to Henchard's old-fashioned business, but, more significantly, also because of his resemblance to his dead younger brother:

"Your forehead, Farfrae, is something like my poor brother's - now dead and gone; and the nose, too, isn't unlike his"

(Ch. 7, p. 79)

Henchard requires Farfrae more to satisfy his social and emotional needs than as an assistant or a manager. Because of his loneliness and isolation from family and lovers, Henchard invites the Scot to name his own terms. Elizabeth-Jane saw that

"Donald and Mr Henchard were inseparables. When walking together Henchard would lay his arms familiarly on his manager's shoulder, as if Farfrae were a younger brother, bearing so heavily that his slight figure bent under the weight ... In Henchard's somewhat lonely life he evidently found the young man as desirable for comradeship as he was useful for consultations"

(Ch. 14, p. 119)

Fraternal affection is again suggested, after Farfrae decides to join him, when Henchard offers the Scot lodging in his home, and, later, confides in him, quite unnecessarily, about "a family matter".

Henchard's affection for Farfrae grows into the deepest love he has ever felt for any man.

"God is my witness that no man ever loved another as I did thee at one time ... And now ... though I came here to kill'ee, I cannot hurt thee! Go"

(Ch. 38, p. 296)

The depth of this feeling and its implications for Henchard's character have not been fully noticed. Farfrae is more than a manager, more than a competitor in business, more than a rival in love; Henchard's relationship with him has the additional force of a surrogate brother - a companion in his lonely life. In finding a surrogate brother, Henchard not only dismisses Jopp, a candidate for the position Farfrae is almost compelled to take, but also turns him, by unjust treatment, into an enemy who will return, like the furmity woman, to hasten his downfall. When the clash over Henchard's humiliation of Abel Whittle takes place, Henchard accuses Farfrae of taking advantage of him

"Why did you speak to me before them like that, Farfrae? You might have stopped till we were alone. Ah - I know why! I've told ye the secret of my life - fool that I was to do't - and you take advantage of me!"

(Ch. 15, p. 129)

Henchard did not accept Farfrae's simple reply that he had forgotten the secret. The mayor's guilt alienates them from each other and becomes a wedge that drives them apart. Farfrae is turned into an enemy.

After Henchard dismisses Farfrae, his manager, the rift between them widens so much that Henchard discourages the growth of the relationship between him and Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard is clearly working against his own interests; the narrator notes:

"One would almost have supposed Henchard to have had policy to see that no better modus vivendi could be arrived at with Farfrae than by encouraging him to become his son-in-law"

(Ch. 17, p. 142)

Some critics seem to consider the Henchard-Farfrae relationship of less importance than the sale of the wife and child; but if we consider the Scot a surrogate brother, as critics like Albert J. Guerard and Lawrence J. Starzyk seem to suggest, then these relationships, especially when they turn into enmity, will have an equally important effect on Henchard's overwhelming sense of guilt. As the sale of his wife and child precipitates Henchard's guilt, his violence against Farfrae intensifies his violence against himself. Henchard's hatred of the Scot breaks out most fiercely after the moral defeat suffered by Henchard when the furmity woman reveals his selling of his wife and child.

Henchard's resumption of drinking after twenty-one years of abstention marks an important turn towards his ultimate downfall:

"Now the Three Mariners was the inn chosen by Henchard as the place for closing his long term of dramless years ... The flush upon his face proclaimed at once that the vow of twenty-one years had lapsed, and the era of recklessness begun anew"

(Ch. 33, p. 255-56)

If his drunkenness in the furmity tent at Weydon-Priors had caused Henchard to violate his wife's human dignity, the resumption of drinking at the Three Mariners intensifies his

violence against Farfrae. Emotional deprivation and repressed feelings cause a series of fits of anger and hatred one of which takes place at the Three Mariners when he forces the choir to sing psalm 109, intending to direct its curses to Farfrae:

"His seed shall orphans be, his wife
A widow plunged in grief;
His vagrant children beg their bread
Where none can give relief.

His ill-got riches shall be made
To usurers a prey;
The fruit of all his toil shall be
By strangers borne away.

None shall be found that to his wants
Their mercy will extend,
Or to his helpless orphan seed
The least assistance lend.

A swift destruction soon shall seize
On his unhappy race;
And the next age his hated name
Shall utterly deface"

(Ch. 33, p.257)

Henchard himself is the object of the curses consciously intended to fall on Farfrae. Henchard is unconsciously praying that his widow shall be plunged in grief, the fruit of all his toil shall be borne away by strangers, and none shall extend mercy to his wants. These curses are reminiscent of the notorious will he ⁱleave after his death, they are produced from the same stuff and echo the same ideas. Since that unforgettable day when he sold his wife and child, Henchard has been living in loneliness. His disorderly life, Susan's death, his discovery of Elizabeth-Jane's identity, his social and economic bankruptcy, his rival's social, economic and moral rise - all aggravate his alienation and nearly strip him of all that gives his ^sexistence worth and meaning. Without a family, friend or business and with drinking driving him

to recklessness, Henchard finds solace in music, a sign of his essentially fine and sensitive nature:

".... be hanged if I wouldn't keep a church choir at my own expense to play and sing to me at these low, dark times of my life"

(Ch. 33, p. 258)

Then he comments on his loveless situation:

"But the bitter thing is, that when I was rich I didn't need what I could have, and now I be poor I can't have what I need!"

(Ch. 33, p. 258)

It has now become obvious that the animosity between Henchard and Farfrae led to Henchard's murderous wishes. Elizabeth-Jane observes Henchard hardly resist the temptation to kill Farfrae in the granary, where the two are walking together — now Henchard is employed by Farfrae. She feels heartsick and comments:

"his subordinate position in an establishment where he once had been master might be acting on him like an irritant poison"

(Ch. 33, p.262)

When the new mayor, Donald Farfrae, prevents the drunken ex-
from receiving and welcoming the royal visitor, Henchard,
mayor, Henchard, who is publicly humiliated, finally determines to
avenge himself on Farfrae:

"He drove me back as if I were a bull breaking fence ... I took it like a lamb, for I saw it could not be settled there. He can rub brine on a green wound ... But he shall pay for it, and she shall be sorry. It must come to a tussle — face to face; and then we'll see how a coxcomb can front a man!"

Without further reflection the fallen merchant, bent on some wild purpose, ate a hasty dinner and went forth to find Farfrae. After being injured by him as a rival, and snubbed by him as a journeyman, the crowning degradation had been reserved for this day — that he should be shaken at the collar by him as a vagabond in the face of the whole town".

(Ch. 38, p. 292-3)

Though on a previous occasion, he could not bring himself to kill Farfrae, this time they are in the same granary, they are alone with nobody to interfere, they confront each other. Henchard pours out his wild anger:

"I've stood your rivalry, which ruined me, and your snubbing, which humbled me, but your hustling, that disgraced me, I won't stand!"

(Ch. 38, p. 295)

All conditions help Henchard's carrying out his revenge; one almost believes that Farfrae's end is imminent; but Henchard in the last moment lets him go:

"though I came here to kill'ee, I cannot hurt thee! Go ..."

(Ch. 38, p. 296)

After the struggle with Farfrae, Henchard's "restless and self-accusing soul" drives him to repair the wrong he has done a man he loved as a brother. Henchard goes after Farfrae and tells him to come back to be beside his wife, Lucetta, in her plight from Skimmington. Farfrae, of course, does not believe him and thinks that Henchard still wishes to kill him and refuses to turn back. This increases Henchard's self-punishment:

"He cursed himself like a less scrupulous Job, as a vehement man will do when he loses self-respect, the last mental prop under poverty. To this he had come after a time of emotional darkness of which the adjoining woodland shade afforded inadequate illustration"

(Ch. 40, p. 308)

The process of degradation that began when he returned to alcohol has alienated Henchard from all decent society. Having

lost all that can make life tolerable, Henchard looks at the future and sees only darkness.

Henchard's first attempt at suicide is suggested in the brilliant scene where he discovers that Elizabeth-Jane is Newson's child. This remarkable scene reveals Henchard's unconscious sense of guilt and desire for self-punishment. After reading Susan's letter, against her instructions, Henchard "compresses his frame, as if to bear better ... this much scourging". Then instantly, the narrator tells us:

"through his passionate head there stormed this thought - that the blasting disclosure was what he had deserved ... Misery taught him nothing more than defiant endurance of it."

(Ch. 19, p. 154)

Once assured of the girl's parentage, "In the present statuesque repose of the young girl's countenance Richard Newson's was unmistakably reflected", Henchard cannot endure her sight. Elizabeth-Jane too has become a reminder of his disgraceful past.

He hastens away and finds himself wandering near the river, a setting full of images of ruin, desolation, punishment, death and execution:

"The river - slow, noiseless, and dark - the schwarzwasser of Casterbridge - ran beneath a low cliff, ... Here were ruins of a Franciscan priory, and a mill attached to the same, the water of which roared down a back-hatch like the voice of desolation. Above the cliff, and behind the river, rose a pile of buildings, and in the front of the pile a square mass cut into the sky. It was like a pedestal lacking its statue. This missing feature, without which the design remained incomplete, was, in truth, the corpse of a man; for the square mass formed the base of the gallows, the extensive buildings at the back being the country gaol. In the meadow where Henchard now walked the mob were wont to gather whenever an execution took place, and there to the tune of the roaring weir they stood and watched the spectacle.

The exaggeration which darkness imparted to the glooms of this region impressed Henchard more than he had expected. The lugubrious harmony of the spot with his domestic situation was too perfect for him, impatient of effects, scenes, and adumbrations. It reduced his heartburning to melancholy, and he exclaimed, "Why the deuce did I come here!" He went on past the cottage in which the old local hangman had lived and died, in times before that calling was monopolized over all England by a single gentleman; and climbed up by a steep back lane into the town"

(Ch. 19, p. 155)

"Why the deuce did I come here!". It is possible that he knows why he came. Elizabeth-Jane, whom Henchard has not been able to endure since his discovery of her identity in the early chapters of the novel, drives him to seek refuge in lugubrious nature. Later in the novel when Henchard is deserted by all people around him, Susan, Lucetta, Farfrae, only the kindness of Elizabeth-Jane gives him some comfort to live:

"In truth, a great change had come over him with regard to [Elizabeth-Jane], and he was developing the dream of a future lit by her filial presence, as though that way alone could happiness lie"

(Ch. 41, p. 312)

But when Newson appears to claim his child and take her, Henchard tells him the lie about her death. In refusing to admit the natural claim of father and daughter, Henchard makes the final error that assures his self-destruction:

"Then Henchard, scarcely believing the evidence of his senses, rose from his seat amazed at what he had done. It had been the impulse of a moment. The regard he had lately acquired for Elizabeth, the new-sprung hope of his loneliness that she would be to him a daughter of whom he could feel as proud as of the actual daughter she still believed herself to be, had been stimulated by the unexpected coming of Newson to a greedy exclusiveness in relation to her; so that the sudden prospect of her loss had caused him to speak mad lies like a child, in pure mockery of consequences."

(Ch. 41, p. 315)

Henchard's long journey to death seems to terminate as he prepares to leap into the pool at Ten Hatches:

"In a second or two he stood backwards and forwards, and no creature appeared in view. He then took off his coat and hat, and stood on the brink of the stream with his hands clasped in front of him. While his eyes were bent on the water beneath there slowly became visible a something floating in the circular pool formed by the wash of centuries; the pool he was intending to make his death-bed. ... then he perceived with a sense of horror that it was himself. Not a man somewhat resembling him, but one in all respects his counterpart, his actual double, was floating as if dead in Ten Hatches Hole"

(Ch. 41, pp. 318-9)

His effigy temporarily saves this superstitious and unhappy man, but it cannot free him from his suicidal thinking. Henchard's will to live is now connected with Elizabeth-Jane's willingness not to leave him, and his return to life is symbolized by his shaving, dressing in clean linen, and combing his hair. The narrator describes him as "a man resuscitated thenceforward", which means that Henchard had died after his attempt to drown himself. Shortly after Elizabeth-Jane moves to his house, the desire to escape from those who do not want him returns, and again he wishes to hide himself. Henchard, as a matter of fact, lives against his will:

"Embittered as he was against society, this moody view of himself took deeper and deeper hold of Henchard, till the daily necessity of facing mankind, and of them particularly Elizabeth-Jane, became well-nigh more than he could endure. His health declined; he became morbidly sensitive. He wished he could escape those who did not want him, and hide his head for ever."

(Ch. 43, p. 330)

As Elizabeth-Jane's love is necessary for his existence, he

does not mind living with her in her home after her marriage bearing Farfrae's abuse just to be near her:

"... living like a fangless lion about the back rooms of a house in which his stepdaughter was mistress; an inoffensive old man, tenderly smiled on by Elizabeth, and good-naturedly tolerated by her husband. It was terrible to his pride to think of descending so low; and yet, for the girl's sake he might put up with anything; even from Farfrae; even snubbings and masterful tongue-scourgings. The privilege of being in the house she occupied would almost outweigh the personal humiliation."

(Ch. 43, p. 330)

The narrator speaks accurately when he says that Henchard is "denaturalized" by his love for Elizabeth-Jane. However, when Newson returns, all hopes of Henchard's staying in Casterbridge are ended. He hastily packs and, without explaining to Elizabeth-Jane, leaves the town. Nearly a quarter of a century after his fatal wife-sale at Weydon-Priors, the ex-mayor returns to his life as a hay trusser:

"... at dusk Henchard left the town ... He went secretly and alone, not a soul of the many who had known him being aware of his departure... Henchard formed at this moment much the same picture as he had presented when entering Casterbridge for the first time nearly a quarter of a century before; except, to be sure, that the serious addition to his years had considerably lessened the spring of his stride, that his state of hopelessness had weakened him ... 'I-Cain-go alone as I deserve - an outcast and a vagabond. But my punishment is not greater than I can bear!'

He sternly subdued his anguish, shouldered his basket, and went on."

(Ch. 43, pp. 333-4)

When Henchard hears of Elizabeth-Jane's imminent marriage to Farfrae and remembers her wish to see him at her wedding, he decides to visit her in spite of "his instinct for sequestration". Once more, he shall seek Elizabeth-Jane's love:

"But he could not help thinking of Elizabeth, and the quarter of the horizon in which she lived. Out of this it happened that the centrifugal tendency imparted by weariness of the world was counteracted by the centripetal influence of his love for his stepdaughter"

(Ch. 44, p. 339)

Hardy's analogy represents the tension raging inside Henchard between life and death instincts, between the centripetal power of his love for Elizabeth-Jane and the centrifugal force of his fate and Elizabeth-Jane being in the centre. Yet, when he does go, Henchard is stunned by Elizabeth-Jane's reception, he is struck dumb and neither explains nor defends himself. The narrator notes that Henchard did not try to lessen his suffering by strenuous appeal or elaborate argument.

After his departure, the "self-alienated man", whose nature is "to extenuate nothing, and live on as one of his own worst accusers", sank into the earth.

Henchard never presents his wedding gift to Elizabeth-Jane, and several weeks later, she discovers the dead goldfinch. The bird, a symbol for Henchard's emotionally starved nature, also represents his physical destruction. What has not been sufficiently noticed is Hardy's skill in presenting the physical breakdown of Henchard and its relation to his spiritual decline. We note that Henchard catches cold and is confined to bed directly after the catastrophic reversal of his life at the trial of the furmity woman. On the other hand, psychologists say that in people suffering from intense depression or melancholia a slight infection can prove mortal. Thus it is not surprising that such a strong man "of fine figure, swarthy, and stern in aspect" as Michael Henchard, when we first see him described in the first

page of the novel, should fall ill from a slight cold. At the same time, we notice the therapeutic value of Elizabeth-Jane's visits to the sick man, "The effect, either of her ministrations or of her presence, was a rapid recovery. He soon was well enough to go out." (Ch. 32, p. 252).

At the end of his day's journey, he is so distressed that he feels no want for food and after his final rejection by Elizabeth-Jane, the panacea for all his problems, he exhausts himself physically because of his inability to eat and spiritually because of his refusal to live.

Michael Henchard's last will confirms his unconscious wish for total extinction:

" Michael Henchard's Will
'That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death,
 or made to grieve on account of me.
& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground.
& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell.
& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.
& that no murners walk behind me at my funeral.
& that no flours be planted on my grave.
& that no man remember me.
' To this I put my name.

Michael Henchard "

(Ch. 45, p. 353)

This is very much like the wills of those who commit suicide and deny themselves the rites of burial. He dies, ultimately, a broken man upon Egdon Heath. If Henchard looks resigned at his death, his resignation, bitter and negative, is the outcome of the extremity of despair. But the positive resignation comes from Elizabeth-Jane, her calm thinking keeps her secure. Her character has been drawn, from the start of the novel, in such a way as to make her stand aside and see the situation with unengaged eye. She can never seem a cold or passive character, she just watches,

records in her mind, understands and keeps her understanding for herself. She has been brought up in poverty and has passed through vicissitudes of fortune ordinarily difficult to endure; she loses her father and mother, Henchard's affection is moodily withdrawn from her, in Farfrae's marriage with Lucetta she loses not only her lover but also her home. All these catastrophes are faced courageously and patiently by this orphan girl.

Early in the novel Hardy reveals Elizabeth-Jane's thinking about Farfrae when she first sees him at the Three Mariners where they have put up on their first arrival in the town:

"She admired the serious light in which he looked at serious things. He had seen no jest in ambiguities and roguery, as the Casterbridge tosspots had done; and rightly not - there was none. She disliked those wretched humours of Christopher Coney and his tribe; and he did not appreciate them. He seemed to feel exactly as she felt about life and its surroundings - that they were a tragical rather than a comical thing; that though one could be gay on occasion, moments of gaiety were interludes, and no part of the actual drama"

(Ch. 8, pp. 85-6)

Such were her views; this revelation of her mind on her first appearance in the novel agrees well with her conclusive feeling that happiness is an occasional episode in the general drama of pain. It reflects not pessimism, but positive resignation. The narrator describes her, when she is sitting up through the night attending her dying mother, by saying "Her eyes fell together; she was awake, yet she was asleep" (Ch. 18, p. 147). She understands her world from a position in which "she is awake, yet she is asleep", a position of a disinterested spectator of all time and the universe. When Farfrae's attachment was shifted from her to Lucetta, Hardy describes her:

learn't

"She had^x the lesson of renunciation, and was as familiar with the work of each day's wishes as with the diurnal setting of the sun. If her earthly career had taught her few book philosophies it had at least well practised her in this. Yet her experience had consisted less in a series of pure disappointments than in a *series* of substitutions. Continually it had happened that what she had desired had not been granted her, and that what had been granted her she had not desired. So she viewed with an approach to equanimity the now cancelled days when Donald had been her undeclared lover, and wondered what unwished-for thing Heaven might send her in place of him"

(Ch. 25, p. 204)

Hardy himself seems to admire the integrity which she has built up by understanding and will. But H.C. Webster, when he describes her as "too impersonally human to be vain, showy or coquettish",⁽¹⁸⁾ refuses to give her any credit for the solidarity of her character against inward unruly impulses. If she does not break in consequence of a failure in love, it is because, he feels, "sexual impulses are not sufficiently strong"⁽¹⁹⁾ in her. He thus displays the dogmatic psychological tendencies of our times to dismiss the obvious moral greatness of an individual as a limitation.

By the end of the novel, Elizabeth-Jane has been able to grasp the nature of the world she is living in. The secret of achieving happiness in this world, she seems to tell us the gist of her experience, lies in "making limited opportunities enduring" (Ch. 45, p. 354) through disinterested self-denial. Henchard does not understand this, he wants everything, his *overriding* ambition makes him sacrifice his family; his selfish and impulsive behaviour isolates him from society, and his self-alienation and self-destruction inevitably lead to his unconsecrated death, whereas Elizabeth-Jane is rewarded with a happy marriage.

One point remains to be made. Hardy concludes in the famous last sentence in the novel, "happiness [is] but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain". Whether this statement is true or false is a matter of opinion and personal outlook. Are we asked to accept Henchard's experience as the basis for such a generalization on the human lot? The fact that Henchard - a most unusual case - is constantly thwarted in his aims and desires does not allow us to conclude that human life in general is a drama of pain. But our first reaction to the long series of tortures suffered by Henchard is one of protest. We are inclined to cry out in his defence and ask why this man should be punished so ruthlessly. The novel makes it abundantly clear that Henchard's troubles are because he has deviated from moral law, and he is personally responsible for all his suffering. We can then modify Hardy's conclusion thus: life is a general drama of pain for those who are morally deviant. But Henchard, many critics say, is as much the victim of adverse circumstance as he is of moral conscience. So, the crucial point that should be made is this: According to Henchard's experience in The M C, man's suffering could be due merely to the antagonism of circumstance, or to his moral flaws. If the first proposition is true, the moral paragon would be as susceptible to misfortune as the moral deviant. In this case Hardy would have reinforced his argument by making Henchard morally admirable. If the second proposition is true, there would be little point in laying emphasis on external circumstance. In fact, I do not see any contradiction between the two propositions. Hardy intended to develop both points to show how human suffering grows out of both causes. J.I.M. Stewart's view that in Jude the Obscure "we are having foisted on us as

human life a puppet show that is not human life"(20) is, in fact, too exaggerated. For a novel to exist at all, it must interest the reader in the actions of human beings and convince him that they are of appreciable value. If Hardy is to render the truth of human life, he is bound to depict characters who feel themselves to be faced with real choices, however clearly a longer perspective shows them not to be so. A generally determinist framework is not a priori incompatible with a work of tragic fiction. If that general position is granted, then it follows that Henchard is a tragic hero and that his suffering is due both to the antagonism of circumstance and to his moral flaws, and his tragedy is that of alienation, human isolation and the absence of human relatedness which is precisely the major theme of Hardy's later novels.

Notes

1. Laurence Lerner, Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge: Tragedy or Social History, p. 38
2. John Paterson, "The Mayor of Casterbridge as Tragedy", Victorian Studies, 3(1959-60), 157-172
3. Lawrence J. Starzyk, "Hardy's Mayor: The Antitraditional Basis of Tragedy", Studies in The Novel, 4(1972), 592
4. Frederick R. Karl, "The Mayor of Casterbridge: A New Fiction Defined", Modern Fiction Studies, 6(1960), 195
5. Ibid., p. 198
6. Philip Drew, The Meaning of Freedom, p. 271
7. Ibid., pp. 276,7
8. All references that appear in parentheses following each quotation are to the paperback New Wessex Edition (London, 1974)
9. R.P. Draper, ed., Tragedy: Developments in Criticism, p. 109
10. J.C. Maxwell, "The 'sociological' Approach to The Mayor of Casterbridge" in R.P. Draper, ed., Hardy: The Tragic Novels, 148-157; J.C. Maxwell also points out mistakes in the historical basis of Brown's contention that The Mayor reflects the agricultural depression of the years between 1870-1902
11. Jean R. Brooks, for example, in Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure, says "Henchard is placed in a setting that speaks

of the primitive past, which both diminishes and enhances his ephemeral dignity, whenever he tries to disown his own past.", p. 208.

