HARDY AND THE HEROINE

HARDY AND THE HEROINE: A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEROINE IN HARDY'S FICTION

By

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis traces Thomas Hardy's portrayal of the heroines in his novels and indicates how she is used to provide a focus for the problems and issues he presents. The thesis begins by suggesting that a standard portrayal of the heroine had emerged in Victorian fiction by about 1850 that was considerably modified by female writers such as Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot, and finally, by Hardy himself. The study of some of Hardy's earlier novels reveals that he also created a stereotype of his own. However, the examination of a selection of his later novels makes it clear that he gradually enlarged his scope in order to present a full, detailed and original sense of woman's personal and social predicament.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a constraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.[1]--Jane Eyre (1848)

Unfortunately, many nineteenth-century novelists before the emergence of writers such as Mrs. Gaskell, Emily and Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, tended frequently to portray women in the way that Jane Eyre here laments. The typical heroine of early nineteenth-century fiction was often so idealized that she frequently assumed an angelic stature and rarely was she shown emerging from that unrealistic dimension. However, this kind of portrayal was considerably modified by the above-mentioned writers so that they developed a deeper consideration of female nature that Thomas Hardy was to follow. His treatment of women in his novels marks a further interesting departure from the treatment of women in early nineteenth-century fiction.

Before considering Hardy's treatment of women though, it is perhaps useful to examine how the typical Victorian heroine was portrayed and how her portrayal was gradually modified. First of all, there seem to be certain common characteristics which can be outlined in order to draw a composite picture of the Victorian heroine. She was most often beautiful and naturally so and usually possessed an inner nature or soul that corresponded to her exterior

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[1]Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p.106. Hereafter cited as Brontë.

loveliness. Because of the nature of her society, the Victorian heroine had to be concerned with her physical beauty, as this was often a means of social advancement for her. Even more important though, was her social class: the more wealthy her family, the more advantages she had in climbing the social ladder. The lower her social rank, the harder it was for her to advance. And of course, the chief mode of advancement lay in marriage. These difficulties of social rank can be seen operating in Jane Austen's Emma where Jane Fairfax is hindered because she is only a lowly governess and Emma holds the upper hand because of her beauty and rank.

Despite the emphasis on social position, the early Victorian heroine was still expected to cultivate her soul. One of the chief realizations that she had to come to was the importance of her inner self and the development of an inner beauty or grace, as opposed to an external facade. Any tendency towards vanity or false aids to beauty such as excessive make-up or wigs was to be avoided. In the same way, clothes and external adornments were to be plain and unostentatious as finery was a sign of vanity.

Of prime importance was purity, both physical and mental. Even after marriage, the Victorian woman was to retain an air of innocence and avoid any show of worldliness. The "fallen woman" was doomed to be an outcast. Sex was something to be endured, never to be enjoyed and any allusions to it were avoided. Thus, the Victorian heroine was a passionless, almost bodiless creature whose chief function was to serve her husband and his desires. She was never to be the active agent in any overtly sexual relationship; she was merely the passive recipient of a man's attentions and advances.

Although the heroine might have been educated, her accomplishments had little chance of practical fulfillment. There were few alternatives for the educated woman: she

could become either a governess, a teacher, an actress (which was not considered very respectable), or a wife, which was the most secure and desired position. Once married, she had few outlets for her energy and intelligence other than child-rearing. Sometimes, she practised philanthropy; working for a charitable cause was usually considered respectable and allowed a woman a chance to extend her activities beyond the confines of her home. The problem of the intelligent woman, frustrated because of the lack of opportunities for fulfillment, occurs again and again in the Victorian novel.