12. Ian Gregor, Introduction to The Mayor of Casterbridge, the paperback New Wessex Edition, p. 28
13. Philip Drew, The Meaning of Freedom, p. 278
14. D.A. Dike, "A Modern Oedipus: The Mayor of Casterbridge", Essays in Criticism, 2(1952), 178
15. F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928, p. 150
16. Frederick R. Karl, "The Mayor of Casterbridge: A New Fiction Defined", Modern Fiction Studies, 6(1960), p. 199
17. Albert J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories, pp.146,47
18. H.C. Webster, On a Darkling Plain, p. 148
19. Ibid., p. 148
20. J.I.M. Stewart, Eight Modern Writers, p. 45

Chapter Six

"The Woodlanders"

(1887)

Chapter Six
The Woodlanders

The problem of genre has been the centre of critical controversy over the tragic novels of Thomas Hardy, novels such as The Return of the Native and The Mayor of Casterbridge. In the foregoing discussion of The Mayor, for example, the task has been relatively easy for we have a classic genre study, Aristotle's Poetics, and a classic model, Oedipus to serve as norms. We can argue about how closely Hardy follows the classic pattern or how far he departs from it.⁽¹⁾ However this problem of genre has not been examined so carefully in the two novels which critics have called pastoral, Far from the Madding Crowd and The Woodlanders. In fact, the critics agree that the two novels are indeed pastoral. Part of the reason for this unanimity among critics is that pastoral does not have an authoritative definition or model as tragedy does; thus many critics have labelled the two novels pastoral for no other reason than that they take place within a rural setting which embodies the same values as that of pastoral, and that the characters and the central theme of both novels are essentially engaged in the life of an agricultural countryside.⁽²⁾

This insistence on the traditional pastoral form of the two novels may be due to the mood of nostalgia felt in many of Hardy's novels, particularly in The Woodlanders, for a lost ground of meaning and value. This longing for a return to a natural good life is of course the essential characteristic of pastoral. The two most explicit expositions of the pastoral view of these novels are Robert Y. Drake and Michael Squires. Drake depends on Hallet Smith for his definition of the form, whereas Squires depends on W.W. Greg, Renato Poggioli, William Empson, and others. But

regardless of the source of the definition, its general terms vary little. The definition which Squires develops for his approach to Far from the Madding Crowd is essentially the same one Drake uses in his approach to The Woodlanders: The pastoral is a genre that idealizes country life through a sharp contrast between city and country, combined with "the intense nostalgia for a Golden-Age past, and the creation of a circumscribed and remote pastoral world characterized by harmony between man and nature and by an atmosphere of idyllic contentment".(3)

This definition has been used by various critics to make the following points about at least four important elements of Far from the Madding Crowd and The Woodlanders:

1. Generally, critics agree that nature in the two novels is a sympathetic force, that the rural society of both novels retains much that is valuable in the old tradition, and that the rustics serve as a positive moral force. John Holloway even goes further in asserting that "the single abstraction which does most to summarize Hardy's view is simple enough: it is right to live naturally ... to live naturally is to live in continuity with one's whole biological and geographical environment".(4)
2. Gabriel Oak and Giles Winterborne are the pastoral heroes of the novels. They are completely satisfied with their position in life and at one with it; both are true Arcadians.
3. Sergeant Troy and Fitzpiers are typical anti-pastoral forces, representative of the sophisticated city life who invade the pastoral world and destroy it. They disrupt the existing harmony.

4. Bathsheba and Grace are the central characters caught in the conflict between pastoral values and the anti-pastoral ones.

I shall try to show that these assertions indicate an outmoded generic approach. The external characteristics of a work and even its content do not create a genre, but rather genre stems from a basic way of looking at reality - from the author's vision itself. Although Hardy uses certain pastoral patterns in FFMC and The Woodlanders, his vision is incompatible with the traditional pastoral. The sense of happiness, self-fulfilment and communion with regenerative nature experienced by the characters of a traditional pastoral are replaced by unhappiness, unfulfilled desires, alienation and isolation from stunted nature experienced by most of Hardy's principal characters. In the following discussion of The Woodlanders, I shall take issue with the assertions which the 'pastoral critics' have made about the four major elements and try to show that the novel is a distortion of pastoral, it can appropriately be called "pastoral elegy".⁽⁵⁾

Many critics have observed that The Woodlanders is a particularly rich mixture of Hardyian modes and moods and that it "draws on genres so widely disparate as to be at times incompatible."⁽⁶⁾ In the earlier novels, most notably in FFMC, the separate modes lived together, not so much in harmony with each other as in a happy state of natural indifference. Hardy himself seems neither to know nor to care that comic, pastoral, pathetic and tragic modes - to name only the most obvious ones - are all collectively at work, in spite of the fact that he was conscious and ambitious in the matter of genre frequently reminding the reader of his novel's affinities with the traditions

both of classic tragedy and of dramatic comedy.

The Woodlanders is such a mixture of modes that Hardy describes a traditionally pastoral view of the woodland country and its denizens and a contemporary Darwinian view of both wood and woodlanders locked in the struggle for survival. In the same way there is the distinction between woodland life and polite society with Grace "in the middle". Marty South's image of splitting gads by night in her cottage and Winterborne's image of planting the young pines typify woodland ways, like those of Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba in FFMC, and the novel seems balanced between country pursuits and urban restlessness, Sergeant Troy and Fitzpiers supplying the same sort of disruptive influence. Episodes such as Grace's skirt being clutched in the man-trap, and the foray of the maidens into the wood seem variations on the memorable scenes in the earlier novel of the sword exercise in the dell of ferns, and of Bathsheba catching her dress in the dark wood on Sergeant Troy's spur. Grace's flight and sojourn in Winterborne's hut parallels Bathsheba's night in the wilderness after the drama of Fanny Robin's coffin and Troy's departure.

However, The Woodlanders, in an unprecedented way, is quite explicit in its descriptions of unhealthy natural world. Little Hintock is a waste land, a world of darkness, isolation, and human cross-purposes. Everytime one steps, there is the sound of leaves crunching and twigs snapping. When one looks up there is no sun visible, only the thick thatch of leaves. The heavy smell of dead leaves, rot and fermenting cider fills one's nostrils. One cannot breathe in this world. The wintry woods in which Grace walks with her father, near the beginning of the novel, do not constitute an idyllic refuge or a source of renewal:

"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"

(Ch. 7, p. 83) (7)

A world in which the wind makes trees "rub each other into wounds" (Ch. 3, p. 47) and a sunless winter day emerges "like a dead-born child" cannot be called a world where one can live in pastoral bliss.

From the very start, we are introduced to a deserted, isolated and secluded world. The narrator pursues a deserted coach-road and ponders the distinction between the empty highway and the empty woodlands which border it:

"The physiognomy of a deserted highway expresses solitude to a degree that is not reached by mere dales or downs, and bespeaks a tomb-like stillness more emphatic than that of glades and pools. The contrast of what is with what might be, probably accounts for this. To step, for instance, at the place under notice, from the edge of the plantation into the adjoining thoroughfare, and pause amid its emptiness for a moment, was to exchange by the act of a single stride the simple absence of human companionship for an incubus of the forlorn"

(Ch. 1, p. 35)

This "loneliness", the "tomb-like stillness", "emptiness", "absence of human companionship" and "incubus of the forlorn" characterize the lives of the characters throughout the novel. The community of Little Hintock is a community "which can no longer cohere; in the sense that it is vulnerable to forces beyond its control, it is devoured by its isolation".⁽⁸⁾ The setting of the novel is "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" (Ch. 1, p. 38). The woods play a part similar to that of Egdon Heath in The Return of the Native,

one similarity among many between the two novels. The woods have a distinctive significance in the novel and give substance and coherence to its theme. By "distinctive significance" I mean that the woods have a continuous presence in the novel, "a multi-dimensional presence which is both outside man and within him (9) too". The woods shape the lives of those who live there. We cannot think of Melbury without thinking of him as a successful timber merchant or of Giles without thinking of him at work on the trees.

The community of Little Hintock is devoured not only by isolation but also by melancholy, reinforced by the sombre atmosphere permeating the woods. The woodland itself may seem as important as any of the characters, and is, indeed, personified in the figure of Winterborne who seems more important than the female characters. We are told at the beginning that in such an isolated woodland community "dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein" (Ch. 1, p. 38). This suggestion is finally made explicit when Marty South, as "Chorus", utters her requiem over Winterborne's grave. Images such as "two overcrowded branches ... which were rubbing each other into wounds" (Ch. 3, p. 47), or "a half-dead oak, hollow and disfigured with white tumours, its roots spread out like claws grasping the ground" (Ch. 29, p. 241), reflect the gloom of the woods. It is as if Hardy wanted to say that nature is diseased, life is thwarted and deformed, suffering prevails. This mood extends beyond the flora and fauna and invades the woodlanders themselves. The most dramatic instance of this is the tall tree which grows outside John South's house and which he feels will fall and crush him. The tree does fall and he dies of shock when he sees it is gone. The tree is not only the cause of

South's death but it also drastically affects the lives of the major characters of the novel. On South's death, the life-hold on his property expires, and both South's house and Giles's, whose lease lasted as long as South lived, revert to the owner of the estate, Mrs Felice Charmond. When Giles loses his house, his last hope that he might marry Grace vanishes and his tragedy follows. The woods, then, establish a pervasive atmosphere of deep melancholy, they crystallise the fears of the characters.

When Grace is hiding in Giles's hut unaware that he is dying close by:

"Sometimes a bough from an adjoining tree was swayed so low as to smite the roof in the manner of a gigantic hand smiting the mouth of an adversary, to be followed by a trickle of rain, as blood from the wound"

(Ch. 41, p. 335)

The rot and sickening nature of the woods may appear most clearly in the following passage:

"She continually peeped out through the lattice, but could see little. In front lay the brown leaves of last year, and upon them some yellowish green ones of this season that had been prematurely blown down by the gale. Above stretched an old beech, with vast arm-pits, and great pocket-holes in its sides where branches had been removed in past times; a black slug was trying to climb it. Dead boughs were scattered about like ichthyosauri in a museum, and beyond them were perishing woodbine stems resembling old ropes.

From the other window all she could see were more trees, in jackets of *lichen* and stockings of moss. At their roots were stemless yellow fungi like lemons or apricots, and tall fungi with more stem than stool. Next were more trees close together, wrestling for existence, their branches disfigured with wounds resulting from their mutual rubbings and blows. It was the struggle between these neighbours that she had heard in the night. Beneath them were the rotting stumps of those of the group that had been vanquished long ago, rising from their mossy setting like black teeth from green gums"

(Ch. 42, pp. 338-9)

In describing this mischievous spirit which permeates the woods, Hardy must have had in mind Arnold's poem "Balder Dead", a poem chiefly concerned with the failure of Nature's renewing power and the loss of joy from the modern world. Like The Woodlanders, it is a pastoral elegy in which Arnold mourns a natural world drained of significance. Denial informs the frustrating worlds of both The Woodlanders and Balder Dead. Grace, after Giles's death, sees the wood as "a house of death, pervaded by loss to its uttermost length and breadth" (Ch. 43, p. 353).

Not only plant life but also animal and human lives are caught up in a fierce struggle for survival. Owls and stoats prey upon mice and rabbits; and men prey upon foxes and rabbits (Ch. 4, p. 54). Men, moreover, fell the trees of the forest for their fibre and bark, subdue horses and dogs to their will, and struggle among themselves for economic, social and sexual preeminence. Hardy takes pains in The Woodlanders to show that people are like trees. He continually presents scenes of the Darwinian world to reinforce the tragedy of the human situation. In the opening scene of the novel, Marty South works with blistered, bleeding hands to make wood spars for George Melbury, she overhears the sounds of a similar ordeal among the trees around her cottage:

"A lingering wind brought to her ear the creaking sound of two over-crowded 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 wood-pigeon ill-balanced on its roosting-bough"

(Ch. 3, p. 47)

Grace's desolation, after the discovery that her husband is a liar, that Suke Damson has ^e never had a tooth pulled, that her

marriage has been a terrible mistake, is reinforced by Hardy's description of the disfigured and half-dead oak:

"They halted beneath a half-dead oak, hollow, and disfigured with 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."

(Ch. 29, p. 241)

Staying in Giles's hut, Grace, feeling absolutely lonely, envies the small creatures wandering around:

"Gazing in her enforced idleness from the one window of the single room she could see various small numbers of the animal community that lived unmolested there - creatures of hair, fluff, and scale; the toothed kind and the billed kind; underground creatures jointed and ringed - circumambulating the hut under the impression that, Giles having gone away, nobody was there; and eyeing it inquisitively with a view to winter quarters. Watching these neighbours who *knew neither law nor sin* distracted her a little from her trouble"

(Ch. 41, p. 333)

The Woodlanders, like the poem "Yell'ham - Wood's Story", signifies "a thwarted purposing"; "Life offers - to deny!".⁽¹⁰⁾
The dominant idea of the novel is made explicit in this passage:

"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."

(Ch. 7, p. 83)

The novel is an explicit expression of the "Unfulfilled Intention which makes life what it is", and the relationships among the characters have in common an acute sense of self-

estrangement. The six major characters share a common sense of alienation, each in his own way. On the one hand, we have the extraordinary and fruitless self-abnegation of Giles Winterborne and Marty South, no longer in tune with the modern world. On the other hand, we have the blind selfishness of Edred Fitzpiers and Felice Charmond whose sterile fulfilment never extends beyond themselves. Grace Melbury, a young and bright girl, cut off from her environment and sent away to be educated, comes back after a considerable number of years to find herself an alien among her people and community. George Melbury, the rich timber merchant, spends much money to educate his only daughter in the hope that she may marry "well" and raise, consequently, the social standard of her family, but discovers at the end that his money, his daughter and his dreams have all been wasted. This is the general picture of the world of The Woodlanders, a world whose inhabitants are estranged and alienated. The unity of place is complemented by the unity of tone. "Pain is the dominant emotion in the novel" as one critic comments.⁽¹¹⁾ The narrative is elegiac and mournful; an aura of lament, sometimes muted, sometimes impassioned, is all-pervasive. A decade after writing The Woodlanders, Hardy in the 1895 Preface to Jude the Obscure, labelled the story of Jude Fawley a "tragedy of unfulfilled aims", the same idea transformed from nature to man, and from country to city.

In the novel, Hardy's images of destruction, deformity and death intensify our sense that Hardy's Unfulfilled Intention is specifically tragic. Just after starting The Woodlanders, Hardy redefined Tragedy to include his concept of the Unfulfilled Intention. He writes on 21-22 November, 1885:

"Tragedy. It may be put thus in brief: a tragedy exhibits a state of things in the life of an individual

which unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in a catastrophe when carried out" (12)

In The Woodlanders the chief victim of the Unfulfilled Intention is Giles Winterborne whose aim of marrying Grace Melbury is thwarted. At the beginning of the novel, there is good reason to expect Giles's intention to be fulfilled because of their affection for one another and Melbury's determination to hasten their marriage as an act of expiation for his having cheated Giles's father in a love affair.

But when Grace returns from her schooling she seems in the eyes of her father too precious to marry to Giles. Grace's indecisive nature too encourages her father to change his mind. The most decisive pressure comes when Fitzpiers arrives in the woodlands and shakes the "great web", of which he, like everybody else, is, of course, ^a part. Because Fitzpiers possesses all the advantages of an ancient name and high connections, Melbury's social dreams for his daughter would come true by her marriage to him. Another reason for the loss of hope of a marriage between Grace and Giles is that Mrs Charmond, the owner of his property, refused to let him retain his holdings for life after he refused to give way to her at the encounter of his timber carriage and her vehicle. The price Giles pays for not submitting to his superiors is his loss of financial and social standing, and with them his hopes for marrying Grace.

Giles's lack of initiative, his passivity and his overscrupulous observance of social customs and traditions are most vividly revealed when he is encouraged to renew his courtship of Grace after she expects to be divorced from her husband. He soon learns to exercise "the necessary care not to compromise Grace by too early advances" (Ch. 38, p. 305). Her wish "to keep

the proprieties", even though she is no longer morally bound to Fitzpiers, becomes an inviolable law for Giles. We must admit that this cruel observance of propriety, Melbury's social ambitions to marry his daughter "well" and Mrs Charmond^s_x thoughtless refusal to let him retain his property for life are insuperable social forces for Giles to resist, but these forces alone cannot account for his strange death, which amounts to suicide. There must be something in his character that effects his fate.

When Giles goes to bring Grace from Sherton Abbas and meets her for the first time, the narrator remarks that:

"It had sometimes dimly occurred to him, in his ruminating silences at Little Hintock, that external phenomena - such as the lowness or height or colour of a hat, the fold of a coat, the make of a boot, or the chance attitude of a limb at the instant of view - may have a great influence upon feminine opinion of a man's worth, so frequently founded on non-essentials; but a certain causticity of mental tone towards himself and the world in general had prevented to-day, as always, any enthusiastic action on the strength of that reflection; and her momentary instinct of reserve at first sight of him was the penalty he paid for his laxness."

(Ch. 5, p. 68)

When Giles invites Grace and her family to a Christmas party "to bring matters to a point", he "in his self-deprecatory sense of living on a much smaller scale than the Melburys did, would not for the world imply that his invitation was to a gathering of any importance" (Ch.9, p. 100). This self-deprecatory sense leads to the damaging failure of his Christmas party and to more complications:

"Grace's disposition to make the best of everything, and to wink at deficiencies in Winterborne's way of living, was so uniform and persistent that he suspected her of seeing even more deficiencies than he was aware of"

(Ch. 9, p. 103)

Later, when Melbury tells him about the failure of Grace's marriage and insists that Giles ought to have married her, Giles says:

"She would hardly have been happy with me", he said, in the dry, unimpassioned voice under which he hid his feelings. 'I was not well enough educated: too rough in short. I couldn't have surrounded her with the refinements she looked for, anyhow at all'"

(Ch. 31, p. 256)

That Giles himself is responsible for causing many of his own problems cannot be denied. In his relations with George Melbury and Mrs Charmond, Giles incurs problems by acting in a way contrary to his best interests. In the auction scene, for example, Giles is unaware that his bidding against Grace's father is making a dangerous tension between them.

Giles is also to blame for the deterioration of his social and financial position. As a land holder, Giles has neglected the simple legal procedure required to preserve his property for the duration of his life. Thus he should have understood that the last person he could afford to offend is Mrs Charmond, into whose possession his cottages will fall upon John South's death. His adamant refusal to give way to her coachman proved disastrous and he paid the price of losing his house.

However, it is only fair to say that Giles's sense of alienation is as much to be attributed to Melbury's social ambitions and Mrs Charmond's irresponsible selfishness as to his own failure to secure his foothold in Little Hintock.

The masterly scene where Giles is "shrouding" John South's tree powerfully evokes his ineffectiveness as a lover and his alienation as a person. Before Grace comes to tell him that she

concedes to her father's wish not to see him again, Giles is shown climbing a ladder to begin his work and "cutting away his perches as he went, and leaving nothing but a bare stem below him" (Ch. 13, p. 124). It seems that Hardy looks back to Giles's alienation from Melbury and forward to his alienation from Mrs Charmond. At Grace's repeated rebuffs,

"Winterborne's face grew strange; he mused, and proceeded automatically with his work. Grace meanwhile had not gone far ... A sudden fog came on, and she curtailed her walk, passing under the tree again on her return ... While she stood out of observation, Giles seemed to recognize 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."

(Ch. 13, p. 125)

When Grace approaches to tell him candidly that they must not think of the engagement, he remains in the tree resting his head on his hand, an embodiment of despair, until "the fog and the night had completely inclosed him from her view ... Had Giles ... immediately come down from the tree to her ... something might have been done ... But he continued motionless and silent in that gloomy Niflheim or fogland which involved him" (Ch. 13, p. 126).

The novel's themes of alienation, isolation and loneliness are nowhere more explicit than in this image of Giles's self-enclosure in the fogs of Niflheim. The self-enclosure is complete and the only communication between Grace and Giles is that of her voice coming out of the mist. It is a poignant demonstration of the void between them. "The difference between Grace and Giles is not as Hardy sees it a simple matter which could have been overcome by a more generous interpretation of the divorce laws.", argues Ian Gregor convincingly, "What separates them is a

difference of consciousness ... Theirs is the crisis of a community as much as the crisis of individuals".⁽¹³⁾

After Grace tells him they must end their agreement to marry, Giles's actual self-sacrifice begins. His symbolic cutting away of his perches isolates him from human contact while climbing upward leads him to the motionless silence and gloom of death.

Though Giles continues to love Grace, yet there is something sterile in that love; his unnatural repression of his emotions keeps him from expressing any passion for her. After the first and last time he ever kisses her, Grace says, "smiling through her tears. 'Giles, if you had only shown half the boldness before I married that you show now, you would have carried me off for your own, first instead of second" (Ch. 39, p. 320).

Hardy's deep psychological understanding of Giles is clear from the description of the two psychological moods dominating Giles after Grace calls down to him from her honeymoon hotel. The first mood is "anger" because of "opening old wounds by calling out my name"; "his second mood was a far more tender one - that which could regard her renunciation of such as he as her glory and her privilege, his own fidelity notwithstanding." (Ch.25, p.207,8)

The poem which Hardy quotes describes Giles's self-degradation and Grace's glorification:

May I sink meanlier than the worst,
Abandoned, outcast, crushed, accurst, -
If I forget .

Though you forget, --- ---
You filled my barren life with treasure;
You may withdraw the gift you gave,
You still are queen, I still am slave,
Though you forget .

(Ch. 25, p. 208)

This abandoning, crushing and cursing obviously recall

Henchard's will, which concluded, and embodied, the long process of his self-destruction. Giles, in fact, destroys himself by his self-imposed restrictions. He accepts the physical torture of staying in a cold and damp hut in the woods. Thus, his health deteriorates while Grace is hardly aware of the extent of his sacrifice. His refusal of food and shelter and his inability to sleep indicate how dangerously his instinct to cling to life has collapsed. In the violent "devilry of a gusty night in a wood", (Ch. 41, p. 335) Giles dies. Grace's recognition that she is not worth such self-sacrifice and her call to him to "come to me dearest! I don't mind what they say or what they think of us any more" (Ch. 41, p.337) comes too late.

Giles's death scene is really perplexing for Giles's refusal to enter the house is incredibly strange; how could a lover deny himself the satisfaction he seeks and needs? Surely there is something unnatural in Giles's restraint. Most critics are dissatisfied with the scene. "If Giles's fate is a sombre one," Michael Millgate argues, "his final act of self-sacrifice has often been regarded as excessive, as almost comic in its strict observation of the proprieties, and certainly as undercut by Grace's eventual return to Fitzpiers."⁽¹⁴⁾ Ian Gregor calls it "too extreme, too insistent ... it strains credulity to the point of irritation"⁽¹⁵⁾ Irving Howe says indignantly that "no one, neither man nor dog, should have to be that loyal."⁽¹⁶⁾ But Giles's "incredible" overscrupulous attention to propriety is in one sense an explicit satirical indictment of late Victorian morality. Instead of opposing Fitzpiers's corruption, Giles's passivity leads him to his own pathetic death. Hardy does not seem to agree with Giles's moral fastidiousness which cares for

society's laws at the expense of human nature. Hardy believes that we cannot live the life represented by Giles, (and by Marty too), but that we must go forward into a future, represented by Fitzpiers the rationalist and scientist, from which there is no escape. Giles's alienation from himself, from Grace and from his traditional milieu stems from his inability to cope with the changing order of his world.

Marty South's voice sounds the characteristic note of The Woodlanders. It is she who opens and closes the novel, and she who most clearly embodies the theme of alienation. Marty is crushed by economic necessity and isolated by unrequited love. She is a woman, unloved but ever faithful, left, at the close of the novel, by the side of the grave of the man who hardly even noticed that she is a woman. The only time she can express her love for Giles is after his death when she, in complete possession of his memory, lays fresh flowers on his grave. Marty and Giles are Victorian images of typical mismatched lovers.

In the episode of Marty's hair, we feel the pressure on her of a whole economic and social system, so that she withdraws into herself having no relationship with the world, except in work. After a night as dark and void as "the ante-mundane Ginnung-Gap" (Ch. 3, p. 46), foretelling her unfulfilled hopes, she has learned from overhearing Melbury's conversation with his wife that Giles is not for her, she desperately cuts off her hair for the guineas to support her disabled father. She accepts her self-sacrificial role.

"Upon the pale scrubbed deal of the coffin-stool table [the long locks of her hair] stretched like waving and ropy weeds over the washed white bed of a stream.

She would not turn again to the little looking-glass out of humanity to herself, knowing what a

deflowered visage would look back at her and almost break her heart; she dreaded it as much as did her own ancestral goddess the reflection in the pool after the rape of her locks by Loke the Malicious"

(Ch. 3, p. 51)

Marty's haircut is, in fact, symbolic of desexing herself in mourning as well as self-abnegation. Marty instinctively recognizes that it is she who is for sale and clings to her womanhood, "I value my locks too much to spoil'em" (Ch. 3, p. 44). When she cuts them off, she surrenders her sex, her identity.

Although Marty and Giles are walking together, each is following his lonely course. This profound loneliness characterizes everything in the novel. Absorbed in her work and ignored by Giles, except as a fellow-worker, Marty remains silent about her love, expressing it only when he is no longer alive to hear it:

"He ought to have married you, Marty, and nobody else in the world!" said Grace with conviction, ...

Marty shook her head. 'In all our outdoor days and years together, ma'am,' she replied, 'the one thing he never spoke of to me was love; nor I to him.'