Charles Dickens was one writer who tended to portray his heroines along the lines of the above stereotype as Katharine M. Rogers points out:

> Complete self-abnegation is the leading characteristic of most of the good women of nineteenth-century literature: Lord Byron's Haidee and Medora, apparently mindless naturals who expect nothing from their lords and languish whenever they are not present, and Charles Dickens' Little Dorrit and Esther Summerson, who never venture even to think of wishes of their own, are obvious examples. The typical virtuous heroine of the Victorian novel is a softened version of Grisilde--rewarded for exploitation by being venerated as a saint. Women, it is implied, are wonderfully angelic and superior to men for giving up their lives to male happiness--but there is no question that this is what they should do.[2]

Dickens usually has his villains prey upon the invariably weaker sex. In David Copperfield (1850), the hero's first shattering experience involves the domination of his mother by the sinister Mr. Murdstone, who eventually drives her to death. The most sexually aggressive character in the novel, James Steerforth, leads Little Emily astray so that her life is ruined and he also constantly frustrates the passions of Rosa Dartle (a rather exceptional female character in her display of such feelings). David's first wife, Dora, is sweet but empty-headed. She is an example of a woman who has been so coddled that she is unable to cope with the

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[2]The Troublesome Helpmate (Seattle, 1966), p.193.

ordinary duties of a wife in a demanding world. She is like a child; she does not demand anything of David as a man. Even those women who do display stamina and force of character, the man-hater, Betsy Trotwood and the angelic Agnes Wickfield are vulnerable to evil individuals such as Uriah Heep. Agnes embodies the state of perfection which David eventually gains; however, he must grow up to be worthy of 'his good angel'. Throughout the novel, Agnes is more a symbol of goodness than a fully developed woman.

In Bleak House (1853), Esther Summerson perhaps best exemplifies the composite Victorian heroine. She is good, sincere and Christian; yet from the beginning she is at a disadvantage because: "Your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers."[3] When stricken and disfigured with smallpox, Esther must learn to ignore her external ugliness and allow the goodness of her nature to predominate. The ultimate achievement she attains is a loving husband and children. Overall she is another Agnes: almost too good to be true. Her constant self-sacrifices and self-condemnations render her annoyingly unbelieveable. Esther's mother, Lady Dedlock is not so fortunate in life--she is doomed to suffer for her illicit love affair. Although she is beautiful and married to wealth, her life with Sir Leicester Dedlock is far from satisfactory. Hers is the position of the cultivated woman who discovers only boredom in marriage. Eventually, exposure of her past brings disgrace and death. Dickens is prepared to consider the plight of the fallen woman but he almost always seems to sentence her to a miserable, outcast state.

Again and again, Dickens explores the ways in which evil men gain control by sexually dominating defenseless women. In Our Mutual Friend (1865), Bradley Headstone becomes an extreme version of Edward Murdstone or Uriah Heep in trying

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[3]Charles Dickens, Bleak House (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), p.13.

to attain complete ascendancy over a good and virtuous woman like Lizzie Hexam. She is the typical Dickens heroine: intelligent, beautiful and resourceful, chaste and kind, but with few defenses, economic or physical, against predatory males. Ultimately she is rescued by her knight in shining armour, Eugene Wrayburn, but even this union is not completely satisfactory in social terms since they must retreat from society: Lizzie's social position is not equal to Eugene's. For Dickens, it is women like Lizzie who seem to come closest to perfection and ultimate goodness. It is Lizzie's example that women like Bella Wilfer must learn to follow. At the beginning Bella is so completely dominated by vanity and avarice that she almost appears a monster. However, she is able to achieve a reversal of character and she begins to acquire the goodness that Lizzie exemplifies.

In his novels, Dickens often seems unable to admit that virtuous, 'good' women have any sort of sexual feeling or passion. His heroines are more acted upon than active; as victims of male pursuers, they are given few defenses other than the strength of their virtue. Those women who do succumb to sexual passion, like Little Emily, Lady Dedlock or Rosa Dartle, are plagued for life by the results of their "illicit" feelings. Dickens exemplifies the standard Victorian conception of woman. Either she is loose and easily led astray or she is a chaste and holy virgin--an angel-harlot dichotomy seems to exist.

It was up to the female writers of the time, Mrs. Gaskell, Emily and Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot to create an increasingly realistic portrayal of women. It is remarkable that, in a time when the status of women was so low, some of the greatest novelists were women. Writing could hardly be considered a profession for women when it had to be carried on secretly or under a male pseudonym; despite this, the genius

of Mrs. Gaskell, the Brontës and George Eliot could not be repressed. They were able to present a first-hand, female understanding of, and insight into, the Victorian woman.

Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth (1853) is an examination of a 'fallen woman'. However brave an attempt it makes in dealing with what was certainly a taboo subject, the impact of Ruth is diminished by some inconsistencies and an excessive discretion. Again it is a story of an innocent, like Little Emily, led astray by a Steerforth-like libertine. Mrs. Gaskell carefully and sympathetically builds up Ruth's plight and the way in which it induces her to succumb to Mr. Bellingham's charms. Nevertheless, the subject of sexual encounter is almost passed over and the illegitimate child is conceived without the reader's full awareness.Until the mention of the child, the reader is unsure just what the nature of the relationship is. And as one Victorian critic of the book pointed out, Mrs. Gaskell has portrayed a woman ultimately too perfect to arouse our sympathy:

> ...she has first imagined a character as pure, pious, and unselfish as poet ever fancied, and described a lapse from chastity as faultless as such a fault can be; and then, with damaging and unfaithful inconsistency, has given in to the world's estimate in such matters, by affirming that the sin committed was of so deep a dye that only a life of atoning and enduring persistence could wipe it out. If she designed to awaken the world's compassion for the ordinary class of betrayed and deserted Magdalenes, the consequences of Ruth's error should not have been made so innocent, nor should Ruth herself have been painted so perfect.[4]

So, tarnished as Ruth is supposed to be, Mrs. Gaskell found it difficult to develop her realistically after her initial "fall". The only recourse for Ruth is to become a virtual saint, never again allowing worldly concerns to engage her; and she becomes a model Victorian heroine. She still retains external beauty, even after her hair is shorn, and eventually her inner goodness predominates. Unfortunately

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[4]W. R. Greg, as quoted by A. W. Ward in intro. to Ruth (New York, 1906), p.xvii.

though, after her fall, Ruth is never allowed to be fully human.

The Brontë sisters were perhaps the first to admit that women had passions and desires as strong as the desires of men. In Wuthering Heights (1847), Emily Brontë infuses her heroine, Catherine Earnshaw, with as much power of emotion and intensity of feeling as Heathcliffe himself embodies. And Catherine is not merely the recipient of Heathcliffe's emotions: she is his alter-ego. The tie that binds them is a sense of identity--they are of the same spiritual essence. Emily Brontë never condemns the lovers as her society would. She allows Catherine to reveal the depths of her love; no previous Victorian heroine was allowed to be as open about her feelings.

Similarly, in Jane Eyre (1848), Charlotte Brontë draws a strong and passionate woman who is more than equal to her lover, Mr. Rochester. Jane is one in a long line of governesses in the nineteenth-century novel, and she shares their problems of displacement and social dispossession. However, "plain" Jane does not submit to her insecure position in any household; within her limited powers, she attempts to make her own way in the world. She rebels against Mrs. Reed's victimization; she insists upon equality with Rochester and rejects St. John Rivers because of the strangling hold he would have assumed over her. Even so by the end of the novel Jane has approached the Victorian ideal of the saintly woman since she denies worldly concerns and emphasizes spiritual fulfillment, though the union that she and Rochester achieve is not entirely spiritual, as Jane admits: "No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh."[5] Charlotte Brontë has allowed her heroine to make her own choices; Jane is not a passive victim of the men in her life. And Jane Eyre is one of the first Victorian

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[5]Brontë, p. 428.

heroines to express her dissatisfaction with her lot, as my opening quotation clearly shows.