'Yet you and he could speak in a tongue that nobody else knew - not even my father, though he came nearest knowing - the tongue of the trees and fruits and flowers themselves.'

(Ch. 44, p. 358)

Hardy's point is that 'intercourse' with Nature is not to be equated with the intelligent intercourse of man with man, or man with woman, if such discourse is to include love."⁽¹⁷⁾ Marty's and Giles's relationships are defined only in terms of their shared work in the woods:

"Marty South alone, of all the women in Hintock and the world, had approximated to Winterborne's level of

intelligent intercourse with nature. In that respect she had formed his true complement in the other sex, had lived as his counterpart, had subjoined her thoughts to his as a corollary.

The casual glimpses which the ordinary population bestowed upon that wondrous world of sap and leaves called the Hintock woods had been with these two, Giles and Marty, a clear gaze. They had been possessed of its finer mysteries as of commonplace knowledge; had been able to read its hieroglyphs as ordinary writing; to them the sights and sounds of night, winter, wind, storm, amid those dense boughs, which had to Grace a touch of the uncanny, and even of the supernatural, were simple occurrences whose origin, continuance, and laws they foreknew. They had planted together, and together they had felled; together they had, with the run of the years, mentally collected those remoter signs and symbols which seen in few were of runic obscurity, but all together made an alphabet."

(Ch. 44, pp. 357-8)

In spite of their "intelligent intercourse with nature", their physical and spiritual communion with the trees in the wood, Giles and Marty remain emotionally isolated from one another. They seem to place a high moral value on the intimacy with the woods and the life of the woods and skill in the woodland crafts, but a negative response seems to be implicit when it comes to their personal relations.

Nothing is more pathetic than Marty in the final chapter, as deserted, totally alone and lost in memories, she tends the flowers on Giles's grave. By the end, she has become "the repository, the residuary legatee of all the sorrows of the Hintock world."⁽¹⁸⁾ Reminiscent of Wordsworth's Solitary Reaper, Marty laments the passing away of the only man she has ever loved:

"As this solitary and silent girl stood there in the moonlight, a straight slim figure, clothed in a plaitless gown, the contours of womanhood so undeveloped as to be scarcely perceptible in her, the marks of poverty and toil effaced by the misty hour, she touched sublimity at points and looked almost like a being who had rejected with indifference the

attribute of sex for the loftier quality of abstract humanism."

(Ch. 48, p. 393)

If Giles and Marty can exist only in the woodlands and are unfit for the modern world, Fitzpiers, Mrs Charmond and Grace are exceptionally aware of the growing forces of change. Giles and Marty are remembrances of the past, Fitzpiers, Mrs Charmond and Grace are glimpses of incipient intellectual, sexual and economic consciousness looming in the modern world. In the relationship between Grace and Fitzpiers, just as in the relationship between Eustacia and Clym, we catch an explicit suggestion of a complexity in sexual and intellectual feelings that foreshadows Tess and Angel or Sue and Jude. If Giles and Marty are noted for their abnegation, Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond are noted for their selfishness. Giles's and Marty's isolation finds expression in their absorption in their work; Fitzpiers' and Mrs Charmond's isolation finds expression in their complacent enclosure within their own fantasies.

We may recognize in Felice Charmond a familiar character, the wealthy lady of mysterious origin who has surrendered to boredom in her search for life's purpose:

"I am the most inactive woman when I am here', she said. 'I think sometimes I was born to live and do nothing, nothing, nothing but float about, as we fancy we do sometimes in dreams'"

(Ch. 8, p. 90)

She, as well as Fitzpiers, is a victim of restlessness and isolation. She lives alone in a large house, seeking comfort in a curtained room from frustrated emotions. Laurence Sterne's A Sentimental Journey may be the ideal book for her to take in her

European travels, travels of keenly felt isolation.

This keenly felt isolation comes as a result of her self-centredness. The most important thing in her life is to satisfy her sensual desires and her relationship with Fitzpiers bring her down to Suke's level in the eyes of a scornful community. Chance plays its customary role in their fortuitous meeting at Little Hintock. The reappearance of Fitzpiers recreates for Felice Charmond the lost days of her youth; and he also sees in her the young girl and not the embittered mature woman. Partners in disillusionment, each fulfils the other's needs until they wear themselves out.

Felice Charmond can relate to neither place nor person. She is out of tune with her environment not only in her dislike of the rusticity but also in her failure to "connect". She is insulated from contact with the woodlanders by wealth, her rank, her carriage and her fine house, whose curtains are drawn in daytime while candles are lit within. Hintock House lies in an absolutely isolated "hole". Felice Charmond's inability to interest herself in her surroundings, her physical and spiritual isolation from Little Hintock demonstrate her inner emptiness.

Her rootlessness extends to her lack of regard for others. As lady of the manor she controls the economic life of the woodlanders and oppresses them by enclosing their land and pulling down their houses. She loses sympathy for Giles and destroys him and Marty. Her purchase of Marty's hair only indicates her falseness and superficiality. When Fitzpiers first sees her, he sees "a woman of elegant figure reclining upon a couch in such a position as not to disturb a pile of magnificent hair on the crown of her head" (Ch. 26, p. 217) and it is not until he receives Marty's note that he discovers the spuriousness of her femininity.

In a final desperate search for human communication, Felice Charmond expresses her wish to have someone like Grace as a companion who might act as secretary. In her spiritual and geographical isolation, she craves closeness; and although that wish is dropped, both women meet, later, in a scene unique in English fiction where they discuss the man whose presence deepens the chasm between them. Drawn irresistibly to Fitzpiers, Felice Charmond finds it hard to agree to Grace's request to release him, and the meeting ends with each feeling more alienated from the other.

Felice Charmond's end is fitting, if melodramatic. Not only has she lived as an alien in Little Hintock, but also, in her death, she is killed by an alien, a mysterious south Carolinian exile, in an alien country.

Fitzpiers' alienation, like Felice Charmond's, emanates from his self-enclosure within a circle not extending beyond himself. He tells Giles that:

"... people living insulated, as I do by the solitude of this place, get charged with emotive fluid like a Leyden jar with electric, for want of some conductor at hand to disperse it. Human love is a subjective thing - the essence itself of man ... it is joy accompanied by an idea which we project against any suitable object in the line of our vision, just as the rainbow iris is projected against an oak, ash, or elm tree indifferently. So that if any other young lady had appeared instead of the one who did appear, I should have felt just the same interest in her, and have quoted precisely the same lines from Shelley about her, as about this one I saw."

(Ch. 16, pp. 146,7)

Like a butterfly he flits from one source of interest to another, from Grace Melbury to Suke Damson to Felice Charmond. Fitzpiers seeks isolation not only in the remoteness of "one of

those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world", but also in the inwardness of his mind, "I am in love with something in my own head, and no thing-in-itself outside it^{at}_x all" (Ch. 16, p. 147). Tense self-consciousness leads Fitzpiers into his restless, peripatetic and unpredictable life; to his sudden preoccupation with Grace, culminating in his marriage, the sudden shift in his attentions to Felice Charmond, his amoral relationship with Suke Damson, and his final return to Grace. In all these relationships, Fitzpiers, like Felice Charmond, sees the world as existing only for his own purposes, and where he buys Grammer Oliver's brain, she buys Marty South's hair. There is a desperation about their characters, which suggests the fundamental instability of their inner lives.

Fitzpiers' estrangement from the people of Little Hintock, whom he supposedly comes to serve, is most explicit throughout the novel. He regards the woodlanders as inferior beings, and does not wish to mix with them. Just after his marriage and while still in the honeymoon, he tells Grace, "we must come to an understanding about our way of living here. If we continue in these rooms there must be no mixing in with your people below. I can't stand it, and that's the truth." (Ch. 25, p. 213). Grace is sadly surprised at his "distaste for those old-fashioned woodland forms of life which in his courtship he had professed to regard with so much interest" (Ch. 25, p. 213). The woodlanders in their turn, regard him "no more as a superior hedged by his own divinity; while as doctor he began to be rated no higher than old Jones, whom they had so long despised" (Ch. 25, pp. 213, 14). Cut off from the people around him and despised by them, Fitzpiers, driven by isolation and loneliness, seeks destructive relationships with Suke Damson and Felice Charmond.

Fitzpiers is "the only fully-fledged intellectual in the Wessex novels", writes David De Laura in an essay very relevant to present purposes.⁽¹⁹⁾ Half-baked rather than "fully-fledged", I would say; and I do not share De Laura's view that Hardy is "curiously hostile to Fitzpiers from the first", and that Hardy is "querulous with regard to Fitzpiers' intellectual pretensions". He is a kind of third-class Shelley, a poet he is fond of quoting, an idealist, a scientist, a philosopher and a man of letters. Fitzpiers, devoted to the abstract and the ideal, is willing to stay up all night to pursue his unspecified studies. The rustics see him a devil, challenging God to learn what no man should know. But Hardy's point is that Fitzpiers' dedication to abstract knowledge is neither good nor evil; rather, it is a shallow interest in experimentation that indicates modern scientific and intellectual consciousness.

Hardy's closest mentor among Romantic poets was doubtless Wordsworth, the celebration of the commonplace advocated in the "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads achieves its narrative expression in the fourteen Wessex novels. Yet however much Hardy recreated "incidents and situations from common life" featuring a "selection of language really spoken by men", many of his philosophical and artistic views were shaped by his abiding admiration for Percy Bysshe Shelley. The Dynasts and individual poems alike bear the imprint of Shelleyan thought; the novels contain deliberate allusions to Shelley's poetry. Shelley's developmental theory of history and society, and his clarion calls for moral and social reform provided guidelines for the young Thomas Hardy. Shelley created in the impressionable young man "an elevated conception of the artist's role"⁽²⁰⁾ which shaped Hardy's approach to writing

novels. (21)

In The Woodlanders, the narrator has assimilated Shelleyan terms and poetic impulses to a striking extent. Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond quote Shelley directly. Some critics have somewhat hastily concluded that a parody of Shelleyan idealism is intended. However, Hardy's concern is the distinction between appearance and reality; the ironic discrepancy between Fitzpiers' words and actions underlines the depth of his corruption.

On the other hand, Fitzpiers' modernify gives him a sense of being different from everybody around, increases his self-pity, as for one doomed to live in a miserable little "hole" like Hintock. Although, at the end of the novel, he promises "to burn - or at least get rid of - all my philosophical literature" in order to claim reunion with Grace, the spirit that these philosophical books represent is still implicit in his character. Fitzpiers has not really reformed; he has only become more conscious of what he is, more sensitive to himself and his particular world.

The whole question of "free thought" begins to dawn on Wessex through Fitzpiers, and I agree with De Laura in seeing him as an "unfocussed first study of a less ethical Angel"⁽²²⁾, and in associating him with Clym and Jude as intellectuals out of their element - as Grace sees him, before they meet, "a tropical plant in a hedgerow, a nucleus of advanced ideas and practices which had nothing in common with life around" (Ch. 6, pp. 80,81).

Giles and Marty are alienated because they belong to a world which can no longer be made communicable, a world "whose language ... becomes, as the final scene shows, a monologue to the dead"⁽²³⁾; whereas Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond are alienated characters because they are possessed entirely by a new world, a world for which they can find no reality beyond themselves. Grace

hovers between these two worlds, being torn between a world represented by the woodland and a world represented by her schooling.

Grace Melbury provides the most explicit instance of isolation and alienation in the novel. Literally speaking, she is isolated by her education from the community in which she has been brought up. Hers is a second return of the native. Sent away from Little Hintock to be educated by a social climber of a father, she finds it difficult to adjust to life on her return. Fancy Day has no cause to regret her education, it has qualified her to earn her living. But Grace's education has left her between two worlds, neither of which can accommodate her. Grace is significant as the focus of the novel and the unifying centre of the book. The conflicting elements are brought together in her because she is trying to belong both to the ancient, traditional, isolated world of Little Hintock and to the mobile, "cultivated" world beyond.

When Giles comes to bring her home from Sherton Abbas she feels uneasy because she does not want to meet him under his specimen tree in the city square. As they ride to Little Hintock she thinks of fashionable suburbs, of cities, lawns and girls "whose parents Giles would have addressed with a deferential Sir or Madam" (Ch. 6, p. 73). She has temporarily lost her roots in the good old Little Hintock, and ultimately agrees with her father that life with Giles would have been "too rough for her".

When Fitzpiers comes asking to marry Grace, Melbury tells her:

"I needn't tell you to make it all smooth for him'

'You mean, to lead him on to marry me?'

'I do. Haven't I educated you for it?'"

(Ch. 22, p. 188)

Melbury's utilitarian view of education as an investment in the marriage-market is not an anomaly in the late nineteenth century, nor is his ambition to ascend the social ladder. Fitzpiers' basic advantage as his prospective son-in-law is not his being a physician, but his having old aristocratic connections:

"You can't help being happy Grace, in allying yourself with such a romantical family. Why, on the mother's side he's connected with the long line of the Lords Baxby of Sherton. You'll feel as if you've stepped into history"

(Ch. 23, p. 190)

Melbury is even willing to sacrifice personal dignity, family and friendship to marry his daughter well. He tells her:

"You'll be living a high, perusing life, such as has now become natural to you; and though the doctor's practice is small here he'll no doubt go to a dashing town when he's got his hand in, and keep a stylish carriage, and you'll be brought to know a good many ladies of excellent society. If you should ever meet me then, Grace, you can drive past me, looking the other way. I shouldn't expect you to speak to me, or wish such a thing - unless it happened to be in some lonely private place where 'twouldn't lower 'ee at all. Don't think such men as neighbour Giles your equal. He and I shall be good friends enough, but he's not for the like of you."

(Ch. 23, pp. 190-91)

Grace does marry Fitzpiers, but shortly after she expresses her disillusionment in a remarkable scene where she sees him off on what is supposedly a professional call, but which she knows to be another appointment with Felice Charmond. Grace contemplates the irony of her faithless husband's riding to his mistress on a horse given to her, Grace, by her first and faithful lover.

What makes The Woodlanders a particularly modern novel is its consideration of specific social problems such as education, social mobility and divorce, which are also characteristic of his two subsequent major novels, Tess and Jude. Grace's problems stem from the self-division engendered by her education, and her inability to reconcile her opposing tendencies. The blunt, straightforward country girl speaks in simple and strong sentences; whereas the society lady uses a language with elaborate sentence structure and affected diction.

The price of Grace's education is deeper isolation and alienation. She tells her father in anger that:

"I wish you had never, never thought of educating me. I wish I worked in the woods like Marty South! I hate genteel life, and I want to be no better than she! ... Because cultivation has only brought me inconveniences and troubles. I say again, I wish you had never sent me to those fashionable schools you set your mind on ... I have never got any happiness outside Hintock that I know of, and I have suffered many a heartache at being sent away ... And I was always a little despised by the other girls at school, because they knew where I came from, and that my parents were not in so good a station as theirs"

(Ch. 30, pp 251-52)

Grace is railing at what education has brought about in her, at the finer sensibility she has got, the deeper consciousness she has acquired and the more acute temperament she has developed.

When we contemplate the relationship between Grace and Fitzpiers before their marriage, we cannot say ^{that} it was love. "In truth, Grace's ante-nuptial regard for Fitzpiers", the narrator tells us, "had been rather of the quality of awe towards a superior being than of tender solicitude for a lover" (Ch. 28, p.233) Grace even does not "celebrate" her marriage to Fitzpiers, her marriage is not an impressive episode in the novel.(24) yet,

it is not surprising that Grace veers towards Fitzpiers for her conscious desires are , of course, for a socially higher partner and the parental pressure to which she has always submitted is also strongly towards accepting him. But even more important, the hypnotic effect which he exerts over her is irresistible to a girl trained for submission. He

"exercised an almost psychic influence over her ... Fitzpiers acted on her like a dram, exciting her, throwing her into a novel atmosphere which biased her doings until the influence was over, when she felt something of the nature of regret for the mood she had experienced"

(Ch. 22, pp. 188-89)

Hardy indicates the blank negative quality of her responses; she exists only as a response to outside influence. Her indifference to Fitzpiers' departure with Felice Charmond and her equal indifference to his return to her after the loss of Charmond can only be explained by her lack of positive feelings about anything most of the time and her muted and confused emotions about Fitzpiers at the time of the marriage. Submissiveness to others and to convention is the guiding force of her nature.

When Giles invites her to a meal in an inn at Sherton:

"She was in a mood of the greatest depression. On arriving and seeing what the tavern was like she had been taken by surprise; but having gone too far to retreat she had heroically entered and sat down on the well-scrubbed settle, opposite the narrow table with its knives and steel forks, tin pepper-boxes, blue salt-cellars, and posters advertising the sale of bullocks against the wall".

(Ch. 28, p.312)

Grace sees in "knives and steel forks" and "tin pepper-boxes" a style of living she is no longer at ease with, and the effect is not so much one of rejection, as one of shame. Her instincts are

at war with each other, or rather she is at war with herself.⁽²⁵⁾

"While craving to be a country girl again, just as her father requested; to put off the old Eve, the fastidious miss - or rather madam - completely, her first attempt had been beaten by the unexpected vitality of that fastidiousness".

(Ch. 31, p. 315)

This internal conflict is just a stage in her gradual alienation. When she resolves the conflict by running away to Giles, "Autumn's very brother", she is also rejected. Grace's rebellion against society's laws, represented by Fitzpiers, is met with, quite ironically, by even stronger laws of "propriety" which consign her to the cottage, while Giles stays in the shed. This final rejection makes her uncertain of the value of any action she might take. The storm is a climatic^c representation of her self-division and alienation:

"No sooner had she retired to rest that night than the wind began to rise, and after a few prefatory blasts to be accompanied by rain. The wind grew more violent, and as the storm went on it was difficult to believe that no opaque body, but only an invisible colourless thing, was trampling and climbing over the roof, making branches creak, springing out of the trees upon the chimney, popping its head into the flue, and shrieking and blaspheming at every corner of the walls. As in the grisly story, the assailant was a spectre which could be felt but not seen. She had never before been so struck with the devilry of a gusty night in a wood, because she had never been so entirely alone in spirit as she was now. She seemed almost to be apart from herself - a vacuous duplicate only. The recent self of physical animation and clear intentions was not there."

(Ch. 41, p. 335)

The outer landscape becomes inner, and Grace is driven from within by forces she cannot name, so that she sees her consciousness seemingly separated out from her body, "a vacuous duplicate only". The experience undergone by Grace here recalls

similar experiences expressed in many of Hardy's poems, in "Wessex Heights", for example. In this poem the protagonist says: "I seem where I was before my birth, and after death may be".⁽²⁶⁾ He "makes himself a lack of being in order that there might be being".⁽²⁷⁾ This description fits Grace's experience in the storm. Hardy's conception is echoed by certain twentieth-century psychologists. Grace's feelings that she is "a vacuous duplicate" of herself, for example, is recapitulated almost word for word in R.D. Laing's The Divided Self. Laing describes the various forms of "ontological insecurity" in which "the individual may come to feel he is merely a vacuum."⁽²⁸⁾

In this experience of existence and non-existence, of alienation and self-division, Grace foreshadows Hardy's more complicated characters Tess and Sue. Through Grace, Hardy describes accurately the conflict between "modern nerves" and "primitive feelings" which he is to explore more deeply in his last two novels. Hardy renders Grace's inner conflict just before she decides to run away to Giles thus:

"In the darkness of the apartment to which she flew nothing could have been seen during the next half-hour; but from a corner a quick breathing was audible from this impressionable creature, who combined modern nerves with primitive feelings, and was doomed by such co-existence to be numbered among the distressed, and to take her scourgings to their exquisite extremity"

(Ch. 40, p. 325)

The elements that make up Grace's complex character are "modern nerves", "primitive feelings", "a vacuous duplicate only", "propriety" and "the unexpected vitality of the fastidious".

The ending of The Woodlanders upset many contemporary readers and still upsets modern ones. Some modern critics have supposed

that Hardy was fixing up a "happy ending" for his heroine in accordance with his readers' expectations. This is not far from the truth. Hardy himself says that

"... the ending of the story - hinted rather than stated - is that the heroine is doomed to an unhappy life with an inconstant husband. I could not accentuate this strongly in the book, by reason of the conventions of the libraries, etc."⁽²⁹⁾

In a sense, The Woodlanders has alternative endings, appropriate to each of its competing genres. Marty's elegy is the pastoral ending and Grace's reunion with her husband the realist ending. She returns a different woman. Fitzpiers survives because he is fitter to survive in a 'modern' age. Grace "chooses a man with the future in his bones over a man whose death symbolizes an old order passing. But the life, the future that awaits her is only bourgeois prosperity and respectability, eaten away by the worm of sexual distrust."⁽³⁰⁾ The price of this future is high. Marty, now utterly deserted, speaks her monologue to a dead man; Melbury, the disappointed father has lost his most precious investment in educating his only daughter; Grace, doomed to a life of marital infidelity in a world void of values, resumes a marriage of dubious success; Fitzpiers will continue in his inconstancy.

Notes

1. For the genre controversy over The Return of the Native, see Leonard W. Deen, "Heroism and Pathos in Hardy's The Return of the Native", NCF, 15(1960), 207-19; John Paterson, "The Poetics of The Return of the Native", MFS, 6(1960), 214-22; Louis Crompton, "The Sunburnt God: Ritual and Tragic Myth in The Return of the Native", Boston University Studies in English, 4(1960), 229-40. For a similar controversy over The Mayor of Casterbridge, see D.A. Dike, "A Modern Oedipus: The Mayor of Casterbridge", Essays in Criticism, 2(1952), 169-79; John Paterson, "The Mayor of Casterbridge as Tragedy", VS, 3(1959-60), 51-72; Frederick R. Karl, "The Mayor of Casterbridge: A New Fiction Defined". MFS, 6(1960), 195-213

2. Douglas Brown, Thomas Hardy; Howard Babb, "Setting and Theme in Far from the Madding Crowd", ELH, 30(1963), 147-61; J.I.M. Stewart, Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography; Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist; Robert Y. Drake Jr., "The Woodlanders as a Traditional Pastoral", MFS, 6(1960), 251-57; Michael Squires, "Far from the Madding Crowd as Modified Pastoral", NCF, 25(1970), 299-326

3. Squires, 303

4. John Holloway, The Victorian Sage, p. 281

5. David Lodge, Introduction to the paperback New Wessex Edition of The Woodlanders, p. 9

6. Penny Boumelha, Thomas Hardy and Women, p. 98

7. All citations between parentheses following each quotation from the novel refer to the paperback New Wessex Edition, 1974
8. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p. 144
9. Ibid., p. 164
10. Thomas Hardy, The Complete Poems, p. 298
11. Jean Brooks, Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure, p. 231
12. F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928, p. 176
13. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p. 148
14. Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist, pp. 257-8
15. Ian Gregor, Introduction to the Penguin English Library Edition of The Woodlanders, p. 25
16. Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, p. 104
17. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p. 147
18. Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist, p. 260
19. David J. De Laura, "The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels", ELH, 34(1967), 392
20. Michael Millgate: Thomas Hardy: a Biography, p. 374
21. For Shelley 's influence on Hardy see William Rutland, Thomas Hardy: a Study of His Writing and Their Background; F.B. Pinion, Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought; Phyllis Bartlett,

- "Seraph of Heaven": A Shelleyan Dream in Hardy's Fiction",
PMLA, 70(1955), 624-37; Roland Duerksen, Shelleyan Ideas in
Victorian Literature.
22. David J. De Laura, "The Ache of Modernism", p. 392
23. Ian Gregor, "Hardy's World", ELH, 38(1971), p. 283
24. Gregor, The Great Web, p. 158
25. Ibid., p. 159
26. Thomas Hardy, The Complete Poems, p. 319
27. Gilbert Neiman, "Thomas Hardy: Existentialist", Twentieth
Century Literature, 1(1956), p. 212
28. R.D. Laing, The Divided Self, p. 75
29. F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy: 1840-1928, p. 220
30. David Lodge, Introduction to the New Wessex Paperback Edition
of The Woodlanders, p. 21

Chapter Seven

"Tess of the D'Urbervilles"

(1891)

Chapter Seven

Tess of the D'Urbervilles

In discussing the novels which preceded Tess of the D'U^rbervilles, I have tried to show Hardy's continuous preoccupation with alienated human consciousness in its conflict with itself and its environment. As one novel followed another, Hardy's sense of alienation continues to characterize the inner self of the individual and his outer relationships with society and the world he is living in. By the time of The Woodlanders, Hardy was able to present a clear picture of separation from the self, denial of identity and alienation from society. In that novel, Hardy traces out "the lonely Courses ... [that] were part of the great web of human doings", and these human doings are characterized by the "Unfulfilled Intention which makes life what it is."