George Eliot also recognizes how necessary it is that women find fulfillment and how difficult it is to attain in Victorian society. In Adam Bede (1859), the two women, Dinah Morris and Hetty Sorrel, are diametrically opposite and because they are such extremes, they lack credibility. Hetty Sorrel is the stereotyped "vain" woman, neglecting the nourishment of her soul in order to increase an admiration for her external beauty. Because she is so susceptible to flattery, she is led astray by another Steerforth-like seducer, Arthur Donnithorne. George Eliot cannot allow her "sin" to go unpunished; sympathetic as she might be to Hetty's plight, she forbids Hetty re-entry into the community. On the other hand, Dinah Morris is fully integrated into the community because she is its virtual saviour or saint. She follows the Agnes-Esther-Lizzie tradition of the angelic woman and so she is also too good, too virtuous, too merciful to be wholly believable. She fits the mold of the standard Victorian heroine too closely; she is never capable of displaying actual human faults or feelings. Despite the one-dimensional portrayal of these two women, George Eliot is still able to show how their society prevents them from fulfilling their respective goals. Hetty longs to escape the farm and the work she sees as drudgery, for more exciting places; Dinah wants to do some concrete work to better her community. However, Hetty dies an outcast and Dinah is not allowed to preach because "Conference had forbid the women preaching, and she's given it up, all but talking to the people a bit in their houses"[6]. Her mission in life, therefore, is now to be a good wife and mother.

George Eliot's portrayal of Dorothea Brooke in Middlemarch (1872), still adheres, to a certain extent, to that of the traditional Victorian heroine but here Eliot has infused a

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[6]George Eliot, Adam Bede (New York, 1961), p. 506.

depth and credibility into Dorothea that are lacking in Dinah. Eliot outlines in her Prelude to Middlemarch the problems of a Saint Theresa, such as Dorothea, born not ahead of her time, but out of her time:

> Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the off-spring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity....With dim lights and tangled circumstance they tried to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement; but after all, to common eyes their struggles seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness; for these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul.[7]

Here Eliot is reiterating Jane Eyre's complaint: that an intelligent, capable woman, perhaps a potential saint, is unable to find fulfillment because of the role her society imposes upon her. However, what Dorothea must learn is to reconcile her other-worldliness with her necessary, inescapable worldliness, for, as good as her intentions may be, they will not succeed if they are impractical. She is myopic not only physically but also in the sense that she cannot see that personal relations are as important as her visionary schemes. She must come to realize that human emotions and desires are vital, controlling elements, not to be supplanted by spiritual yearnings. The body must be as well satisfied as the mind. Yet, as discreet as Eliot is in dealing with Dorothea's passions and desires, there is a sense that she is moved by them. Therefore, although Dorothea is a good character, she is rounded, and not flat in presentation as Agnes, Esther, Lizzie, Ruth or Dinah are. Eliot has succeeded in developing the psychology of a 'good' character so that she becomes a credible human being and not simply an allegorical figure.

Rosamond Vincy serves almost as a foil for Dorothea in Middlemarch. She is a development from Hetty Sorrel and

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[7]George Eliot, Middlemarch (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), p.3.

another "vain" woman, but she has been given additional dimensions. Admittedly she is a selfish, egotistical creature who longs to be different from those around her, yet Eliot manages to evoke almost as much pity as disgust for her because of the nature of her position. In a sense, she is another Dora or another Bella Wilfer, pampered and protected to an excess, given no sense of responsibility by her family. Thus, she can hardly be expected to display maturity and force of character after her upbringing in a world of false refinement.

In her novels, George Eliot presents two aspects of female nature: vanity and goodness, usually embodied in two different characters. Sometimes these characters approach the Victorian stereotype but in Middlemarch, they become sympathetically real people. Yet George Eliot often is too discreet in dealing with them; their sexuality is alluded to but never openly discussed. And her virtuous heroine is saintly.