In Tess of the D'U^rbervilles, Hardy concentrates the conflict that, in the earlier novel, had been widely presented, on the single character of Tess. The temptations of Suke Damson, the endurance of Marty South, the divided consciousness of Grace Melbury and the sexuality of Felice Charmond - all come together and coalesce in Tess Durbeyfield.

Characteristically for Hardy, the first chapter introduces us to themes which will subsequently be fully explored in the central figure of Tess. The novel opens, as it ends, with two wandering figures. John Durbeyfield's encounter with Parson Tringham along a lonely road raises the theme of history, the presence of the past behind and in the present, it introduces the theme of the fall, "how are the mighty fallen", and it initiates the theme of the conflict of impulse and judgement, "However, our impulses are

too strong for our judgement sometimes".

Chapter 2 begins with a description of Marlott which "lay amid the north-eastern undulations of the beautiful vale of Blakemore or Blackmoor ... an engirdled and secluded region ... untrodden as yet by tourist or landscape-painter." In Marlott we are first introduced to Tess through her participation in the "local Cerealia". She appears like a living symbol carrying white flowers and a peeled willow-wand and recalls the ancient fertility rites. Tess's white dress represents her innocence and virginity, while the red ribbon she wears in her hair and her "pouted-up deep red mouth" suggest her sexuality. These external signs are complemented by the narrator's remark: she, like the other club-walkers, has a

"private little sun for her soul to bask in; some dream, some affection, some hobby, at least some remote and distant hope which, though perhaps starving to nothing, still lived on, as hopes will. Thus they were all cheerful, and many of them merry."

(Ch. 2, p. 41) (1)

The unreality of such dreams is implicit in the description of the varied shades of white in the dresses of the club-walkers, which represent an ironical qualification of the "Ideal" by the "real".

Tess appears in this scene as a tabula rasa on which experience is yet to be written, "a mere vessel of emotion untinged by experience" (Ch. 2, p. 42); but the tensions already present within her life and her psyche also first manifest themselves here. We see Tess both as withdrawn - it is because of her "backwardness" that Angel Clare does not notice her in the dance - and as proud. She is mortified by the ludicrous appearance

of her father, and responds aggressively to the derisive laughter of her companions:

"Look here; I won't walk another inch with you, if you say any jokes about him!" Tess cried, and the colour upon cheeks spread over her face and neck. In a moment her eyes grew moist, and her glance drooped to the ground."

(Ch. 2, p. 42)

Tess's tone here is both defensive and aggressive, and the club-walkers are silenced. But the narrator also suggests the potential danger of a loss of self-control in Tess:

"Perceiving that they had really pained her they said no more, and order again prevailed. Tess's pride would not allow her to turn her head again, to learn what her father's meaning was, if he had any,"

(Ch. 2, p. 42)

A more important passage that shows Tess's implicit sense of separation from the world of custom and communication at this stage is the following:

"Mrs Durbeyfield habitually spoke the dialect; her daughter, who had passed the sixth standard in the National School under a London-trained mistress, spoke two languages; the dialect at home, more or less; ordinary English abroad and to persons of quality ... Between the mother, with her fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter with her trained National teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code, there was a gap of two hundred years as ordinarily understood. When they were together the Jacobean and the Victorian ages were juxtaposed."

(Ch. 3, pp. 48-51)

In this stage of her life at Marlott, and throughout most of the novel's crucial events, Tess is insistently described as in a state of unconsciousness, reverie or sleep, linked with mist and halo imagery. Her dreamy distraction reinforces her alienation and

makes her look like a real alien in the surrounding world.

As she drives the cart toward Casterbridge in chapter 4, Tess lapses into contemplation of her place in the universe:

"With no longer a companion to distract her, Tess fell more deeply into reverie than ever, her back leaning against the hives. The mute procession past her shoulders of trees and hedges became attached to fantastic scenes outside reality, and the occasional heave of the wind became the sigh of some immense sad soul, conterminous with the universe in space, and with history in time.

Then, examining the mesh of events in her own life, she seemed to see the vanity of her father's pride; the gentlemanly suitor awaiting herself in her mother's fancy; to see him as a grimacing personage, laughing at her poverty, and her shrouded knightly ancestry - Everything grew more and more extravagant, and she no longer knew how time passed. A sudden jerk shook her in her seat, and Tess awoke from the sleep into which she, too, had fallen."

(Ch. 4, p. 60)

The association of Tess's fall into sleep with that of little Abraham provides both a parallel and a contrast with their parents. John and Joan Durbeyfield escape reality by their drinking and romantic notions, while Tess and Abraham fall into nightmarish visions of that same reality. They all lapse into defence mechanisms to shun responsibility, they are all escapists.

However, Tess allows Abraham to go to sleep because although she

"was not skilful in the management of a horse; she thought that she could take upon herself the entire conduct of the load for the present"

(Ch. 4, p. 60)

She has also "proudly" refused her mother's suggestion that she ask a "young feller" from the club-walking to take the hives to Casterbridge:

"O no - I wouldn't have it for the world!" declared Tess proudly. 'And letting everybody know the reason - such a thing to be ashamed of! I think I could go if Abraham could go with me to kip me company."

(Ch. 4, p. 57)

In her pride, Tess rejects all the help she could have got to do a job which she was not able to do herself. The scene shows Tess's lack of realism. It is the exact opposite of her parents' irresponsibility. Tess also assumes too much blame when things go wrong. After telling Abraham that they live on a blighted planet, thus suggesting that they are not responsible for what happens to them, she sees the death of Prince as entirely her fault. What the novel demonstrates, of course, is that neither view offers a full explanation of human experience: both external events and personal responsibility converge in the life of Tess Durbeyfield.

The trip to Trantridge comes immediately out of the circumstances surrounding the death of Prince. It is the sense of guilt at having killed the family's breadwinner that chiefly compels her to go there:

"the self-reproach which she continued to heap upon herself for her negligence ... Nobody blamed Tess as she blamed herself ... She regarded herself in the light of a murderess"

(Ch. 4, p.62-3)

Thus Hardy expresses Tess's division of consciousness and her separation from her parents, but again her own pride is also an issue. Here she is torn between two forms of defiance. She is reluctant to follow her mother's suggestion that she assume 'the part of poor relation', but she also cannot stand her father's deluded dreams of grandeur "as a reason for staying away"

"I don't like my children going and making themselves beholden to strange kin', murmured [John d'Urberville]. 'I'm the head of the noblest branch o' the family, and I ought to live up to it'.

His reasons for staying away were worse to Tess than her own objection to going."

(Ch. 5, p. 65)

Tess is forced to choose between the shameless opportunism of the one and the feckless vanity of the other. Coaxed by her mother, pricked by her sense of guilt and pressed by the hard economic realities of her family, she decides to go:

"Well, as I killed the horse, mother,' she said mournfully, 'I suppose I ought to do something. I don't mind going and seeing her, but you must leave it to me about asking for help. And don't go thinking about her making a match for me — it is silly"

(Ch. 5, p. 65)

Tess's arrival at the d'Urbervilles' estate represents a new crucial stage in her life, for she is confronted for the first time with both wealth and sexual aggression. Her response is predictably ambivalent. The Club-walking had already revealed her attraction to men of a different class from her own, and so Alec d'Urberville represents a new world that Tess cannot entirely resist. She seems like the chaste lady in Comus or the Eve of Paradise Lost. In both of Milton's narratives the woman is offered dangerous food. Here, Tess accepts a strawberry from Alec, in a scene that anticipates her seduction:

" he stood up and held it by the stem to her mouth. 'No — no!' she said quickly, putting her fingers between his hand and her lips. 'I would rather take it in my own hand'. 'Nonsense!' he insisted; and in a slight distress she parted her lips and took it in.

They had spent some time wandering desultorily thus, Tess was eating in a half-pleased, half-reluctant state whatever d'Urberville offered her. When she could

consume no more strawberries he filled her little basket with them; and then the two passed round the rose trees, whence he gathered blossoms and gave her to put in her bosom. She obeyed like one in a dream, and when she could affix no more he himself tucked a bud or two into her hat, and heaped her basket with others in the prodigality of his bounty"

(Ch. 5, p. 70)

The pattern of their relationship is established at this first meeting. Just as she has submitted to her mother's scheme, she is expected to submit to Alec's advances. On their second meeting, after she is forced to hold on to his waist, her submission is symbolized when she receives "the kiss of mastery". Tess, clearly, underestimates the danger and decides against returning home and abandoning the scheme to rehabilitate her family. The ambivalence of Tess's relations with Alec in these scenes is always complicated, too, by her financial reliance on Alec:

"she was more pliable under his hands than a mere companionship would have made her, owing to her unavoidable dependence upon his mother, and, through that lady's comparative helplessness, upon him."

(Ch. 9, p. 92)

This economic dimension in Tess's very complex relations with Alec will figure again in the Chase scene, as well as in the later scenes at Flintcomb-Ash and Sandbourne.

The Chaseborough dance and its aftermath are very important precursors of the seduction scene in The Chase. Although Tess had first resisted the invitations of her fellow-workers to go to Chaseborough, she follows them "again and again" to escape from her "monotonous attention to the poultry-farm all the week". The dance itself is portrayed as another possibility of escape into a dream world:

"Changing partners simply meant that a satisfactory choice had not as yet been arrived at by one or other of the pair, and by this time every couple had been suitably matched. It was then that the ecstasy and the dream began, in which emotion was the matter of the universe, and matter but an adventitious intrusion likely to hinder you from spinning where you wanted to spin."

(Ch. 10, p. 97)

As she stands watching the dance, Tess is beset by the temptation to participate. She resists and, as she returns home with the Trantridge revellers, she continues to keep aloof from the drunken atmosphere surrounding her. But as "a black stream of [treacle] glisten[ing] like a slimy snake in the cold still rays of the moon" trickles down Car Darch's neck, Tess finally joins the communal ecstasy and bursts into laughter:

"the laughter rang louder; they clung to the gate, to the posts, rested on their staves, in the weakness engendered by their convulsions at the spectacle of Car. Our heroine, who had hitherto held her peace, at this wild moment could not help joining in with the rest. It was a misfortune ... No sooner did the dark queen hear the soberer richer note of Tess among those of the other work-people than a long smouldering sense of rivalry inflamed her to madness."

(Ch. 10, pp. 99-100)

Tess's laughter makes her the focus of her companions' jealousy and antagonism. Her response is characteristic:

"Tess was indignant and ashamed. She no longer minded the loneliness of the way and the lateness of the hour; her one object was to get away from the whole crew as soon as possible"

(Ch. 10, p. 100)

When Alec d'Urberville arrives on his horse and invites Tess to jump behind him, Tess takes the opportunity to satisfy all her

conflicting impulses:

"But coming as the invitation did at the particular juncture when fear and indignation at these adversaries could be transformed by a spring of the foot into a triumph over them, she abandoned herself to her impulse, climbed the gate, put her toe upon his instep, and scrambled into the saddle behind him. The pair were speeding away into the distant gray by the time that the contentious revellers became aware of what had happened."

(Ch. 10, p. 101)

Tess "abandoned herself to impulse", a danger to which we have been alerted in the novel's opening scene, when Parson Tringham tells Jack Durbeyfield:

"At first I resolved not to disturb you with such a useless piece of information; said [Tringham]. However, our impulses are too strong for our judgment sometimes. I thought you might perhaps know something of it all the while!"

(Ch. 1, p. 35)

Tess is driven by impulse to her tragic course, just as Bathsheba is driven by impulse to send Boldwood a valentine. Hardy seems to suggest that a person can release destructive forces when his impulses are not in harmony with or controlled by his judgment. Nowhere is Tess's self-division clearer than when her ultimate impulse delivers her from Car Darch into the far more dangerous company of Alec d'Urberville.

On the way to The Chase, Alec gradually and intelligently reduces her mood of aggressive triumph over her companions to one of defeat and submission to him. She "expressed no further negative" to his advances. She even accepts the nest of dead leaves he makes for her. When he mentions the horse and gifts he has given her family, Tess is reduced to tears. She has become completely passive.

The seduction scene is one of the most controversial in Hardy not only because what happens in the darkness and silence of The Chase is ambiguous, but also because Tess's feelings about Alec are ambivalent. Tess's "violation" is not directly described. "It exists in the gap between the paragraphs in which the event has not yet occurred and those which see it as already part of the irrevocable past".⁽²⁾ None of the crucial acts of violence in the novel are directly described; the killing of the horse, the murder of Alec, the execution of Tess, all happen off-stage. But whether Tess was raped or seduced by Alec is a particularly crucial question because on it rests the meaning of the novel, as a history of "a pure woman faithfully presented". The novel does not provide any conclusive answer to the question. As Penny Boumelha has remarked, Tess's sexuality is ultimately 'unknowable and unrepresentable' by the narrator, and he withdraws completely from her consciousness at the most crucial moments in her life, the moment when she was wakened to Alec's return in The Chase, the weeks following that scene when she was his mistress (if she was), the time of the discovery of her pregnancy and the birth of her child, the moment when she decided to return to Alec and then to murder him and flee with Angel.⁽³⁾ Indeed, Tess's "real" thoughts and feelings are rarely presented in the novel, except when she suffers the consequences of her actions. Her moral choices seem obscured in ambivalence, while their results are vividly portrayed. Ian Gregor sounds more reasonable when he says, "it is both a seduction and a rape. ... We could say that as a woman, Tess feels it to be a seduction in the way the strawberry scene hints at; as an individual person, she knows it was rape, "There were they that heard a sobbing one night last year in The

Chase." (4)

While Hardy relies on subtle and indirect techniques for building ambiguity, the scene in *The Chase*, on the other hand, reveals Tess's emotional confusion about Alec. Though she admits she does not love him, she has remained there for about three months. When he rails at her for playing with his feelings and eluding him, and wants to treat her as a lover, Tess is unsure of how to respond:

"We know each other well; ... Mayn't I treat you as a lover?"

She drew a quick pettish breath of objection, writhing uneasily on her seat, looked far ahead, and murmured, 'I don't know - I wish - how can I say yes or no when -
- '

He settled the matter by clasping his arm round her as he desired, and Tess expressed no further negative."

(Ch. 11, p. 104)

Tess's subsequent account of their relationship confirms her ambivalence with Alec. She insists she had never sincerely loved him, but "My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all."

I believe that Tess is attracted to Alec, not because of his charm and flattery, but essentially because of what he is. Alec d'Urberville is not simply a stereotyped villain of Victorian melodrama, with attributes like his "full lips, badly moulded", his moustache, cigar, reckless driving and plotting. Nor is he the unregenerate human villain enlarged into Satan. Doubtless in the presentation of Alec there are diabolical hints which we should not ignore, but equally we should not give them too much weight. Alec is rather the ordinary, sensual, wilful and intelligent man who wants his own way. Hardy may have started by thinking of Alec as a villain-rapist who preys upon innocent girls. But Hardy's

creative imagination sees in this man qualities that make him more than a figure of disgust. D.H. Lawrence was probably the first critic to draw attention to Alec's masculine attractiveness when he said that "Alec d'Urberville could reach some of the real sources of the female in a woman, and draw from them."⁽⁵⁾

Lawrence may be indirectly expounding his own sexual philosophy, but what he says is in line with the Alec presented in the novel. "What Alec presents irresistibly to Tess is a sense of power," says Ian Gregor, "... he recognizes her as a woman, and this gives to her, in a way that she has never experienced before, a sense of her own power, her own attraction. It gives her a new sense of her individuality and she is right to think that if she betrays that she imperils her own being; so that when the time comes she will have her own role to play as the avenging woman. In Alec, she senses both her creator and her destroyer".⁽⁶⁾.

Tess's education at Trantridge at Alec's hands throws her relationship with her family into conflict. Hardy expresses the tension in the concluding sentence to the first "phase":

"As Tess's own people down in those retreats are never tired of saying among each other in their fatalistic way: 'It was to be'. There lay the pity of it. An immeasurable social chasm was to divide our heroine's personality thereafter from that previous self of hers who stepped from her mother's door to try her fortune at Trantridge poultry-farm".

(Ch. 11, p. 108)

By Tess's "own people" the sheer occurrence of event is passively accepted for good or bad as fate. But for Tess the experience in The Chase divides her not only from the world outside her but also within her own being, and the result of this self-division is her transformation, at a single stroke, into

"another girl than the simple one she had been at home". The nature of her change is indicated by Hardy's descriptions of her movements. She rests on a gate "in a mechanical way", sits and replies to Alec "like a puppet" and receives his masterful kiss "like a marble term".

Tess's guilt so overpowers her that she speaks of loathing and hating herself for her weakness. Alec tries to shake off her melancholy, yet the depth of her feeling is indicated in her wish that she had never been born. If there is a leitmotif in Tess's life henceforth, it is the reiteration of her wish to die.

We see her back in her father's house, feeling terribly depressed and wanting to hide herself in a tomb: Hardy describes Tess in the following famous passage at the end of chapter 13:

"The only exercise that Tess took at this time was after dark; and it was then, when out in the woods, that she seemed least solitary. She knew how to hit to a hair's breadth that moment of evening when the light and the darkness are so evenly balanced that the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralize each other, leaving absolute mental liberty. It is then that the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least possible dimensions. She had no fear of the shadow; her sole idea seemed to be to shun mankind - or rather that cold accretion called the world, which, so terrible in the mass, is so unformidable, even pitiable, in its units.

On these lonely hills and dales her quiescent glide was of a piece with the element she moved in. Her flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene. At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed a part of her own story. Rather they became a part of it; for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were. The midnight airs and gusts, moaning amongst the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulae of bitter reproach. A wet day was the expression of irremediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood, and could not comprehend as any other."

(Ch. 13, p. 120)

Tess has been transformed into a miserable alienated woman. She has come to feel "the ache of modernism", she is to be "a true inheritor of the modern world and to receive what for Hardy is its distinctive legacy, that interior conflict which he describes as 'the mutually destructive interdependence of flesh and spirit'".⁽⁷⁾ The line which separates the world from her consciousness of the world becomes difficult to draw, 'the world is only a psychological phenomenon'. Her habit of reverie, of self-withdrawal is now carried to an extreme.

Her baby is born, she works as a field-woman:

"Tess ... somewhat changed - the same, but not the same; at the present stage of her existence living as a stranger and an alien here, though it was no strange land that she was in. After a long seclusion she had come to a resolve to undertake outdoor work in her native village"

(Ch. 14, p. 124)

Tess is in a state of trance, in a state of weightlessness, present but unseeing, benumbed and moving mechanically and perfunctorily. Around her, other field girls feel sympathy for the "alien":

"There were they that heard a sobbing one night last year in The Chase; and it mid ha' gone hard wi'a certain party if folks had come along!...

'twas a thousand pities that it should have happened to she, of all others. But 'tis always the comeliest! The plain ones be as safe as churches - "

(Ch. 14, p. 126)

The already existing gap between Tess and Marlott is now at its widest, and Tess reaches her most extreme isolation with the death of her baby, Sorrow.

The scene of the solitary candle-lit figure of Tess

performing the sacred religious rite of baptising her baby, taking sole responsibility for the baby's salvation, is really most heart-rending. The scene is moving because the "act of approximation" is made divine and meaningful not by virtue of the rite itself, but by the intrinsic value of a wronged individual human being standing at the centre of Christian religion:

"The ecstasy of faith almost apotheosized her, it set upon her face a glowing irradiation, and brought a red spot into the middle of each cheek ... The children gazed up at her with more and more reverence, and no longer had a will for questioning, she did not look like Sissy to them now, but as a being large, towering, and awful - a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common."

(Ch. 14, p. 131)

Tess is also baptized in the scene as a suffering human being. "Conception in sorrow, toil for daily bread, frailty, awareness of human alienation are to define the newly-created woman in place of nobility, human and divine, and innocence lost." (8)

Tess now begins to reconsider her life more detachedly. Her powerful vitality struggles against her despair. Urged by the pulse of hope, she tries to forget the past:

"Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice ... her soul [was] that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize. But for the world's opinion those experiences would have been simply a liberal education ... To escape the past and all that appertained thereto was to annihilate it, and to do that she would have to get away. Was once lost always lost really true of chastity? She would ask herself. She might prove it false if she could veil by-gones. The recuperative power which pervaded organic nature was surely not denied to maidenhood alone."

(Ch. 15, p. 135)

Tess's decision to leave shows the complex woman she has become since her education at Trantridge. On one point she was resolved: "there should be no more d'Urberville air-castles in the dreams and deeds of her new life. She would be the dairymaid Tess and nothing more." For all the wisdom of such a resolve, it is simply impossible for one with her emotional nature and intellectual potential to achieve.

The gradual development of Tess's relationship with Angel Clare - particularly the triumph of Tess's loving nature over her self-repressive reluctance - is one of the finest creations in all of Hardy's novels. Though she loves him, her sense of his superiority leads her to the self-abnegation of encouraging him to choose one of the other milkmaids for his wife. Eventually, Angel's persistence overcomes her determination never to be tempted to marry again.

From the start Tess tends to see Angel as more than a man, she idealizes him:

"There was hardly a touch of earth in her love for Clare ... he was all that goodness could be ... She thought every line in the contour of his person the perfection of masculine beauty, his soul the soul of a saint, his intellect that of a seer ... He would sometimes catch her large, worshipful eyes, that had no bottom to them, looking at him from their depths, as if she saw something immortal before her"

(Ch. 31, p. 234)

Angel, too, idealizes Tess and sees her a "visionary essence of woman", each idealizes the other. In her wedding night Tess perceives Angel's idealizing attitude and says:

"'O my love, my love, why do I love you so!' She whispered there alone; 'for she you love is not my real self, but one in my image; the one I might have been!'"

(Ch. 33, p. 256)

Tess's idealization of Angel is not less unreal:

"She knelt down and prayed. She tried to pray to God, but it was her husband who really had her supplication. Her idolatry of this man was such that she herself almost feared it to be ill-omened."

(Ch. 33, p. 256)

As soon as she consents to marry Angel, she remains undecided whether or not to tell him of her relationship with Alec, "she dismissed the past - trod upon it and put it out, as one treads on a coal that is smouldering and dangerous". When she decides to inform Angel of her past relationship with Alec, all her attempts fail. Tess must be seen as responsible for this failure which is at the very heart of her story. It is the kingpin of the plot for it is the direct cause of her tragedy, it is an irreparable error, and leads, in the end to her murder of Alec and to her execution. Tess's inability to reveal her past to Angel corresponds with his inability to sense that she has something to say. This inability to communicate proceeds from deep uncertainties within themselves.

Throughout her wedding day, Tess is besieged by feelings of guilt and unworthiness. The desire to die, so evident before The Rally, reappears on her wedding night even more persistently: Tess is mortified by Retty's attempted suicide, but when Angel tells her that the maid was naturally morbid, Tess claims she had no cause to be, "while they who have causes to be, hide it, and pretend they are not". The narrator comments:

"The incident had turned the scale for her. They were simple and innocent girls on whom the unhappiness of unrequited love had fallen; they had deserved better at the hands of Fate. She had deserved worse - yet she was the chosen one. It was wicked of her to take all without paying. She would pay to the uttermost farthing."

(Ch. 34, p. 266)

Tess's sense of guilt at concealing her weakness with Alec convinces her that she does not deserve her good fortune and calls for punishment. With Tess's confession at Welbridge Manor a new phase of Tess's alienated consciousness begins. It is quite easy for Tess to forgive Angel for his "eight-and-forty hours' dissipation with a stranger" because he is the object of her idolatry; the god before whom she placed her guilt and to whose judgment and punishment she willingly submits. Her feeling of his superiority over her not only rules out her condemning him but also reinforces her sense of unworthiness and her tendency toward self-pity and self-sacrifice. Tess's real terror is apparent as soon as Angel begins to see her as she sees herself "a guilty woman":

"He looked upon her as a species of impostor; a guilty woman in the guise of an innocent one. Terror was upon her white face as she saw it; her cheek was flaccid, and her mouth had almost the aspect of a round little hole. The horrible sense of his view of her so deadened her that she staggered; and he stepped forward, thinking she was going to fall"

(Ch. 35, p. 272)

Tess's dire need to love and be loved by Angel makes her immolate herself. This is starkly clear when, moments after her confession, Tess suggests that she does not belong to Angel:

"Angel, am I too wicked for you and me to live together? ... I shan't ask you to let me live with you, Angel, because I have no right to! I shall not write to mother and sisters to say we be married ... I shan't do anything, unless you order me to; and if you go away from me I shall not follow'ee; and if you never speak to me any more I shall not ask why, unless you tell me I may. ... I will obey you like your wretched slave, even if it is to lie down and die"

(Ch. 35, p. 272)

This passivity and inaction can sometimes be as destructive as action. Tess's sense that she has no right to tamper with his life, her refusal to anger him "made his way easy for him":

"If Tess had been artful, had she made a scene, fainted, wept hysterically, in that lonely lane, notwithstanding the fury of fastidiousness with which he was possessed, he would probably not have withstood her. But her mood of long-suffering made his way easy for him, and she herself was his best advocate. Pride too, entered into her submission ... and the many effective chords which she could have stirred by an appeal were left untouched."

(Ch. 37, p. 297)

Because Tess persists in considering Angel her lord, she must endure humiliation and deprivation. After she is abandoned by Angel, she cannot return to her father's home and she is forced to seek work on Flintcomb-Ash farm to support herself.

If Tess's life at Talbothays has been characterized by illusion and dream, her life at Flintcomb-Ash is characterized by physical hardship. Flintcomb-Ash brings sharply to the senses the bleak sterility of life without hope, without love. The severity of the weather and its physical effects on Tess and Marian, the inhumanity of Farmer Groby, the infertility of the land and the obduracy of the earth all suggest the obliteration of human identity. Tess in the fields is the typical alienated worker who works on the farm mechanically and without the least interest or enthusiasm. She is inhumanly exploited by Farmer Groby in return for a few pence that hardly sustain life. We see her in the fields barely distinguishable from the land or the land from her:

"The swede-field in which she and her companion were set hacking was a stretch of a hundred odd acres, in one patch, on the highest ground of the farm, rising above stony lanchets or lynchets - the outcrop of siliceous veins in the chalk formation, composed of myriads of loose white flints in bulbous, cusped, and

phallic shapes. The upper half of each turnip had been eaten off by the live-stock, and it was the business of the two women to grub the lower or earthy half of the root with a hooked fork called a hacker, that it might be eaten also. 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. So these two upper and nether visages confronted each other all day long, the white face looking down on the brown face, and the brown face looking up at the white face, without anything standing between them but the two girls crawling over the surface of the former like flies"

(Ch. 43, p. 331)

Nothing could be more reductive of the size and significance of the human being. This passage sets the mood of this phase "The Woman pays" as surely as "the oozing fatness and warm ferments" set that of "The Rally". Flintcomb-Ash is associated with the impersonal threshing machine which has changed the reaping ritual into a meaningless process. The horses and local driver, who understood every stage of the reaping ritual, have been replaced by the itinerant Northern engineer, described less as a person than as a mechanical function, who "had nothing to do with preparatory labour" and remained isolated from the agricultural scene. Flintcomb-Ash, too, has been invaded by the "ache of modernism". The thresher is a soulless 'red tyrant' that gears the workers to its insatiable demands, and the dominance of machinery in late nineteenth-century Wessex was one of the factors which exiled men from work rooted in nature and defined them by the profit motive and the production schedule.

In the valley of the Great Dairies, the division in Tess's consciousness had thrown her into the world of reverie and illusion. Flintcomb-Ash threatens her with physical suffering which she has to endure, like the strange birds, with "dumb

impassivity". In her physically exhausting and spiritually demeaning existence, Tess takes advantage of her position as Angel's wife to see Angel's parents. The attempt fails and Hardy goes on to rebuke her and suggest that it is Tess who is at fault here, "Her present condition was precisely one which would have enlisted the sympathies of old Mr and Mrs Clare".

Tess's commitment to Angel makes her suffer in a way that is so unbearable that Marian is surprised at a gentleman's wife working under such conditions:

"But you be a gentleman's wife; and it seems hardly fair that you should live like this?"

'O yes it is, quite fair; though I am very unhappy.'

'Well, well. He married you - and you can be unhappy!'

'Wives are unhappy sometimes; from no fault of their husbands - from their own''

(Ch. 42, p. 328)

In order to repel all other men she "mercilessly nipped her eyebrows off and thus insured against aggressive admiration". She even hates all other men and likes them ^{to} _x "think ⁿ _f scornfully of me". All this is done to sustain her love for Angel to whom she still hopes to be reconciled. Could the struggle inside her between life and death be more tragic?

Unfortunately, Alec appears and renews his importunities before Tess hears from Angel. When Alec taunts Tess ^{with} _x accusing her ^f of his backsliding and tells her "to leave that mule you call your husband for ever", instinctively "she passionately swung the glove by the gauntlet directly in his face ... and in a moment the blood began dropping from his mouth." Then she tells him:

"Whip me, crush me; you need not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim - that's the law"

(Ch. 47, p. 379)

Tess challenges Alec with the whole of her being, she sees him not just as her seducer, but as a whole complex of interrelated forces. Like the young men at Chalk-Newton, Alec attacks Tess in lust for her body which she values only because it belongs to Angel.

Though Tess confesses to Angel on her wedding night that "I love you for ever - in all changes, in all disgraces, because you are yourself", Tess, as well as Angel, is in love with an illusion. The Angel she loved never existed after her confession, and the man she continues to love is not the Angel she knew. When Tess is finally disillusioned and realizes how monstrously Angel has treated her, she tries to forget him. Her faith in him is destroyed when Tess is near despair over her homeless family. Alec well knows that she cannot resist dependence on him:

"I shall not come - I have plenty of money!" she cried.

'Where?'

'At my father-in-law's, if I ask for it.'

'If you ask for it. But you won't, Tess; I know you; you'll never ask for it - you'll starve first!'"

(Ch. 51, p. 404)

It is now that Hardy explicitly introduces the agricultural and economic crisis that has overtaken Wessex and turned families, like the Durbeyfields, into migratory 'labour'. The last phases of the novel are dominated not only by Tess's consciousness but also by money, changing methods of work and migration of families. The social and economic conditions in Wessex give a new dimension to

Tess's alienated consciousness. These social and economic conditions produced people like Alec who is associated with the world of Flintcomb-Ash and the threshing machine. This world is "inseparable from nineteenth-century laissez-faire capitalism, it is the triumph of the individual bourgeois ethic, what is wanted can be bought".⁽⁹⁾ Alec wants Tess's body and her alienation from Angel leaves her spiritually dead. Alec's victory over Tess now is the result of her accepting this division within herself to such an extent that, when Angel meets her at Sandbourne, he feels "that his original Tess had spiritually ceased to recognize the body before him as hers-allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will" (Ch. 55, p. 429). Alec has mastered Tess twice, in the first time, she was a victim of her ambivalent nature, in the second, she is a tragic heroine.

Her body, which has caused her so much misery and which, she thinks, no longer seems desirable, is worthless. This is symbolically indicated when she kills the wounded pheasants to put them out of their misery. When she exchanges her flesh for Alec's economic help for her and her family, she ceases to recognize her body.

Tess suffers, not only because of inner divisions in herself, but also because of her society's unwillingness to accept her attempts to achieve perfect harmony of being with Angel; she is thwarted by the attitudes of the society in which she lives. The conventional view of her as an unmarried mother affects her tremendously and causes latent psychological disturbance to come to surface. Society is the real agent of destruction, and it is represented both as something outside Tess and as a part of her

personality. On the one hand, social values that threaten to limit or destroy Tess are concentrated in external forces, in the natural environment and in other persons, particularly those close to Tess - her parents, Angel Clare, and Alec D'Urberville.⁽¹⁰⁾ Hardy lends breadth to Tess's experience in her wanderings over the face of England, from the lush, rural farmland of the south to the flinty, harsh soil of the north, but the forces that pursue her are endemic to her whole world and are grounded in the personalities of Alec, Angel, and Tess's parents.

Hardy's protagonists are burdened, like Dickens's and George Eliot's characters, with a set of social values that hampers their self-realization. Tess is partially responsible for her fate because she shares others' evaluations of herself throughout most of the novel. Society, to Hardy, and to George Eliot, is not only an environment outside the individual but an internalized texture of attitudes and opinions. Some critics have seen Tess of the D'Urbervilles as the story of a "pure woman" caught in the meshes of society.⁽¹¹⁾ This reading overlooks, however, the two forms society takes in the novel and diminishes its richness. Hardy seems to explore the ways in which the "Pure Woman" of the subtitle becomes *accomplice* in her own fall, how Tess is both victim and agent of her own doom.⁽¹²⁾ The sets of opposition in the novel, havens of nature versus the engines of society, sensual Alec versus spiritual Angel, rural world versus urban world, serve as contexts to explore the action of society on character. Both Alec and Angel destroy Tess, both want her to be artificial. Tess is both a child of nature and a child of society, sensual and spiritual. Both the rural world with its customs, traditions, and superstitions, and the urban world, with its industrialization, progress, and education, constitute society in Tess. Tess is prey

both to her parents' simple ideas of former grandeur and to Angel's bookish, naive notions of purity and innocence. Hardy recognizes the destructive effect of social norms on individuals, a destructive effect that often operates as much from within a character as from without. Hardy's novels, and particularly the major novels, share a sadness to the effect that for individuals society is no longer a structure of support. The narrator concludes, "But for the world's opinion those experiences would have been simply a liberal education" (Ch. 15, p. 135), but Tess can never fully share this lofty perspective. Although she escapes the confines of Blackmoor, the "world's opinion" lives in her soul and continually argues for her alienation and unfitness for fulfilment. In order to heighten Tess's discordant relationship with the "social substance", Hardy's narrator seems to suggest that this fabric of opinion has no real validity; it is a "cloud of moral hobgoblins by which [Tess] was terrified without reason":

"But this encompassment of her own characterization, based on shreds of convention, peopled by phantoms and voices antipathetic to her, was a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy - a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason. It was they that were out of harmony with the actual world, not she. Walking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such a anomaly"

(Ch. 13, pp. 120-21)

The narrator's meaning is clear; individuals' self-conceptions reflect social opinion. Society is woven firmly into the fabric of individual psychology.

Angel's return to reclaim his abandoned wife deepens her sense of guilt for having been unfaithful to him, and her anger against Angel is displaced ^{onto} Alec for destroying her chances of happiness. When she murders Alec, Tess herself becomes the victim of her desperate rage against the man who has torn her life to pieces. By murdering Alec d'Urberville, Tess makes herself subject to the death penalty. She realizes this and accepts it willingly, Tess asserts her whole being in the murder of Alec, a being undistorted either by Angel's earlier false idealization of her or by her own self-destructive guilt or by the society's inhibiting attitudes.

Tess escapes to join Angel and they enjoy a brief idyll in a large deserted house. In the New Forest interlude, there are echoes of the earlier innocence at Marlott - seclusion, the dream-like atmosphere, and the sense of suspended time:

"All is trouble outside there, inside here content ... within was affection, union, error forgiven: outside was the inexorable'."

(Ch. 58, p. 442)

Tess and Angel can only achieve absolute harmony by "ignoring that there was a corpse". In that house Tess's relationship with Angel reaches its fulfilment but she knows it will not last. Tess is glad because at last she has vindicated herself, she has fused for Angel the image he adored, "the visionary essence of woman", with the woman ^{he} rejected. Tess is no longer an alienated, split, or self-divided character, she is genuinely "fulfilled". She does not like to leave that deserted house, but she is aware that her fate can only be decided by the social law. When the authorities come for her, Tess murmurs:

"What is it, Angel?' she said, starting up.

'Have they come for me?'

'Yes, dearest," he said. 'They have come.'

'It is as it should be,' she murmured. 'Angel, I am almost glad - yes, glad' This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough and now I shall not live for you to despise me!' She stood up, shook herself, and went forward, neither of the men having moved. 'I am ready,' she said quietly."

Angel Clare is not simply a cog in the narrative machine; he is a successful, subtle and complex character. Hardy described him by saying:

"Angel is a type of a certain class of the modern young man. Cruel, but not intentionally so. It was the fault of his fastidious temperament. Had he not been a man of great subtilty [sic] of mind, he would have followed his brothers into the church. But he had intellectual freedom in the dairy. A subtle, poetical man, he preferred that life to the conventional life"⁽¹³⁾

Hardy's extraordinary achievement in the creation of Tess has led some to disparage the other characters as markedly inferior conceptions. Some reviewers often simply disliked them as unpleasant human beings, others regarded them as clumsy or incredible. William Watson's review was exceptional in its recognition of the complexity of Angel Clare:

"Perhaps the most subtly drawn, as it is in some ways the most perplexing and difficult character, is that of Angel Clare, with his half-ethereal passion for Tess ... many readers ... will be conscious of ... anger against this intellectual, virtuous and unfortunate man It is at this point [the confession], however, that the masterliness of the conception and its imaginative validity are most conclusively manifest, for it is here that we perceive Clare's nature to be consistently inconsistent throughout."⁽¹⁴⁾

Angel is torn between opposite extremes from the start. Even on the slight occasion when he is first introduced, the

possibility of conflict is raised. He is contrasted with his brothers in his "uncribbed, uncabined, aspect", and in his dancing with the village girls, yet he runs after them in order to discuss A Counterblast to Agnosticism. We next see him shocking his father about a book and refusing to enter the church. However, at this stage it looks as if the conflict were largely external, and as if taking up farming had solved his intellectual and emotional problems:

"Considering his position he became wonderfully free from the chronic melancholy which is taking hold of the civilized races with the decline of belief in a beneficent Power"

(Ch. 18, p. 156)

Angel's attitude to life is based on unresolved conflicting views. Intellectually, he has rejected his father's dogma, but emotionally he is torn between austerity and sensuousness, rigidity and spontaneity. As long as this conflict remains dormant, it seems manageable. But when strong feelings enter in, the conflict ceases to be abstract and theoretical, and the whole personality is exposed to opposing forces.

Hardy continually keeps before us the two central conflicting impulses in Angel's character: his capacity for intense feeling and his fear of its getting out of control. Angel has a demanding super ego at the same time as powerful instinctive drives. This dichotomy is quite explicit. Having decided that he may think of Tess as a possible future wife, Angel is able to respond to her in a clearly sensuous, physical way:

"She had not heard him enter, and hardly realized his presence there. She was yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's. She

had stretched one arm so high above her coiled-up cable of hair that he could see its satin delicacy above the sunburn; her face was flushed with sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. The brim-fulness of her nature breathed from her. It was a moment when a woman's soul is more incarnate than at any other time; when the most spiritual beauty bespeaks itself flesh; and sex takes the outside place in the presentation."

(Ch. 27, p. 210, Emphasis added)

Hardy creates an impression of Angel transformed by love into a sensuous impulsive being, but he soon qualifies this impression:

"he was, in truth, more spiritual than animal; he had himself well in hand, and was singularly free from grossness. Though not cold-natured, he was rather bright than hot-less Byronic than Shelleyan; could love desperately, but with a love more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal; it was a fastidious emotion which could jealously guard the loved one against his very self."

(Ch. 31, p. 234)

Hardy creates a sense of genuine and profound conflict which is seen to be fundamental to Angel's nature from the start and therefore is inescapable.

One factor in Angel's character, which makes his response to Tess's confession inevitably one of rejection, is his strongly idealized conception of her. All Hardy's lovers, Boldwood, Knight, Clym, Fitzpiers, Angel and Jude, disembodied their beloved and strip them of previous existence, they delight in seeing them in rather the same way as Sue Bridehead sees herself, as an ethereal, Shelleyan being, completely free from the "grossness" of her body. Hardy says that Angel loved Tess "fancifully and ideally", to Angel

"[Tess] was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman - a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names."

(Ch. 20, p. 170)

The reasons Angel gives for rejecting Tess are quite explicit; they are a direct admission that he has been idealizing her. "You were one person: now you are another"

"I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you'.

'But who?'

'Another woman in your shape'"

(Ch. 35, pp. 271,72)

Angel confirms the truth of Tess's own insight on her wedding day:

"O my love ... why do I love you so!' she whispered there alone; 'for she you love is not my real self, but one in my image, the one I might have been!'"

(Ch. 33, p. 256)

Tess is aware of what is wrong with him, and tells him so clearly, "It is in your mind what you are angry at, Angel: it is not in me". Hardy tells us that:

"Clare's love was doubtless ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability. With these natures, corporeal presence is sometimes less appealing than corporeal absence, the latter creating an ideal presence that conveniently drops the defects of the real ... she was another woman than the one who had excited his desire"

(Ch. 36, p. 287)

Hardy makes Angel's rejection of Tess quite convincing by relating it to his idealisation of her. He shows him withdrawing from reality by refusing to admit that she is the woman he loved. Then Angel is no longer able to disguise the fact that he has been treating Tess as his inferior, and begins to despise her:

"Don't, Tess; don't argue. Different societies, different manners. You almost make me say you are an

unapprehending peasant woman, who have never been initiated into the proportions of social things"

(Ch. 35, p. 275)

The cruelty of this is not altogether surprising. Angel now admits that he has married beneath him:

"My position is this ... I thought ... that by giving up all ambition to win a wife with social standing, with fortune, with knowledge of the world, I should secure rustic innocence as surely as I should secure pink cheeks"

(Ch. 36, p. 281)

With the loss of what he considered to be her one virtue, the way is open for total contempt.

Angel's earlier "eight-and-forty hours' dissipation with a stranger" is the cause of most readers' and critics' attack on Angel to the extent that one critic says, "Unconscious of his own acceptance of a double standard of morality - an ethical code which excuses his own indiscretion but condemns Tess's - Clare assumes the role of Tess's psychological tormentor and becomes the real villain of the tragedy".⁽¹⁵⁾ Angel is not a deliberate "tormentor" of Tess, nor did he accept a "double standard of morality" in his attitude towards Tess. Angel is simply following an accepted pattern of behaviour in an age when a man could divorce his wife for adultery, while a woman could not divorce her husband for it. Schopenhauer, at that time one of the advanced thinkers whom Angel would have read, wrote in "The Metaphysics of Love":

"a man is always desiring other women, while a woman always clings to one man, for nature compels intuitively and unconsciously to take care of the supporter and protector of future offspring. For this reason, conjugal fidelity is artificial with the man but natural to a woman. Hence, a woman's infidelity,

looked at objectively on account of the consequence, and subjectively on account of its unnaturalness is much more unpardonable than a man's"⁽¹⁶⁾

So, it is perfectly plausible that an "advanced and well-meaning, young man ... was yet the slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teaching" (Ch. 39, p. 309). Thomas Hardy, in fact, is exposing the injustice of society's rather than of Angel's attitude to women, an issue which he will grapple with more seriously in Jude the Obscure.

But the significance of Angel's lapse is that it gives a psychological basis for his idealisation and rejection of Tess. Because of his guilt feelings he needs her to embody the purity he has lost; when he finds she cannot do so, his rejection of her is inevitable.

Angel's attempts to justify the rejection are largely concerned with "what people will think". The coexistence in Angel Clare of "the man of advanced ideas" and the "slave of customs and conventionality" splinters his consciousness dividing him against himself.

Angel's method of attempting to grapple with his problem is through purely intellectual means:

"Clare was meditating, verily. His thought had been unsuspending; he was becoming ill with thinking; eaten out with thinking, withered by thinking; scourged out of all his former pulsating flexuous domesticity. He walked about saying to himself, 'What's to be done - what's to be done?'"

(Ch. 36, p. 285)

He fiercely represses all instinctive impulses:

"Tess stole a glance at her husband. He was pale, even tremulous; but, as before, she was appalled by the determination revealed in the depths of this gentle being she had married - the will to subdue the grosser

to the subtler emotion, the substance to the conception, the flesh to the spirit. Propensities, tendencies, habits, were as dead leaves upon the tyrannous wind of his imaginative ascendancy"

(Ch. 36, p. 288)

Hardy shows how strong the mind and will must be to subdue the instinctive feelings which were revealed in the sleepwalking scene. The episode of Angel's walking while asleep and his actual burying of Tess deepens our insight into Angel just as a similar episode reveals much about Lady Macbeth. Most critics have felt this scene to be one of the weakest in the novel, but it corresponds to the findings of modern psychology, and it throws important light on Angel. The Tess he was burying was the real Tess Durbeyfield, not the "visionary essence of woman". It is only after he comes back from Brazil, broad minded and liberated from the constraints of received values, that the two "Tess's" emerge into one real Tess.

On the conscious side of his life, Angel's attempts to act solely by reason, in the scenes after the confession scene, are presented in such a way that we are as aware of his suffering as of Tess's. He comes across as a suffering human being. Particularly after the confession, Angel turns out to be a very complex character, almost tragic. Angel represents humanity in his dilemma and we do understand and sympathise with his conflicting motives. He is a complete and complex character, not a mediator of authorial satirical intention as De Laura claims.⁽¹⁷⁾ His complex and divided character makes him act cruelly out of one side of his nature, but he is bitterly unhappy because of the other side of himself - his love for Tess, and a newly formed real idea of her that is much different from his former judgment. He is a potential Othello. Angel Clare, without knowing it, suffers from a sort of

cultural and intellectual schizophrenia. He lives, as it were, in a no-man's land with one foot in one part of his culture, and one foot in another. He is Hardy's equivalent of the speaker in Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" who sees himself as:

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride -
I come to shed them at their side."⁽¹⁸⁾

Many modern readers, though satisfied with the novel on the whole, do find the character of Angel Clare discomfiting. In his book on the development of the manuscript of Tess of the d'Urbervilles, J.T. Leavel asserts that Angel "is not a fully successful character study"⁽¹⁹⁾ He feels the presentation of Angel's character is not convincing to the modern reader because, with Henry Knight in A Pair of Blue Eyes and Giles Winterborne in The Woodlanders, they reveal "the tendency to idealize the women they love and to avoid, through timidity or scrupulosity, taking these courses of action which alone could lead to the physical consummation of their love."⁽²⁰⁾ I suggest that Hardy's inclusion of this trait in Angel Clare is what gives him life and makes him credible. He is a young man who is trying to find his way in a new world, trying to put some sort of philosophy into practice, trying to adjust his nature to being in love at the same time.

Failure to understand Angel's rejection of Tess makes us miss the whole character of Angel Clare. In Angel's view, Tess had concealed from him a fact of such fundamental importance that she misrepresented her nature and her character to him. Perhaps we can best appreciate Angel's position by substituting concealed things likely to have a strong impact in our own day, say the concealing

of Aids, or of a mental illness, or of drug addiction, or of a sentence in jail. Hardy broaches a very serious issue, the extent to which one's past history affects the present, particularly when that history involves moral choices about which men may differ. History is no less important in Tess of the D'Urbervilles than in his other major novels.

Hence Hardy goes beyond satire, treating Angel Clare sympathetically. Angel's is really the suffering of a wounded ego. In the evening of the confession Angel and Tess are seen "walking very slowly, without converse, one behind the other, as in a funeral procession" (Ch. 35, p. 275). The image of shared anguish and despair is most telling. The scene recalls "Beyond the Last Lamp", where two "loiterers, wan, downcast" are seen first in the early evening, and then again hours later:

"Moving slowly, moving sadly
That mysterious tragic pair" (21)

Hardy gives the tragic hero a particularity which is needed when there is so much emphasis on his abstract philosophising. In the scene in which he and Tess exchange confessions, Angel feels diminished when he learns that his knowledge of Tess is smaller than he thought because she had not told him everything. Hardy accurately describes Angel's harshness as "The cruelty of fooled honesty is often great after enlightenment" (Ch. 35, p. 274), and makes Angel think of himself as "a dupe":

"as he looked into the candle its flame dumbly expressed to him that it was made to shine on sensible people, and that it abhorred lighting the face of a dupe and a failure."

(Ch. 39, p. 309)

His confident mind has framed a truth and now it turns out to be inaccurate. He has been so sure of this truth that he has made it difficult for Tess, when she has tried, to amend it. "The visionary essence of woman" is now "swayed by the antipathetic wave which warps direct souls with such persistence when once their vision finds itself mocked by appearances" (Ch. 36, p. 284). "Mocked" is the appropriate word for it expresses the sense of being ridiculed. For Angel forgiveness is an irrelevance. How could he forgive an error that is in direct contradiction to his whole existence? How can he transfer his affections, just like that, to a different person?