This is where Thomas Hardy marks an interesting further development in the presentation of the heroine in the nineteenth-century novel. Certainly he is indebted to his predecessors for creating a serious and significant exploration of female nature. However, he seems to have avoided the angel-harlot dichotomy and his heroines are not necessarily saints. Their flaws are made abundantly clear from the beginning and many of his heroines are susceptible to vanity. Many of them are enigmas: it is often unclear whether they have more destructive or constructive effects in terms of the novels in which they appear. In the tradition of the Brontës, Hardy also instils power of feeling and passion in his heroines. Often they are more interesting and powerful figures than the men in his novels because their personalities pose more challenging questions.

It is important to realize that Hardy's heroines are imperfect and never do they attain the level of perfection that many Victorian heroines exhibit. This is partly what

makes them human and gives them honest and vital dimensions. "And it was the touch of the imperfect upon the would-be perfect that gave the sweetness, because it was that which gave the humanity."[8]

At times, Hardy does create a female stereotype of his own, as will be discussed later, but overall he makes important advances in presenting women as full, rounded individuals in their own right. Also he makes it increasingly apparent how male-centred Victorian society stifles adequate personal fulfillment for women. This problem was discussed by the Brontës and George Eliot and Hardy discusses it further: in his novels, society proves to be an even more destructive force than it was in many earlier Victorian novels.

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[8]Thomas Hardy, Tess of the d'Ubervilles (London, 1957), pp. 174-175.

CHAPTER TWO: THE EARLY HEROINES

Hardy's handling of Fancy Day, Elfride Swancourt and Bathsheba Everdene in Under the Greenwood Tree (1872), A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873), and Far from the Madding Crowd (1874), anticipates his treatment of the heroines in his later novels. The elements that can be seen first in Fancy, then in Elfride and finally in Bathsheba are later developed and enlarged upon in characters such as Grace Melbury, Eustacia Vye, Tess, and Sue Bridehead. Already in the creation of these early heroines, Hardy veers away from previous modes of female characterization in nineteenth-century fiction. Hardy seeks to portray his female characters as realistic women with human flaws and imperfections, as well as endowing them with considerable charm and fascination. He does not try to present his heroines as potential saints; he stresses this point in answer to criticism of his portrayal of Bathsheba:

> I myself, I must confess, have no great liking for the perfect woman of fiction....The majority of women are quite worthy enough in nature to satisfy any reasonable being, but I venture to think that they too frequently do not exhibit that nature truly and simply....I had an idea that Bathsheba, with all her errors, was not devoid of honesty of this kind; it is however a point for readers to decide. I must add that no satire on the sex is intended in any case by the imperfections of my heroines.[1]

Perhaps the chief imperfection of his heroines lies in their capriciousness, which is common to all of them; and

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[1]Quoted by Carl J. Weber, Hardy of Wessex (New York, 1965), p. 94. Hereafter cited as Weber.

Hardy increasingly develops the social and personal implications of this characteristic.

Although the women in Hardy's novels provide a central focus, or a source of interest and mystery, they also often emerge as disruptive elements in a closely-knit community. However, this is not to say that Hardy views women as generally destructive, as Samuel C. Chew suggests:

> On the whole, however, Hardy's attitude towards women is unfavourable; his opinion of them is bitter. They have many good qualities of heart, but they are fickle and vain, insincere, conscienceless, and seductive. Almost all are passionate, and passion leads invariably to grief. The Brontë sisters and George Eliot had led the way away from the Rowenas and Doras and Amelias of earlier fiction.[2]

Because Hardy is able to describe flaws in his heroines does not mean that his "attitude towards women is unfavourable." On the contrary, he recognizes that his women often find themselves in untenable positions which influence their sometimes erratic behaviour. It is often as much the fault of the men in their lives that they are unable to attain proper and fulfilling relationships. Hardy's women live in a male-centred society which does not permit them complete and honest self-expression.