Hardy's essential quality as a novelist emerges if we recognise the sensibility of his treatment of Angel Clare. Hardy, on the one hand, is challenging the conventional views of his contemporary readers in persuading them to accept Tess's purity; on the other hand, suggesting that this acceptance does not justify condemnation of Angel who, for social and psychological reasons, cannot grasp this idea. This extent of Hardy's sympathy with Angel is particularly striking here since the whole story is a plea for a change in those attitudes held by Angel Clare. The characterization of Angel Clare not only shows a remarkable ability to understand and analyse a personality full of contradictions but also to diagnose the causes of his intellectual and emotional disturbance, while at the same time creating for the reader a real sense of a suffering human being who also inflicts suffering on others. The conflict in Angel between his "advanced ideas" and received attitudes of his "early teachings" has produced Angel Clare's alienated consciousness, a symptom of the ache of modernism.

Notes

1. All citations between parentheses following each quotation from the novel refer to the New Wessex paperback edition of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, 1974
2. J. Hillis Miller, Fiction and Repetition, p. 117
3. Penny Boumelha, Thomas Hardy and Women, pp. 121-126
4. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p. 182
5. D. H. Lawrence, Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays, p. 96
6. Gregor, The Great Web, p. 182
7. Ibid., p. 183
8. Jean Brooks, "Tess of the d'Urbervilles: The Move towards Existentialism" in F.B. Pinion, ed., Thomas Hardy and The Modern World, p. 52
9. Gregor, The Great Web, p. 192
10. This Conclusion contradicts some major criticism of the novel. For example, Van Ghent, The English Novel, Form and Function, has argued that nature is a primary agent of Tess's destruction, pp. 201-9
11. Social criticism of Hardy's novels stresses two kinds of conflicts, that between nature and society and that between two aspects of society, urban/rural or industrial/agricultural. Brown, Thomas Hardy, p. 90, defines Tess as "the tragedy of a proud community baffled and defeated by processes beyond its understanding or control". Brown

emphasizes agricultural decline as the source of tragedy. Kettle, Introduction to the English Novel, II, p. 49, focuses on "the peasant Tess" as representative of the "destruction of the English peasantry" and terms the novel a "moral fable". In a similar vein, but looking at Tess in the context of the English historical novel, Fleishman, English Historical Novel, argues, "It is by now well known that Tess's social theme is the destruction of the old yeoman class of small-holders and peasants" (p. 190). Tess sacrifices herself to "the course of history itself ... the tragic sense of life becomes a historical attitude" (p. 197).

Howe, Thomas Hardy, p. 110, has argued that the tragedy stems from disjunctions between nature and society. He says, "Tess derives from Hardy's involvement with and reaction against the Victorian cult of chastity ... Tess reaches a purity of spirit even as she fails to satisfy the standards of the world". Howe, in defining this conflict, moves beyond both Brown and Kettle. Howe wants to acknowledge Tess's "reality" and convincingness as woman and as a source of the novel's power, "What matters ... is the figure of Tess herself. Tess as she is, a woman made real through the craft of art and not Tess as she represents^e an idea" (p. 130).

Other critics have moved away from dichotomies between nature and society, between agricultural and industrial to argue that Hardy tempers his agricultural values with an appreciation for improvements in the social system. See Williams, The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, pp. 97-102, and Country and the City, pp. 197-214

In all of these studies of Tess in society, we find an

emphasis on Tess as representative - of purity or of class. Yet, Howe indicates a desire to acknowledge the social themes without reducing Tess to a symbol, and Williams urges our recognition that "the social alienation enters the personality", Country and the City, p. 210.

My view studies the ways in which the character of Tess retains her autonomy even as the novel develops social dimensions to her personality and social themes. It stresses the social conflicts within her as an individual, the destructive social forces are not simply outside her.

12. Williams, Country and the City, p. 213, has arrived at a similar position. He concludes of Tess, as well as of Marty South and Jude Fawley, that "people choose wrongly but under terrible pressures; under the confusions of class, under its misunderstandings, under the calculated rejections of a divided separating world".
13. Conversation with Raymond Blathwayt, printed in Black and White, 27 August 1892, quoted in Lerner and Holmstrom, Eds, Thomas Hardy and His Readers, p. 96
14. In The Academy, 6 February 1892, quoted in Lerner and Holmstrom, *ibid.*, pp. 77,78
15. Roy Huss, "Social Change and Moral Decay in the Novels of Thomas Hardy", The Dalhousie Review, 47 (1967-68), p. 38
16. Schopenhauer, "The Metaphysics of Love", Essays of Schopenhauer, p. 182
17. David De Laura, "The Ache of Modernism in Hardy's Later Novels", ELH, 34(1967), pp. 390-391

18. The Poems of Matthew Arnold, Second Edition, 1979, edited by Miriam Allott, p. 305. Allott quotes Carlyle and J.S. Mill expressing similar ideas. In his essay "Characteristics", Carlyle says, "The doom of the Old has long been pronounced, and irrevocable; the Old has passed away; but, alas, the New appears not in its stead, the Time is still in pangs of travail with the New". J.S. Mill [~]expresses the same idea in his essay "The Spirit of the Age", he says, "Mankind have outgrown old institutions and doctrines, and have not yet acquired new ones", p. 305

19. J.T. Laird, The Shaping of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p. 131

20. Ibid., p. 131

21. The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy, p. 314

Chapter Eight

"Jude the Obscure"

(1895)

Chapter Eight

Jude the Obscure

The title of this novel suggests the central fact of Jude Fawley's existence, a fact which the continually changing setting emphasises.⁽¹⁾ Jude's obscurity is explicitly social and implicitly cosmic, and his failure to identify himself in society and the continual evidences of his consequent social alienation constitute a major theme of the novel. Throughout his life Jude Fawley is not recognised by people he deals with in whatever role society has imposed upon him, by the villager friend of his Aunt Drusilla, by Vilbert the physician, by Arabella's father and their neighbours, by Phillotson in later years and by the authorities in Christminster; those in charge of Sue's school refuse to believe that he is her cousin, and Arabella, returning from Australia, expects him to have been ordained. In the end, as Jude lies dying in the city that has stood at the centre of his lifelong dream, the contrast between his own laments and the shouts from the Remembrance Day celebrations dramatizes the obscurity that has always been his.

Jude Fawley remains obscure even to himself. Jude's initial experience in life is that of separation. After his mother drowns herself and his father dies, Jude feels himself a "poor useless boy" alienated from the ugly and lonely landscape, and unwanted by anyone, including the aunt who had taken him. His sense of worthlessness at being unloved is reflected in his sympathy for the puny and sorry birds whose lives resemble his own, and his exaggerated sense of guilt makes him fear he has wholly disgraced himself and become a burden to his great-aunt for life. Very early

in his life, Jude experiences a fit of despondency over his existence. Because he perceives horrid cruelty in nature and the uselessness of his own, undemanded existence, Jude desires to prevent himself from growing up and becoming a man. This desire recurs and his denial of life intensifies as he learns the meaning of his own more thoroughly.

Jude the Obscure is Hardy's fullest description of modern civilization and its discontents, with its concentration upon the ills and problems of contemporary life, the need for reforms in education and in the church; the social problems of marriage, divorce, and repressive public opinion, and the spiritual problems of alienation and "unrest". From the time Hardy wrote the note which was the germ of the story, through his experimentation with various titles, and for years after the book was published, his central interest had been fixed on the experience of "a young man - 'who could not go to Oxford' - His struggles and ultimate failure. Suicide ... There is something [in this] the world ought to be shown and I am the one to show it to them".⁽²⁾ One of Hardy's earlier ideas for a title, "The Malcontents" or "Hearts Insurgent", would have more adequately conveyed the central concerns of the novel than the actual title did. The pattern of Jude the Obscure is similar to the previous novels:

"The book is all contrasts - or was meant to be in its original conception. Alas, what a miserable accomplishment it is, when I compare it with what I meant to make it! - e.g. Sue and her heathen gods set against Jude's reading the Greek testament; Christminster academical, Christminster in the slums; Jude the saint, Jude the sinner; Sue the pagan, Sue the saint; marriage, no marriage; etc. etc."⁽³⁾

One of the main problems in the novel is the difficulty we have in saying specifically just what it is "about". It seems to

be "about" so many things - a malevolent universe, an outworn system of education, the rigidity of marriage laws, the problems of adaptation to a rapidly changing world, the search for self-definition, self-knowledge and self-efficiency, the intellectual overdevelopment that endangers the primary appetites for life, the ascendancy of the death-wish, self-destructive exclusiveness of personal relationships, etc. The novel suffers from a plethora of themes. A recent critic has said that the novel is about "the sheer difficulty of human beings living elbow to elbow and heart to heart; the difficulty of being unable to bear prolonged isolation or prolonged closeness; the difficulty, at least for reflective men, of getting through the unspoken miseries of daily life".⁽⁴⁾ Jude the Obscure initiates the modern working-class novel with its ambitious hero and its neurotic heroine, city life in the back streets and the problems of commercial and material values. In a nutshell, the novel foreshadows the modern themes of failure, frustration, futility, disharmony, isolation, rootlessness, and absurdity as inescapable conditions of life, it heralds a rebellion against conditions which inhibit spontaneity, personal growth and self-realization.

Jude the Obscure is a modern psychological novel that goes deep to uncover unconscious motives long before Freud and embodies the impulse to self-destruction as self-punishment for the guilt of aspiring. The novel differs from Hardy's earlier novels in that its deeper reality lies less in the action than in the flow of feelings, thoughts and perceptions which make up an Ibsenite discussion drama of the inner life. Jude's consistent heroic prototypes are the defiant, suffering Job and Sisyphus - the hero who provided Camus with an image of modern man's futile effort. Jude's personal search for fulfilment and a place in life takes

place in the post-Darwinian world of insecurity and doubt. His search for meaning leads to knowledge of futility "The yearning of his heart to find something to anchor on, to cling to" leads to experience of the void. His quest is the basic theme of twentieth-century man, of Gide's Oedipus and Sartre's Orestes; the theme of the morally isolated individual, lost in a world he never made, who searches for freedom and who wills his own destruction. Jude the Obscure mourns the human condition. It is not a document preaching reform, nor is it the story of one man who chose wrongly. It is on a higher level - the story of a race discontented and alienated by its own institutions.

A. Alvarez sees that:

"the essence of this tragedy is Jude's loneliness. He is isolated from society because his ambitions, abilities, and sensibility separate him from his own class while winning him no place in any other. He is isolated in his marriage to Arabella because she has no idea of what he is about, and doesn't care. He is isolated in his marriage to Sue because she is frigid. Moreover, the sense of loneliness is intensified by the way in which both women are presented less as characters complete in themselves than as projections of Jude, sides of his character, existing only in relation to him."⁽⁵⁾

The characterization of Jude Fawley yet again demonstrates Hardy's ability to depict complex and contradictory characters. Jude has too often been interpreted as a weak character, an easy victim of society. In fact, until close to the end, he copes resiliently with both his own strong passions and ideas, and the external world. His loss of the will to live at the end seems a fairly reasonable reaction to the loss of everything that makes life meaningful to him. His disintegration is more the result of external pressures than anything else.

The first part of the novel, "At Marygreen", introduces Jude Fawley lying in a field looking through the interstices of his straw hat at "something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it." (I,2,p.38).⁽⁶⁾ "Events did not rhyme quite as he thought", (I,2,p.37), this sentence can be a very suitable epigraph for the whole first part. A remarkably "modern" figure, Jude seems afflicted by the "disease of consciousness" and is extremely vulnerable to that abnormally developed faculty within him. At the age of eleven, "his face wearing the fixity of a thoughtful child's who has felt the pricks of life somewhat before his time" (I,1,p.30). Hardy shows him an orphan living in a dreary north Wessex village with a reluctant aunt. The departure of the schoolmaster, who acts as a surrogate father, leaves him without any emotional ties. Hardy stresses his sensitivity, and his sympathy for the birds is partly because they "seemed like himself to be living in a world which did not want them" (I,2,p.34). Jude is exceptionally thoughtful and sensitive. Meditating on the responsibilities of growing up, he becomes aware of the cruelty of life. He is also sensitive, perhaps hypersensitive, to the sufferings of others, going to immense pains to avoid treading on earthworms and mourning for trees that are cut or lopped. The fields of Marygreen are lonely and inhospitable.

"Troutham had seized his left hand with his own left, and swinging his slim frame round him at arm's-length, again struck Jude on the hind parts with the flat side of Jude's own rattle, till the field echoed with the blows, which were delivered once or twice at each revolution.

'Don't 'ee, sir - please don't 'ee!" cried the whirling child, as helpless under the centrifugal tendency of his person as a hooked fish swinging to land, and beholding the hill, the rick, the plantation,

the path, and the rocks going round and round him in an amazing circular race"

(I,2,p.35)

Jude suffers a symbolic foreshortening of his fate, placed with no secure foothold in an alien mechanical world that whirls him round on its own inscrutably punitive mission. The effect is sharpened by Hardy's emphasis on physical violence.

Unlike the earlier Wessex novels, which build up gradually, Jude the Obscure plunges us directly into tragedy. From the opening pages, Aunt Drusilla reminds us of Jude's luckless existence:

"It would ha' been a blessing if Goddy-mighty had took thee too, wi' thy mother and father, poor useless boy! ... why didn't ye get the schoolmaster to take 'ee to Christminster wi' un, and make a scholar of 'ee?"

(I,2,pp.32-3)

Jude, with his strange introspectiveness and love of books, sets his sights on the "distant halo" of the city. The lad whose tender care of the birds prevents his caring for the crops discovers early that

"Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony"

(I,2,p.37)

Orphaned and almost rejected by his aunt, deserted by Phillotson, his surrogate father and only friend, sacked by Farmer Troutham, deceived by Vilbert, Jude Fawley, long before he has met Arabella, has felt "his existence to be an undemanded one", and indeed wished "that he had never been born".

Jude finds salvation in his vision of Christminster. This is the first of many cycles, moving from despair to hope. His life is a series of cyclical movements from aspiration to defeat to renewed efforts. After finding in the "anchorage" of Christminster a substitute for secure human relationships, he is immediately determined to acquire an education. But after his initial disappointment with the books, Jude realizes the vastness of the effort ahead of him, and is stimulated by the realization:

"To acquire languages, departed or living, in spite of such obstinacies as he now knew them inherently to possess, was a herculean performance which gradually led him on to a greater interest in it than in the presupposed patent process"

(I,5,p.51)

Hardy's account of Jude's educational problems indicates intellectual conflicts that will take years to resolve.

Jude is now nineteen years old and hitherto has been immersed in his "dream of learning". It is not at all unexpected that his sexual awakening should be so abrupt and that his sexual instincts should be so powerful. He has shown his capacity for intense feeling; his sexual feelings are equally intense. So begins the next cycle, which takes Jude through the phases of the excitement of the first experience of sex, through disillusionment with it, to despair as he discovers that sensuality, powerful though it may be, by itself does not provide a fulfilling relationship, at least not for him. Lawrence's conviction that "Arabella gives Jude to himself"⁽⁷⁾ makes that self much simpler than Hardy conceives Jude to be. There is a 'superior' fastidiousness in Jude's gradual awareness that Arabella is not the natural village maiden she had seemed. What has caused Jude's disillusionment is his discovery that there are instincts and aspirations that Arabella can never

satisfy. Her life has virtually nothing in common with his own. Jude's disenchantment with Arabella, the discovery of his mother's suicide and the renewed reminder of the marital misfortunes of the Fawley family lead him to see suicide as the only way out of a situation that appears to him to be permanent (Book I, Ch. 11). Attempting to drown himself, as his mother had done, he is unable to crack the ice on the lake. Spared from 'death by water', he seeks an alternative form of self-destruction.

"What could he do of a lower kind than self-extermination; what was there less noble, more in keeping with his present degraded position? He could get drunk ... Drinking was the regular, stereotyped resource of the despairing worthless. He began to see now why some men boozed at inns"

(I,11,p.91)

At Marygreen the pig's pizzle cutting across Jude's abstract reflections makes him aware of his double nature, and the contrast between the "ideal" life and his "squalid real" life is so intense that he thinks once more of committing suicide:

"The "grimy" features of the story go to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead. The throwing of the pizzle, at the supreme moment of his young dream, is to sharply initiate this contrast ... It is, in fact, to be discovered in everybody's life ..." (8)

Moreover, his brief marriage with Arabella brings into question the justice of social and natural laws which show indifference to his finer aspirations. We are hardly surprised that Jude walks out to the centre of a frozen pond and seeks to drown himself. From the moment of his arrival at his aunt's house, orphaned and alone, to the moment when Arabella deserts him some seven or eight years later, he seems hardly to have known more than the most fleeting

happiness.

The whole of Part First of the novel, "At Marygreen", depicts a society so relentless, depressed and ugly that it was to be swathed in deception - Vilbert's quack medicine, Arabella's artificial hair, manufactured dimples, false pregnancy and sexual trickery.

After Arabella leaves Jude, he decides to recommit himself to a career at Christminster. Though knowledge and self-education motivate him, the decision is primarily emotional. It is undertaken after Jude has been aroused by a photograph of his cousin, Sue Bridehead, who is living and working in the university town. The university at Christminster becomes for him the central goal of his existence, expanding into an "imaginative world ... in which an abstract figure, more or less himself, was steeping his mind in a sublimation of the arts and sciences, and making his calling and election sure to a seat in the paradise of the learned." (II,6,133). The university degree seems in itself to have no value for him except as a means of attaining both social position and justification of his inner conviction. Such is the significance of his boyhood prayer, made at Marygreen, that the mist might rise so that he can see Christminster in the distance. Christminster is "a city of light" and the place where "the tree of knowledge grows," Jude believes, "It is what you may call a castle, manned by scholarship and religion" (I,3,45) - the two human activities which for Jude express human identity. The boy who has not wanted to grow up (Part I, Ch. 2) now comes to Christminster to find self-fulfilment in the image of those thinkers associated with Christminster in his own time.

Phillotson's failure to recognize Jude after his arrival in

Christminster is of course a shattering experience; but still the world remains reasonable and orderly if only by some means Jude can find his place in it. Thus he is not prepared for rejection by the Master of the College and in his fury can assert, by marking on the college wall in a pathetic gesture that he is as worthy as the Master. Nevertheless, Christminster remains an unvarying symbol of the cosmic and social order that lies at the heart of his projection, the world made from the needs of the Self. Jude himself observes later in the novel, "it is the centre of the universe to me, because of my early dream: and nothing can alter it" (V,8,340). And somewhat earlier Sue remarks to Arabella:

"Christminster is a sort of fixed vision with him which I suppose he'll never be cured of believing in. He still thinks it a great centre of high and fearless thought, instead of what it is, a nest of commonplace schoolmasters whose characteristic is timid obsequiousness to tradition"

(V,7,p.332)

To the end of his life Jude equates the universe with the hope of establishing his own identity in it.

Almost at once, however, Jude is forced to re-examine his dreams about Christminster. His disillusionment begins the morning after he arrives, when he is beset by impressions of the barbarism and corruption of the place. Throughout the first day, he remains in loneliness and begins to perceive how far away from realizing his hope he really was. At the end of the day, the last voice he hears from the university's past lullabies him to sleep with the prophetic lines:

"Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed.
Teach me to die - - - -"

(II,1,102)

Jude's architectural evocation of the city has caught many aspects of obstruction.⁽⁹⁾ Jude's "city of light", "heavenly Jerusalem" is dissected in Parts II and VI "into all the earthly reality that defeats the vision: slum lodgings, seedy taverns, and above all the insuperable barrier of cold stone college walls that he can live at the back of and restore ... but never enter as a scholar".⁽¹⁰⁾ The social criticism of this part, at Christminster, is "direct and unequivocal, and the authorial sentiment none the less trenchant for its familiarity".⁽¹¹⁾ It is a city of dead creeds, a maze of false consciousness and sham ceremony which imprisons Jude as effectively as Arabella's wiles. Hardy seems to say that Jude's work as a stonemason expresses a productive creativity which contrasts strongly with the sterility of the university. Realizing the hopelessness of his chances for matriculating at Christminster, Jude knows that his destiny is to be among "the manual toilers in the shabby purlieu" of Christminster, among the struggling men and women who "were the reality of Christminster":

"For a moment there fell on Jude a true illumination; that here in the stone yard was a centre of effort as worthy as that dignified by the name of scholarly study within the noblest of the colleges"

(II, 2,p.104)

"He began to see that the town life was a book of humanity infinitely more palpitating, varied, and compendious than the gown life. These struggling men and women before him were the reality of Christminster, though they knew little of *Christ or Minster*"

(II,6,p.137)

Once Jude has become involved with Sue, she destroys him as she has destroyed all the men she has encountered. Sue becomes

almost the focus of those spiritual yearnings that have led Jude to Christminster. The photograph that he takes from his aunt to keep him company invests his cousin with a radiance that, for Jude, she is never to lose: "a pretty girlish face, in a broad hat with radiating folds under the brim like the rays of a halo" (II,1,p.97). He delights to think of her as "an ideal character, about whose form he began to weave curious and fantastic day-dreams" (II,2,p.108). Occasional glimpses of her in the street or at church or in the neo-Gothic frame of her bookseller's shop satisfy Jude's rhapsodic imagination:

"She looked right into his face with liquid, untranslatable eyes that combined, or seemed to him to combine, keenness with tenderness, and mystery with both, their expression, as well as that of her lips, taking its life from some words just spoken to a companion, and being carried on into his face quite unconsciously. She no more observed his presence than that of the dust-motes which his manipulations raised into the sunbeams."

(II,2,p.109)

There is only an illusion of communication here, as Sue looks "right into his face" with her "liquid untranslatable eyes". Even when they meet at last, "Jude was surprised to find what a revelation of woman his cousin was to him" (II,4,p.122); what she reveals is a nervous intensity, a different kind of "otherness" from Arabella's. Sue's tantalizing and enigmatic nature becomes dominant and from this point on, Jude is either trying to adjust himself to her needs, or to persuade her to act differently.

The novel was perceived by its contemporary readers as being Hardy's contribution to the so-called "marriage question". Although Hardy denied in a letter to Florence Henniker ⁽¹²⁾ that it was, his sense of participating in the debate is evident in,

for example, the argument of Phillotson and Gillingham over "domestic disintegration" and the collapse of the family as the social unit (IV,4,p.252), or in this rather didactic discussion of marriage:

"Still, Sue, it is no worse for the woman than for the man. That's what some women fail to see, and instead of protesting against the conditions they protest against the man, the other victim ..."

'Yes - some are like that, instead of uniting with the man against the common enemy, coercion'"

(V,4,p.306)

It seems that, with the appearance of "Ibsenism", the marriage question and the New Woman, Hardy was able for the first time in a major work to place the examination of sexual relationships openly at the centre of his novel. Whatever Hardy's account of the genesis of Jude the Obscure, which he describes in a letter to Florence Henniker as "the Sue story",⁽¹³⁾ there can be no doubt that, as Patricia Ingham has shown, Sue Bridehead and marriage are the very impulse of the novel, not an afterthought.⁽¹⁴⁾

In the Preface, Hardy describes one of the subjects of the novel as "the deadly war waged between flesh and spirit". This theme is treated in a complex way and embodied in various aspects of the novel, in the contrast between Arabella and Sue; in the conflicts between Sue and Phillotson, and Sue and Jude; in the inner conflicts of Jude; and in Sue's inner conflicts. The whole tenor of the book, and in particular the characters of Jude and Sue, suggests that this war is unnecessary and avoidable. It is misleading to understand such "a deadly war" as inevitable. Hardy is illustrating through these two characters that the "flesh" is as much a part of a normal person as the "spirit", and that society and conventional attitudes can be destructive to the whole

of man. Although some critics have condemned Jude for "weakness for women", and Jude himself deplotes his "animal instincts", yet Hardy seems not to agree. In Tess, he had suggested that with more of the animal in Angel, he might have been a nobler man. Jude is that nobler man. His adolescent sexual awakening by Arabella could have been a "liberal education", as could Tess's encounter with Alec; but it is the demands of society which turn it into a crippling relationship. Jude, just after he has been tricked into marrying Arabella, sees this in a rather tentative way:

"There seemed to him, vaguely and dimly, something wrong in the social ritual which made necessary a cancelling of well-formed schemes involving years of thought and labour, of foregoing a man's one opportunity of showing himself superior to the lower animals, and of contributing his units of work to the general progress of his generation, because of a momentary surprise by a new and transitory instinct which had nothing in it of the nature of vice and could only at the most be called weakness"

(I,9,p.82)

When Jude despairs of having Sue, he goes to Melchester to the theological college with a vague intention of entering the church, hoping to find a cure for his "modern vice of unrest". Jude feeds this latest aspiration by reading the Church Fathers, as well as Paley and Butler, and embarks upon what Sue later calls his "Tractarian stage" by reading Newman, Pusey, and other modern theological lights. But Sue remains both a lodestar and a refuge for such a lonely young man as Jude. Having idealized her, like all Hardy's lovers, Jude permits Sue to displace God and henceforth turns to her to satisfy his basic needs for "something to love" and "some kind of hope to support" him. If Christminster proves no "anchor" for Jude, Sue is no more reliable. A haloed figure, associated with chaste mythological goddesses, Sue

represents a superhuman type for Jude. Referring to her as "almost a divinity", Jude describes her in such terms as "ethereal", "uncarnate", "aerial", and "phantasmal, bodiless creature". Intellectual and independent, Sue seems to Jude a free thinker scornful of Christminster's social remoteness and its attachment to a creed outworn; she seems "the sceptical voice of the present age".⁽¹⁵⁾ She is a free spirit, sensitive and open to change, an early instance of the "New Woman" of the 1890s. For her, Jude is enslaved to a false dream of learning and an idle religious superstition. The kind of conflict which exists between them is succinctly expressed in the following passage:

"She was something of a riddle to him, and he let the subject drift away. 'Shall we go and sit in the Cathedral?' he asked, when their meal was finished.

'Cathedral? Yes. Though I think I'd rather sit in the railway station,' she answered, a remnant of vexation still in her voice.

'That's the centre of the town life now. The Cathedral has had its day!'

'How modern you are!'

'So would you be if you had lived so much in the Middle Ages as I have done these last few years! The Cathedral was a very good place four or five centuries ago; but it is played out now ...'"

(III, 1, pp. 153-4)

Jude would seem to be the victim of a nostalgic addiction to the past, as Sue says, "the mediaevalism of Christminster must go, be ^usloshed off, or Christminster itself will have to go" (III, 4, p. 170). When Sue disobeys the rules of her training college, we understand that her criticism of Christminster is being extended, the intellectual rigidities of the one being replaced by the moral rigidities of the other.

Although Sue sees the university as a place "full of fetichists and ghost-seers" (III,4,p.171), yet by the end of the novel she herself is both, and exposes her perverse enslavement to the social and moral conventions of the time. Sue is so contradictory and so complicated a character that Jude wonders if she is to break his heart as she broke the heart of the young writer. Jude remarks that she is "so uncarnate as to seem at times impossible as a human wife to any average man ... how she lived as such passed his comprehension" (III,9,p.207).

In spite of everything, Jude cannot separate himself from Sue. After meeting her at Shaston, he can acknowledge that "the human was more powerful in him than the Divine" (IV,1,p.227). From this point, Jude's internal "war between flesh and spirit" gains momentum. Sue's confession of her unhappiness with Phillotson, their passionate kiss at parting, his admission to himself that whatever his theories and ambitions, "to persist with headlong force in impassioned attentions to her, was all he thought of" (IV, 3, p. 238), lead him to question "the artificial system of things", and ultimately, to burn his theological books.

In Sue's relationship with him, even after she leaves Phillotson, Jude experiences all kinds of spiritual anguish and tormenting conflicts because of her ambivalent nature and her inability to achieve a commitment of any kind. Jude's inner "war between flesh and spirit" is still raging. After Sue breaks up her marriage to Phillotson and elopes with Jude, they live together sexlessly for a year, and when Arabella comes to visit them at their cottage at Aldbrickham, Jude's responsiveness to Arabella arises immediately from his sexual frustration. It is only then, through jealousy, that Sue capitulates to Jude. Her neurotic, obscure and contradicting nature is a major cause behind Jude's

alienation. By taking physical possession of Sue, Jude believes he has soiled the purity of his ideal. In one of the most poignant scenes in the novel, he expresses his guilt for spoiling his divinity:

"I have seemed to myself," he said, "to belong to that vast band of men shunned by the virtuous — the men called seducers. It amazes me when I think of it! I have not been conscious of it, or of any wrong-doing towards you, whom I love more than myself. Yet I am one of those men! ... Yes, Sue — that's what I am, I seduced you ... You were a distinct type — a refined creature, intended by Nature to be left intact. But I couldn't leave you alone!"

(VI, 3, p. 363)

This self accusation is excessive and irrational. Jude's violent responses to Sue spring from her violent repudiation of their love, particularly after the death of the children and consequent self-punishment. In Sue, Hardy explores in far greater depth the neuroses already examined in Angel. Arabella is not much more complicated than Alec. Tess's and Jude's problems arise more from the attitude of society as a whole than from within. Just as one can see in Angel's character traits that are developed in Sue, so Tess's sensuousness and imaginativeness are developed into a more complicated personality in Jude. In both novels Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure, Hardy shows the need of human beings for integration through satisfying both "flesh and spirit". It is rather surprising that Lawrence in his interesting Study of Thomas Hardy claims that "Jude Fawley wanted to arrest all his activity in his mind ... and wanted to deny, or escape the responsibility and trouble of living as a complete person, a full individual"⁽¹⁵⁾ While this may be true of Jude during the time when he is trying to be religious and ascetic, it fails to take

into account that he changes and develops. Through the two novels, Hardy is moving towards the idea of "the whole man alive" -- "flesh and spirit" integrated and indivisible. The epigraph to part V is significant here:

"Thy aerial part, and all the fiery parts which are mingled in thee, though by nature they have an upward tendency, still in obedience to the disposition of the universe they are over-powered here in the compound mass of the body'."

Jude has learnt "obedience to the disposition of the universe" and is no longer trying to be "all air and fire".

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Hardy is examining in Tess and Jude some of the same problems as those Freud dealt with in his more general writings such as Civilization and its Discontents and "Civilized Sexual Morality and the Neuroses. Their views of the difficulties which civilization or society imposes on the individual are very similar. A very great part of what Freud puts in theoretical terms in these books Hardy has stated in imaginative terms. Jude certainly shows that society and the individual whose superego "Coincides with the demands of the prevailing cultural superego"⁽¹⁷⁾ work together to make life unbearable. Hardy's picture of the "discontents" associated with the civilization anticipates Freud's book by about 35 years. He gives expression to a theme which is to be more fully explored by late writers and psychologists. When Lawrence, for example, says, "Life is only bearable when the mind and the body are in harmony and there is a natural balance between them, and each has a natural respect for the other"⁽¹⁸⁾, he is reiterating and developing points made in Jude the Obscure. This quotation from Lawrence could almost serve as an epigraph to the novel. Sue's mind and body are never in harmony, and so her life and Jude's

become unbearable. Jude's basic problem is how to make "life bearable" in a society which is largely destructive, and how to develop a relationship which will satisfy his deepest needs.

Sue Bridehead is undoubtedly one of Hardy's most remarkable achievements. This character is, as J.I.M. Stewart has said, "virtually a point of major innovation in prose fiction",⁽¹⁹⁾ With her, Hardy is exploring further aspects of personality already tentatively developed in Knight and Angel. But with Sue, he made tremendous advances on all fronts, he explored psychological problems in greater depth than ever before; he dealt with taboo subjects with clarity and honesty; he raised questions about mental health and psychological balance which were to become central in the twentieth century novel; he touched on new ways of conceiving character in the novel which other novelists were later to develop; and he rendered Sue's character with concreteness, vividness and immediacy. In the combination of ^{these} elements Hardy achieved the peak of his art as a novelist because he here fuses most completely the analytical and the creative (or synthetic) aspects of characterization. As we read the novel, we are fully conscious of her psychological problems. Hardy makes us experience her "mode of being". He presents Sue dramatically instead of, as often with Clym or Angel, through analytical summary. Most of the analysis of Sue is done by herself, or by Jude and Phillotson as they gradually understand her, or by Arabella, in her limited but intelligent assessments. Sue is, as John Bayley remarks, "consistently exhibited"⁽²⁰⁾; she is pictorialized, rendered in a series of visual images which give some accuracy to Vigar's description of the novel as employing a "'snapshot' method"⁽²¹⁾

A close reading of the novel reveals that Hardy is

consciously aware that he is exploring regions of great psychological complexity, that Sue's problems are more extreme than any of his characters' and eventually develop into mental illness. A review of 1896 by Edmund Gosse, still one of the most valuable contributions to our understanding of Jude the Obscure and especially of the character of Sue, stressed Sue's importance in the book. It is worth quoting at some length:

"The "vita sexualis" of Sue is the central interest of the book, and enough is told about it to fill the specimen tables of a German specialist. Fewer testimonies will be given to her reality than Arabella's because hers is a much rarer case. But her picture is not less admirably drawn; Mr. Hardy has, perhaps, never devoted so much care to the portrait of a woman. She is a poor, maimed "degenerate", ignorant of herself and of the perversion of her instincts, full of febrile, amiable illusions, ready to dramatise her empty life, and play at loving though she cannot love. Her adventure with the undergraduate has not taught her what she is: she quits Phillotson still ignorant of the source of her repulsion; she lives with Jude, after a long, agonising struggle, in a relationship that she accepts with distaste, and when the tragedy comes, her children are killed, her poor, extravagant brain slips one grade further down and she sees in this calamity the chastisement of God. What has she done to be chastised? She does not know but supposes it must be her abandonment of Phillotson, to whom, in a spasm of self-abasement and shuddering with repulsion, she returns without a thought for the misery of Jude. It is a terrible study in pathology, but of the splendid success of it, of the sustained intellectual force implied in the evolution of it, there cannot, I think, be two opinions"⁽²²⁾

Hardy thought this review "the most discriminating that has yet appeared",⁽²³⁾ yet he modified Gosse's comments to some extent and referred to Sue's "abnormalism" and spoke of her sexual instinct as "unusually weak and fastidious". "Sue", Hardy continues, "is a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me, but the difficulty of drawing the type has kept me from attempting it until now".⁽²⁴⁾ Sue's attractiveness for Hardy is evident in the whole conception of the character. His great achievement with Sue

is that she is a living, changing "unstatable" woman, evoking vivid and ever-changing responses from those who know her.

Sue dramatises all the conflicts and evasions of what can best be termed a transitional form of consciousness, deadlocked between the old and the new. Her behaviour is that of both a prisoner of convention and an impetuous rebel, and her psychological pattern is one of masochism and self-torture, a continual process of acting impulsively and then self-punitively. She embodies and becomes the focus of "the ache of modernism" and of all the related and confused yearnings of Victorian spirituality. In Sue, Hardy attempts to relate feelings he has about the nature of women and of sexuality, to interpretations of those feelings in terms of the intellectual climate of late Victorian society. This is most clear in her deep fear of sexuality. Jude the Obscure is a novel about passion - passion for human and sexual fulfilment, and its agonised frustration at the hands of a society which denies it. The problem is how to prevent that passion from being destroyed by oppressive society, and it is this which motivates Sue's rejection of marriage. But her rejection of marriage means that she denies the body. The freedom she seeks, as a result, is negative and destructive, a self-possessive individualism which sees all commitment as slavery.

Sue is the culmination of several attempts to depict a personality on the edge of insanity - Boldwood, Knight, Angel, Clym - but she is the most complex and the most vital and exceptionally difficult to depict. One of the difficulties was the Victorian taboo on saying anything honestly about marital relationships. "Candour in English Fiction" makes it clear that Hardy regarded this as one of the major obstacles to serious

writing. Jude is a determined attempt to break down these taboos on "those issues which are not to be mentioned in respectable magazines and select libraries".(25)

Sue Bridehead, in whom "the 'bride' is fatally inhibited by the 'head', by intellectuality and a revulsion of the physical"(26), almost takes the book away from the title character because of her complexity, significance and contradictory impulses. Sue's original role is that of counterpoint to Arabella, spirit against flesh; they are meant to represent sides of Jude, who consistently thinks about them together, contrasts them, regards them as mutually exclusive opposites. Whereas Jude and Sue struggle bravely against empty conventions, Arabella manipulates these conventions for her own advantage. "Life with a man is more business-like after [marriage]", she tells Sue, "and money matters work better" (V,2,p.288).

Both Arabella and Sue are individualists, and both exploit Jude, Arabella crudely and materially, Sue subtly and spiritually. In terms of the comparison, Arabella seems in some ways rather better, there is a crude but candid authenticity about her desire for Jude, "I must have him. I can't do without him. He's the sort of man I long for" (I,7,p.69), which contrasts tellingly with the evasions of a woman who, as Jude complains, can never say directly whether she loves him or not. Arabella is able to forsake her religious conversion and acknowledge her real feelings for Jude; Sue moves in precisely the opposite direction, disowning her true feelings for Jude for an apparent adherence to religious orthodoxy. In spite of Lawrence's tendency to make Arabella the heroine, he said that she survives Hardy's deliberate coarsening of her, yet Arabella remains "a complete and substantial female animal - no more, no less" (I,6,p.59). Although Alvarez argues

that she "shows flashes of real intelligence"⁽²⁷⁾, yet her intelligence is restricted to the one subject which interests her, sex. She is, like Sue, the antithesis of a whole person.

Hardy's delineation of Sue makes her a figure of Shelleyan idealism. When Phillotson describes the spiritual affinity that he sees between Jude and Sue, Gillingham exclaims, "Platonic!", Phillotson qualifies, "Well, no. Shelleyan would be nearer to it. They remind me of Laon and Cythna" (IV,4,p.252), the idealized liberators and martyrs in The Revolt of Islam, which is quoted later in another context (V,4,p.305). Sue asks Jude to apply to her certain lines from Shelley's Epipsychidion, an important source for Jude⁽²⁸⁾:

"There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings far aloft.
— — — — —
A seraph of Heaven, too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman ..."

O it is too flattering, so I won't go on!"

(IV,5,p.265)

Deliberately Hardy is using certain Romantic values to contrast with those of his own day, a free spirit set against an oppressive society and its empty conventions, the ethereal against the commonplace and material. But a very odd thing happens - in conceiving of Sue as "spirit", free and rebellious, we find her coming up with a powerful aversion to marriage and sex - in other words, with a strong infusion of the very Victorianism to which many of her other feelings and intellectual attitudes run counter. Whatever the contradiction between Sue's manifestations of free spirit, she nevertheless appears quite conventional. Repeatedly Hardy uses such words as "perverseness", "riddle", "conundrum",

"colossal inconsistency", ... etc. The answer to the enigma of Sue seems to lie in that she, like Jude himself, is a 'representative' character, and "her elusive complexity stems in part from the fact that she points beyond herself, to a confused, ambiguous structure of feeling which belongs to the period in general."⁽²⁹⁾ It is precisely in her inconsistency that she is at once most fully realised and most completely representative.

Almost all critics are agreed that her dominant characteristic is inconsistency which makes the character exceptionally elusive. She has been called childish, selfish, sadistic, masochistic, narcissistic, frigid and neurotic.⁽³⁰⁾ But these conclusions have not satisfied even their authors, among whom Irving Howe is representative in cautioning: "Yet one thing, surely the most important, must be said about Sue Bridehead. As she appears in the novel itself, rather than in the grinder of analysis, she is an utterly charming and vibrant creature."⁽³¹⁾ Perhaps a character can be so fluid and complex that she eludes the combined critical effort to capture her.

If in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, the character of Tess determines and limits the character of Angel and Alec, similarly in Jude the Obscure, the primacy of Jude shapes the narrative function of Arabella and Sue, who appeal to opposite poles in the protagonist's nature. Thus both Arabella and Sue contribute to unmask the deep-seated assumptions which baffle Jude's hopes. But Hardy's original intention took on a new direction and the "Sue story" - originally a subplot - assumed greater importance.⁽³²⁾ Many of Sue's inconsistencies are in fact seen from Jude's point of view. It is Jude who tells us that Sue is unpredictable and inconsistent, "a riddle", "a conundrum", etc. If we see Sue as merely a narrative device through which to portray Jude, we need

not worry much about these "inconsistencies" in her character, but Sue refuses to be read as a device. The narrator also contributes to Sue's inconsistent portrait, and Dale Kramer has made an argument "to clarify the nature of the narrator's self contradictoriness".⁽³³⁾

The problem of Sue's inconsistencies resolves itself into two main questions: what roles does Sue play in the novel?, and in what ways does her "reality" seem to exceed these roles? In answer to the first, many critics have identified Sue's several functions: she is a double to Jude; she is the spiritual woman who contrasts with Arabella, the sensual; she represents "the sceptical voice of the present age"⁽³⁴⁾; she reveals the failure to make reason accord with feeling; she expresses the excess of selfishness and the lack of loving-kindness.⁽³⁵⁾ In these interpretations, Sue is not a whole personality. She is one half of an equation: spirit/flesh, feeling/reason, emotion/intellect, selfishness/selflessness. Hardy seems to encourage this interpretation, "Of course the book is all contrasts -".

The second question, in what ways does Sue's "reality" seem to exceed these roles?, could be rephrased thus: to what extent does Sue's role introduce larger contemporary issues of the "woman question" which ultimately cannot find resolution within the scope of the novel's subject?⁽³⁶⁾ Critics have interpreted her from the point of view of psychology as a neurotic type, the "frigid woman". The most extreme version of this approach is, of course, D.H. Lawrence's, which sees Sue as "no woman" but a witch, whose attraction to Jude in the first place is in reaction to the incomprehensible womanliness of Arabella:

"And this tragedy is the result of overdevelopment of one principle of human life at the expense of the other; an overbalancing; a laying of all the stress on the Male, the Love, the Spirit, the Mind, the Consciousness, a denying, a blaspheming against the Female, the Law, the Soul, the Senses, the Feelings. But she is developed to the very extreme, she scarcely lives in the body at all. Being of the feminine gender, she is yet no woman at all, nor male, she is almost neuter" (37)

Lawrence failed to recognize the real nature of Sue's conflicts. This is probably because he is far more concerned in his "Study of Thomas Hardy" to work out his own philosophy than to assess Hardy's. Lawrence assumes that the female in Sue was born atrophied, but later critics usually locate the interest in her lack of sexual life. Though Jude calls her sexless, a disembodied creature, incorporeal as a spirit, yet it is noticeable that he takes it all back when she shows sexual jealousy over Arabella. Hardy explains in a letter to Gosse that Sue's oddity is sexual in origin, but not perversion and not entire lack. He says that her sexual drive is healthy as far as it goes but weak and fastidious. (38) Mary Jacobus is in the minority in giving her a significant sexual side. Sue herself says that she loves Jude "grossly", and Arabella, who knows about these things, has the last word in the novel when she says Sue will never find peace outside of Jude's arms.

When Sue's character is not drawn along psychological lines, it is drawn along sociological lines. Sue is the "type" of new woman. She is the "Bachelor girl" heralded by the reviewer Hardy cites in his "postscript" to Jude. She struggles for new independence and intellectual freedom, and in this struggle inconsistencies necessarily result. Robert Gittings sees Sue as a type not ^{of} the "New Woman" of the 1890's, but "The Girl of the Period" in the 1860's, and bases his conclusions on the quality of

Sue's intellectualism, her typical loss of faith and substitution of Positivism.(39)

It is reasonable to assume that Hardy's original subplot of the "Sue story" did portray Sue in these comparatively two-dimensional ways - spiritual, new woman, girl of the period. But as the character gained complexity, Sue gains dimensions which are incompatible with Hardy's original scheme.(40) However, there is "no doubt there can be more in a book than the author consciously puts there, which will help either to its profit or to its disadvantage as the case may be" ("Postscript" to the "Preface to the First Edition of Jude the Obscure", 1912, p. 26), and the case here is that what Hardy has consciously put in the character of Sue is to the novel's advantage. She is one of the most fascinating characters in English fiction not only to Hardy but also to many readers.

However, we have great difficulty in crediting Sue with a healthy personality because of the novel's deep ambivalence towards her. Whereas it is increasingly clear that the source of Jude's tragedy is not the wrath of God "only ... man and senseless circumstance" (VI,3,p.362), the source of Sue's tragedy is not exactly clear. In an interesting article Katherine Rogers explores the pervasive bias against women and points out that Jude, and the narrator too, tends to blame Sue qua woman for his own failures and pain.(41) This famous passage draws the reader's attention:

"Strange that [Jude's] first aspiration - towards academical proficiency - had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration - towards apostleship - had also been checked by a woman. 'Is it', he said, 'that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?'"

(IV,3,p.238)

The second cause - inadequate social system - asks for a serious consideration, but the first - "women are to blame" - seems to be an attractive possibility for Jude's failures. Jude tends to search for the cause of Sue's behaviour in the nature of her sex. The explanation of Sue's behaviour of gender appears in many situations in the novel. For example, Jude speculates, giving Sue in marriage to Phillotson, "Women were different from men in such matters. Was it that they were, instead of more sensitive, as reputed, more callous, and less romantic; ... or was Sue simply so perverse ..." (III,7,p.194). And when Jude reveals his marriage to Arabella, he describes Sue's outrage as the "exercise of those narrow womanly humours on impulse that were necessary to give her sex" (III,6,p.187). Finally, when Sue retreats back into her marriage with Phillotson, Jude poses what John Goode considers "the fundamental ideological question posed by the novel and found unforgivable by the critics who cannot take Sue":⁽⁴²⁾

"What I can't understand in you is your extraordinary blindness now to your old logic. Is it peculiar to you, or is it common to woman? Is a woman a thinking unit at all, or a fraction always wanting its integer?"

(VI,3,p.371)

The question poses for Sue only one of two possibilities, Goode argues, that her blindness to her own logic must be explained either by her "peculiarity", or by her womanhood. The second possibility is no less attractive, for as Jude later generalizes, "Strange difference of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably" (VI,10,p.419). This interpretation of a complex tragedy will hardly satisfy readers who have been attracted by the

complexity of Hardy's vision, particularly when we recognize that Sue always ascribes Jude's failures to ^{an} inadequate social system _x not to his nature as Man. So the interpretation of Sue's inconsistencies on the basis of gender is immediately dismissed in favour of a more general view that relates Sue's problems, as she achieves increasing prominence in the novel through the marriage plot, to the discrepancies between social pressure and individual needs.

Despite the prominence of social analysis in the novel regarding Jude's fate, the equivalent analyses regarding Sue's are not particularly prominent. We can think of Sue's problems in the light of such famous works as Ibsen's A Doll's House or Hedda Gabler which Hardy had seen in London in 1891, four years before Jude was published. If Jude aspires beyond his class, Sue aspires beyond her class and sex; but Sue's is not simply a class conflict, it is a conflict finally between what a woman can do and what she is expected to do. Sue's problems come partly from the fact that she is a woman, not as an explanation of innate disposition but as it explains her particular circumstances. Just as the novel offers frequent explanations of what it means to be a poor man of humble origins, we need to know what it means as a social fact to be a woman in Jude's world. One brief scene does touch on that meaning. It occurs just after Sue flees from Melchester Boarding School and the focus is on Sue's seventy young peers:

"Half-an-hour later they all lay in their cubicles, their tender feminine faces upturned to the flaring gas-jets which at intervals stretched down the long dormitories, every face bearing the legend 'The Weaker' upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were moulded, which by no possible exertion of their willing hearts, and abilities could be made strong while the inexorable laws of nature remain what they are. They

formed a pretty, suggestive, pathetic sight, of whose pathos and beauty they were themselves unconscious, and would not discover till, amid the storms and strains of after-years, with their injustice, loneliness, child-bearing, and bereavement, their minds would revert to this experience as to something which had been allowed to slip past them insufficiently regarded"

(III,3,pp.160-61)

The narrator still reverts to Nature - "the inexorable laws of [woman's] nature" - as explanation for "injustice, loneliness, child-bearing, and bereavement", but the dramatized scene itself stresses the chains social convention has imposed on women. In wanting an identity of her own, an identity through freedom, Sue is asking for something which men take for granted. "She, or he who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him", she tells Phillotson, "has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation". J.S. Mill's words, those are." (IV, 3, p. 244)

In making Sue quote J.S. Mill, a staunch supporter of the variety and independence of human behaviour, Hardy ironically exposes her rigidity and intolerance of opinions different from her own, her total inability to enter Phillotson's feelings, and her insensibility. The deaths of the children are a decisive blow for her, driving her even deeper in her inconsistencies. Her return to the church and remarriage to Phillotson are the culmination of her contradictoriness and the aspects of her character, her struggle for independence from traditional beliefs and her sparkling intellect, are lopped off as if they had never existed, replacing her earlier enslavement her "enslavement to forms" of self-renunciation to forms of self-assertion. Enclosed within herself, she seals herself off almost literally from human communication; when Jude leaves her for the last time she "stopped her ears with her hands till all possible

sound of him had passed away" (VI,8,p.410). Her return to traditional belief and her "licenced" husband is something like a spiritual suicide, self-destruction; and in destroying herself, Sue destroys the lives of those around her. Her individual and social roles become inextricably united, a recall to Hardy's abiding theme that the human race is "one great network or tissue which quivers in every part when one point is shaken, like a spider's web if touched".(43)

Truly, as Hardy says in his preface, Jude's is a tragedy of "unfulfilled aims", and that unfulfilment is both public and private, educational and matrimonial. His attitude of mind is made clear in his speech to the crowd who have gathered for Remembrance Day:

"it was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one ... I was, perhaps, after all, a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness, that makes so many unhappy in these days! ... And what I appear, a sick and poor man, is not the worst of me. I am in a chaos of principles - groping in the dark - acting by instinct and not after example. Eight or nine years ago when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I am. ... I perceive there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas; what it is can only be discovered by men or women with greater insight than mine - if, indeed, they ever discover it - at least in our time."

(VI,1,pp.345-6)

These bitter sentiments define the way in which Jude has evolved throughout the successive stages of his life, the early metaphysical gloom, the division of the world at Marygreen, the unfocussed intellectual and theological ambitions, the failure of his relationships with Arabella and Sue, and almost every one in the novel, complete isolation and retreat into self, and now the attempt to come to terms with a harsh social reality. To reinforce

the sense of alienation, so powerful and pervasive in the novel from beginning to end, Hardy draws lavishly on the ironies of plot. Jude, a tragic hero, is ravaged and finally destroyed by implacable events; Jude abandoned by Sue for Phillotson, following the death of the children; Jude tricked and made captive again by Arabella; Jude catching his fatal illness through an abortive visit to Sue; Jude dying, alone, reciting the curses of Job, while the university which rejected him is celebrating outside his windows.

Notes

1. Ward Hellstrom, "Hardy's Use of Setting and Jude the Obscure", Victorian Newsletter, 25(1964), p. 11, proposes that the shift from one location to another throughout the novel dramatizes "the modern vice of unrest". This underestimates the situation for Jude's alienation in an absurd and indifferent society is far more than "unrest".
2. F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928, pp. 207-8.
3. Ibid., pp. 272-3.
4. Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, p. 135.
5. A. Alvarez, "Jude the Obscure", in Albert J. Guerard, ed., Hardy. A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 120.
6. Citations between parentheses following each quotation from the novel refer to the New Wessex paperback edition of Jude the Obscure, 1974
7. D.H. Lawrence, Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays, p. 106. Lawrence further says, "Jude could never hate her. She did a great deal for the true making of him, for making him a grown man ... And there was danger at the outset that he should never become a man, but that he should remain incorporeal, smothered and under his idea of learning".
8. F. E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928, p. 272
9. C.J.P. Beatty, The Part played by Architecture in the Life and Works of Thomas Hardy with particular Reference to the Novels, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1963.

10. Jean R. Brooks, Thomas Hardy. The Poetic Structure, p. 270.
11. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p. 213.
12. "To Florence Henniker", 10 November 1895, One Rare Fair Woman, p.47
13. "To Florence Henniker", 12 August 1895, ibid.,43.
14. Patricia Ingham, "The Evolution of Jude the Obscure", Review of English Studies, 27 (1976), pp. 27-37 and pp. 159-69; a decisive refutation of John Paterson's "The Genesis of Jude the Obscure", Studies in Philology, 57 (1960), pp. 87-98.
15. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p. 214.
16. D.H. Lawrence, Study of Thomas Hardy And Other Essays, p. 108.
17. Freud, Civilisation and its Discontents, p. 76.
18. D.H. Lawrence, Apropos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover", p. 92.
19. J.I.M. Stewart, "The Integrity of Hardy", English Studies (The English Association), vol. 1 (1948), p. 25.
20. John Bayley, An Essay on Hardy, p. 201.
21. Penelope Vigar, The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality, p. 193.
22. Edmund Gosse, review of Jude the Obscure in Cosmopolis (January, 1896), quoted in R.G. Cox, ed., Thomas Hardy. The Critical Heritage, pp. 268,9.
23. Letter to Edmund Gosse, 10 November 1895, quoted in F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928, p. 271.

24. Letter to Edmund Gosse, 20 November 1895, *ibid.*, p. 272.
25. Harold Orel, Ed., Hardy's Personal Writings, p. 130.
26. Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy. His Career as a Novelist, p. 320.
27. A. Alvarez, "Jude the Obscure". in A.J. Guerard, ed., Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 117
28. For an interesting study of the Shelleyan motif in the novel, see Michael E. Hassett, "Compromised Romanticism in Jude the Obscure", Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 25(1971), pp. 432-43
29. Terry Eagleton, Introduction to the New Wessex paperback edition of Jude the Obscure, p. 17
30. According to critics, inconsistency is Sue's major trait. Albert J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories, pp. 108-14, sees Sue as Hardy's portrait of a "neurotic and sexually maladjusted woman". A. Alvarez, "Jude the Obscure", in A.J. Guerard, ed., Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 113-122, points to Sue's "frigidity" and "narcissism" as a source of her inconsistency. Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, pp. 132-46, offers a sympathetic portrait of Sue, yet describes her as "masochistic" to explain her contradiction. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, pp. 225-26, focuses on Sue's "selfishness" and "self absorption" caused by her "enslavement to forms of self-assertion" leading to a divorce of "the aerial part" and "the body". Virginia Hyman, Ethical Perspectives in the Novels of Thomas Hardy, pp. 165-66, notes that Sue's actions "are remarkable for their inconsistency", pointing out that Sue embodies characteristics that we tend

to see as "hopelessly contradictory". Dale Kramer, Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy, p. 161, has located Sue as the very cause of the tragedy "Jude could survive if he were not so totally an idealist and if he had not entrusted that idealism to a person so frail and inconsistent that, it can justly be said, Jude's choice of Sue is what dooms him". Finally Robert B. Heilman, "Hardy's Sue Bridehead", Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 20(1965-66), p. 319, concludes that Sue is "split in her make-up" but finds her "inner truth" or consistency in "the tendency of the nonrational foundations of life and security".

31. Irvine Howe, Thomas Hardy, p. 143. Guerard, Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories, p. 113, develops a similar point following a scathing criticism of Sue's inadequacies. So summarized, Sue Bridehead may seem a monstrously unpleasant person, as unpleasant as most fictional neurotics. But she is, as it happens, one of Hardy's most appealing heroines; charming and alive ..." A. Alvarez similarly acknowledges: "in creating [Sue] Hardy did something extraordinary original, he created one of the few totally narcissistic women in literature; but he did so at the same time as he made her something rather wonderful".

32. Robert C. Slack, "The Text of Hardy's Jude the Obscure", Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 11(1957), pp. 261-75, has documented the textual changes in the novel between the 1903 and 1912 editions, and he finds them mainly concerned with revising passages which deal with Sue.

33. Kramer, Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy, pp. 153,154. Other critics have been struck by similar problems with the narrator of the novel. Hyman, for example, notes that "Sue Bridehead puzzles Hardy readers" and that "part of the reason for the difficulty is that Hardy, contrary to his former practice, provides no authorial comments to shape our attitudes or opinions about her" (p. 165). John Lucas, The Literature of Change, pp. 188-191, is the harshest of all critics, "The trouble is not simply that she [Sue] is irritating, although she certainly is, but that Hardy himself is unable to make up his mind about her, so that it becomes almost impossible to know how one is supposed to take her."
34. See note 15
35. Heilman, "Hardy's Sue Bridehead", pp. 319-22, locates the novel's power in revealing the bankruptcy of reason without feeling; Hyman, Ethical Perspectives in the Novels of Thomas Hardy, p. 165, sees Sue's dominant trait as selfishness.
36. Mary Jacobus, "Sue the Obscure", Essays in Criticism, 25(1975), pp. 304-28, has posed similar questions about Sue. Above all, she asks with what success Sue and the issues she raises are integrated into the novel as a whole. She focuses, however, on theoretical issues. Drawing extensively from J.S. Mill, Jacobus explores the philosophical bases of Sue's beliefs setting them in logic and emotional truths about the individual and marriage, society and nature.
37. D.H. Lawrence, Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays, pp. 121,2

38. See note 24
39. Robert Gittings, Young Thomas Hardy, p. 139
40. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p. 215, talks explicitly about the novel's changing track in "an extremely interesting and unexpected way", and he sees Hardy's interest in Sue as a cause of that change. But he concludes that her character finds a new consistency as Hardy ponders the meaning of freedom through Sue's "nervous self-enclosure, the swift conceptualising, safeguarding the self against the invasions of experience".
41. Katherine Rogers, "Women in Thomas Hardy", Centennial Review, 19(1975), pp. 252,54-58, sees Sue as "at once Hardy's major contribution to feminism and the expression of his doubts about it". Acknowledging Sue's "pervasive inconsistency", Rogers suggests that Sue's "radical weakness comes from a conflict Hardy saw between her sex and her rationality"
42. John Goode, "Sue Bridehead and the New Woman", in Mary Jacobus, ed., Women Writing and Writing About Women, p. 101
43. F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928, p. 177

Conclusion

Thomas Hardy and Alienation

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Thomas Hardy and Alienation

The greatest Victorian writers were the severest social critics. The "alien" visions of Tennyson, Arnold, Dickens, Carlyle and Pater, to name some of the most obvious, come immediately to mind; and these authors are Hardy's most important predecessors as social critics. But Hardy differs from them in the intensity of his scrutiny and in his persistence in telling the Victorians profoundly disturbing truths about their values and society which they did not want to hear. David De Laura understood this when he wrote that Hardy was warning his contemporaries that "they had not imagined the human consequences of honestly living out the modernist premises."; Hardy's eye is consistently on "the painful exigencies of modernism, its human cost, and not on its liberating effects".⁽¹⁾ Examining the alienation of the individual in the late nineteenth century, Hardy presents the costs emphatically and repeatedly. Thus the most salient distinction between Hardy's novels and the darker works of, say, Dickens is that, in novel after novel, Hardy's protagonists refuse to endure paralysis and emotional deprivation; and they instead make choices that prove self-destructive and ultimately alienate them from themselves and from their society.

In his autobiography, Hardy records a great many incidents which, taken together, help us better to understand the formation of his idiosyncratic imagination and to account for the pervasiveness of alienation in his novels and poetry. For all its miscellaneous character, entries that provide a basis for seeing Hardy clear, though not whole, and despite recent discussion about

the omissions and distortions of The Life, it remains a valuable and indispensable source of information about Hardy's youthful experiences and emotions.⁽²⁾ There is enough of what he encountered and felt to acquaint us with his art.

The roots of Hardy's interest in alienation may go back to the time of his birth - when he was literally cast aside as dead and survived only because of the midwife's carefulness. Michael Millgate reports that the infant was "so lacking in motion and discernible intelligence" that his mother soon was convinced she had given birth to an idiot, and Hardy's parents, fearing the weakly child was unlikely to live, took little interest in him, and feared to make any great emotional commitment to him.⁽³⁾ That incident early in The Life, where Hardy lies on his back, looking through his straw hat at the sun, prefigures the strain of melancholy that permeates almost all his works, (The Life, pp.15-16) and recalls particularly Jude. Deeply sensitive to the sufferings of the physically weak and to how useless he was, Hardy concluded that he did not wish to grow up or meet new people. The feeling of personal worthlessness intermittently pursued "Thomas the Unworthy", as he called himself throughout the life (The Life, p. 200); and self-defamation may account for the weak attachment to life in most of his characters, who easily succumb to death when they cannot appease their feelings of guilt.

Hardy's early sense of unworthiness and his desire not to grow was rejection of a self unfit for the struggle for survival. It was virtually rejection of his life. Early in life, Hardy reflected on a world that neglects us, a world full of "agony, darkness, death also" (The Life, p. 112). In the poem "Tess's Lament", the narrator speaks for Hardy's major fictional characters when he says:

I cannot bear my fate as writ,

I'd have my life unbe;
Would turn my memory to a blot,
Make every relic of me rot,
My doings be as they were not,
And gone all trace of me!⁽⁴⁾

There are several personal poems in which the same wish is uttered, though none is so explicit as the "In Tenebris" sequence.

Though some critics may be suspicious of biographical criticism I believe that in the treatment of a topic like alienation, it is particularly illuminating to draw on Hardy's personal life. I do not say that Hardy's novels and poetry are simply a reflection of his personal difficulties; they are something more than that, and this element is of major critical importance.

Hardy's native psychological disposition was reinforced by his reading. He was familiar with the world's great literature of pain and suffering: the Old Testament, Greek tragedy, Shakespeare, and the traditional ballads. He never forgot the ballad "The Outlandish Knight", which he first heard at a harvest supper. It includes the stanza he quoted in The Life (p. 20):

"Lie there, lie there, thou false-hearted man,
Lie there *instead o' me*;
For six pretty maidens *thou hast a-drown'd here*,
But the seventh hath drown-ed thee!"

Hardy is like a prophet, crying out in the wilderness of modern life to a community threatened by the "ache" of modernism. He is an "intellectual deliverer", in the sense Matthew Arnold intended in his essay "The Modern Element in Literature", one who contemplates and communicates the spirit of the age. A sceptic by temperament, Hardy early learned to admire Milton, Gibbon, Shelley

and John Stuart Mill. His critical bent took shape under the social protests of Saturday Review and he received with enthusiasm what many of his contemporaries felt were the "subversive" works of Darwin, Huxley and the authors of Essays and Reviews. Hardy's genius and his reading made him welcome the awakening of the modern spirit. He would be a prophet; he wrote to Mrs Henniker that "If you mean to make the world listen to you, you must say now what they will all be thinking and saying five and twenty years hence: and if you do that you must offend your conventional friends." (5)

At the very heart of Hardy's greatest writing is a sense of the fragility of man's life and the extreme suffering of human beings. Life in a Godless, absurd universe is cruel; for many of its victims, Hardy repeatedly stated, it would have been better had they never been born. And while Hardy seems to understand man's erotic impulse, what in Tess he calls the "inherent will to enjoy", there is so little for many of his characters to enjoy that their attachment to life becomes very slender. The comment in Jude the Obscure about the "coming universal wish not to live" is made not only in connection with the unnaturally gloomy Little Father Time, but also is meant to include Hardy's long-evolving sensitivity to modern man's declining zest for life and his conviction that thought was robbing existence of its joyousness and making life a heavy burden. Hardy's narrator goes so far as to predict that in future there will be more Judes and Sues, who "will see weltering humanity still more vividly than [they] do now, as 'shapes like our own selves hideously multiplied,' and will be afraid to reproduce" (V,4,p.305). In this respect, Hardy may have been affected by the Romantic poets who viewed life as purgatorial, a state of no life and no death in which the individual remains aware of "the irreparable separation

between his present self which is dying and his self of the immediate past which is already dead."⁽⁶⁾ Or Hardy may have been influenced by Schopenhauer whose view of tragedy necessitates the surrender of life, or at least of the will to live, as the ultimate consequence of long suffering.⁽⁷⁾ Increase in consciousness of man's separation from all that is not himself, in other words, leads to a resigned acceptance of absolute separation, of death as the only mode of non-existence.

Hardy puts this argument in a very important passage in The Life:

"For my part, if there is any way of getting a melancholy satisfaction out of life it lies in dying, so to speak, before one is out of the flesh; by which I mean putting on the manners of ghosts, wandering in their haunts, and taking their views of surrounding things. To think of life as passing away is a sadness; to think of it as past is at least tolerable. Hence even when I enter into a room to pay a simple morning call I have unconsciously the habit of regarding the scene as if I were a spectre not solid enough to influence my environment."

(pp. 209-11)

This passage throws considerable light on the major novels, since they represent Hardy's most systematic attempt at dealing with the modern temper.

Throughout Hardy's major novels the tension is generally between the demands of nature and the demands of civilization, between the unrestrained expression of life on the one hand and the stifling norms of society on the other. The dilemma experienced by Sue, Jude, Tess, Angel, Grace and Clym makes them realize that it is "a mishap to be alive". Absolutely essential to a recognition of the wish not to live is the recognition of one's alienation, of consciousness of self in opposition to the

consciousness of the rest of existence. With increased awareness of the self comes increased awareness of the other as enemy.⁽⁸⁾

Recent criticism has been concerned to define Hardy's philosophical position and to show its relevance to the modern world. Ian Gregor has pointed out that while there are "a number of quite definable interests running through" the novels, "nevertheless, separate and distinctive as these interests are, they do not seem to compromise, much less to threaten the unity and coherence of the novels".⁽⁹⁾ Gregor's central contention is that we must not look in Hardy for the kind of enclosed Jamesian structure, but see a Hardy novel rather as "it unfolds in the process of reading it".⁽¹⁰⁾ I find his argument wholly convincing. Both the diversity and the coherence of Hardy's novels arise from the great depth and breadth of his sympathies. His ability to enter into a wide variety of modes of being underlies the basic structure of his novels. There are, broadly speaking, three kinds of characters in Hardy's novels:

(1) Characters who suffer from the "ache of modernism", they are alienated from society because of the disparity between their ideals and the social norms - Tess, Angel, Sue, Jude, Henchard, (Clym), Grace, are all alienated in the Hegelian sense. On account of their own dreams and desires, they strike a discordant note, feel lonely and alienated, reel or revolt under the blows of Fate, sink in despair, ascribe their misfortunes to the contrivance of some malicious Being, wish never to have been born in such a defective world, and talk now and then of committing suicide. Jude is the most sensitive of this group of Hardy's characters; he embodies the conflicts that cripple him. Tess depicts the increasing oppression of society on individuals by thwarting the

ability of distinctive individuals to realize their best selves and by barring the expression of individual goodness by insisting on the letter of the law. Hardy's concern with the individual emanates from his sense of society's unaccommodating attitude to individuals. Sue's idea that laws ought to be adjusted according to individual needs is Hardy's own theory; he wrote to the Parisian paper, L'Ermitage, in 1893:

I consider a social system based on individual spontaneity to promise better for happiness than a curbed and uniform one under which all temperaments are bound to shape themselves to a single pattern of living. To this end I would have society divided into groups of temperaments, with a different code of observances for each group"

(The Life, p. 258)

Hardy's protagonists are not defeated only by society but by individual failings, misperceptions and weaknesses as well.

(2) The second group of characters are those through whom Hardy thinks. They display a compassionate outlook that gives them an ability to place the needs of another above their own self-interest, but their most characteristic quality is an ability to endure. They can accept and bear conditions about them, whether good or bad, with a kind of equanimity. They do not rail at the universe or perform impulsive acts. They are heroic in that, by virtue of their spiritual strength, ^{they} survive intact the ordeals and tribulations which would break the average man. They substitute self-abnegation for self-indulgence, renunciation for overreaching ambition, resignation that restores harmony between man and the conditions of his being, in place of the revolt of the previous group.

Bathsheba's reactions to Gabriel Oak may help to illustrate the qualities of this second group:

"What a way Oak had, she thought, of enduring things. Boldwood, who seemed so much deeper and higher and stronger in feeling than Gabriel, had not yet learnt, any more than she herself, the simple lesson which Oak showed a mastery of by every turn and look he gave - that among the multitude of interests by which he was surrounded, those which affected his personal well-being were not the most absorbing and important in his eyes. Oak meditatively looked upon the horizon of circumstances without any special regard to his own standpoint in their midst. That was how she would wish to be.

(Ch. 43, p. 321)

Sue Bridehead condemns herself for being the exact opposite of Gabriel Oak,

"We ought to be continually sacrificing ourselves on the altar of duty! But I have striven to do what has pleased me. I well deserved the scourging I have got! I wish something would take the evil right out of me ...
"Self-renunciation - that's everything! I cannot humiliate myself too much. I should like to prick myself all over with pins and bleed out the badness that's in me!"

(VI, 3, p. 364, 5)

This group includes such characters as Elizabeth-Jane, Gabriel Oak, Diggory Venn, Thomasin, and Clym in the later stage of his life. These characters are alienated, and they realize the disparity between themselves and the external world, but they deliberately have eliminated the gulf that had separated them from society, and, consequently, have attained universality, as Hegel says, by conforming to the social substance.

(3) The third group of characters are the simple rustics blissfully unaware of the painful human condition, happy with the world, never looking beyond the boundaries of Wessex. Critics have shown widespread disagreement on the subject of Hardy's rustics, some cautiously asserting, others emphatically denying their

documentary reality.⁽¹¹⁾

Hardy's peasants are often shrewd and rarely suffer severe physical hardships. They have but slightly diverged from Nature. Their limited wants do not conflict with the silent universe. "Now 'tis very odd, but I never feel lonely - no, not at all," says Grandfer Cantle wondering at Mrs Yeobright's acute feeling of loneliness in The Return of the Native. They stand for the average humanity who toil with endurance through life enjoying the bliss of ignorance. They eat and drink and talk without a touch of melancholy. Over the dead body of Fanny, Coggan says in Far from the Madding Crowd, "Drink, shepherd, and be friends, for tomorrow we may be like her" at which Mark Clark drinks greedily and sings. Christopher Coney in The Mayor of Casterbridge digs up "four ounce pennies" buried in the garden after Susan Henchard's death in accordance with her last wish, and spends them on liquor. When charged with 'Cannibalism' by his fellow rustics for thus disrespecting the dead, he declares:

"I don't see noo harm in it. To respect the dead is sound doxology: and I wouldn't sell skellintons —... to be varnished for 'natomies, except I were out o'work. But money is scarce, and throats get dry. Why should death rob life o'fourpence? I say there was no treason in it"

(Ch. 18, p, 149)

Hardy wrote in Dorsetshire Labourer, "It is among such communities as these that happiness will find her last refuge upon earth, since it is among them that a perfect insight into the conditions of existence will be longest postponed."⁽¹²⁾ Clym's tragedy is that he has come to teach "how to breast the misery" to those who are already at peace with themselves and the world.

Notes

1. David De Laura, "The Ache of Modernism", E L H, 34 (1967), pp. 399, 396.
2. Robert Gittings, Young Thomas Hardy, p. 20, *says in the style of The Life*:
"a set of clumsily-connected anecdotes, often, it seems, chosen for quaintness or oddity rather than for relevance to the main themes of his life."
3. Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy: A Biography, p. 16.
4. The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy, p. 177.
5. Evelyn Hardy and F.B. Pinion, eds, One Rare Fair Woman, p. 26.
6. Lawrence J. Starzyk, "The Coming Universal Wish Not to Live in Hardy's "Modern" Novels", Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 26 (1971-72), p. 420.
7. There are several discussions of Hardy's indebtedness to Schopenhauer, the most interesting is J.O. Bailey, Thomas Hardy and the Cosmic Mind.
8. I am indebted to Starzyk throughout this paragraph.
9. Ian Gregor, The Great Web, p. 25.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
11. Albert J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy. The Novels and Stories, p. 123, *says* "the peasants are "unmistakably brittle, decorative, fictitious"; Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy, p. 146, "Read a page of rustic talk in Mr Hardy, and you will think

of Shakespeare". For further questioning of Hardy's realism, see H.G. Duffin, Thomas Hardy. A Study of the Wessex Novels, pp. 22-24; and David Cecil, Hardy the Novelist, p. 92. *A good* defence of his realism appears — in Harvey Curtis Webster, On a Darkling Plain, p. 108; Desmond Hawkins, Thomas Hardy, pp. 50-57.

12. Harold Orel, ed., Thomas Hardy's Personal writings, p. 169

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5. The Mayor of Casterbridge, Introd. Ian Gregor.
6. The Woodlanders, Introd. David Lodge.
7. Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Introd. P.N. Furnbank.
8. Jude the Obscure, Introd. Terry Eagleton.
9. Desperate Remedies Introd., C.J.P. Beatty.
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11. The Hand of Ethelberta, Introd. Robert Gittings

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