In Hardy's second novel, Under the Greenwood Tree, the heroine, Fancy Day, has many of the qualities we find in Hardy's later heroines. To begin with, she is certainly a disruptive element in her community. As an attractive, educated woman, she is immediately considered as an excellent

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[2] Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist (New York, 1928), p. 133.

prospective wife: "Miss Fancy Day; as neat a little figure of fun as ever I see, and just husband-high."[3] It is her eligibility which first causes all the problems in the novel: three men, Farmer Shiner, Dick Dewey and Parson Maybold have the same intentions toward her. And all three men hold different attractions for Fancy. Mr. Shiner has wealth and property; Dick has a charming innocence and honesty and Parson Maybold has culture and education. Of course, the ideal mate for Fancy would embody all these characteristics but because of the impossibility of this, she is forced to choose among her prospective partners.

The courting of Fancy first takes place at a communal event--the country dance. She appears to be the passive recipient of her two admiring partners' attentions, with either Mr. Shiner or Dick Dewey attempting to monopolize her time completely. But, as Hardy reminds the reader: "Flexibility was her first characteristic" (p. 53) and Fancy exhibits no partiality towards either man; she keeps them both guessing. This is the game she continues to play, causing minor upheaval in the community. Because Mr. Shiner and even Parson Maybold wish to hear her play the church organ, the Mellstock choir is ousted. The members of the choir do not seem to think that Fancy is innocent of blame in this affair:

'If that young figure of fun--Fance Day, I mean,' said

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[3]Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree (London,1971), p. 25. Page references to this text will be given in brackets after all subsequent quotations.

Bowman, 'hadn't been so mighty forward wi' showing herself off to Shiner and Dick and the rest, 'tis my belief we should never ha' left the gallery.'

'Tis my belief that though Shiner fired the bullets, the parson made 'em,' said Mr. Penny. 'My wife stick to it that he's in love wi' her.'

'That's a thing we shall never know. I can't onriddle her, nohow.' (p. 95)

The village rustics see the real, capricious Fancy Day far more clearly than does Dick Dewey. He idealizes his "angle" (p. 69) and credits her with an "airy-fairy nature" (p. 102) which Fancy is fully aware of. However, he soon begins to realize that his idol has feet of clay. His awareness of her vanity and fickleness comes to a climax on the nutting day and Dick cynically muses: "What she loves best in the world...is her hair and complexion. What she loves next best, myself, perhaps!" (p. 146) Fancy finally senses Dick's disgust and her danger of losing him and she quickly changes her tune. They now seem destined "to live happily ever after" but a new temptation is thrown in front of Fancy. It is the temptation that some of Hardy's later heroines fall prey to: the allure of a cultured, accomplished man, in this case Parson Maybold, who can offer an escape from the rural surroundings that Hardy's women sometimes feel trapped in. His offer is one of material wealth and cultivated society:

Of course we would not live here, Fancy. I have had for a long time the offer of an exchange of livings with a friend in Yorkshire....There we would go. Your musical powers shall be further developed; you shall have anything, Fancy, anything to make you happy--pony-carriage, flowers, birds, pleasant society; yes, you have enough in you for any society, after a few months of travel with me! (p. 178)

At first, the offer is too good for Fancy to resist. Other later heroines such as Bathsheba, Grace Melbury, Eustacia Vye and even Tess, respond affirmatively to the same kind of plea and get into trouble as a consequence. Hardy later seems to imply that such women should not be taken out of their familiar environments, their home communities, as attractive as a cultivated life seems to be. The grass there always seems greener, but it rarely is. For Hardy, cultivated life represents an infringement on rural life; its industrial and technical aspects rapidly destroy rural harmony. Fancy brings this complexity to Mellstock in a tangible form: the music she is asked to produce does not find favour with the community for:

> whether from prejudice or unbiased judgment, the venerable body of musicians could not help thinking that the simpler notes they had been wont to bring forth were more in keeping with the simplicity of their old church than the crowded chords and interludes it was her pleasure to produce. (p. 173)

Her culture and learning acquired in the city are evidently out of keeping with rural simplicity. And this conflict within Fancy, in some ways, represents the central conflict of the book: the old vs. the new, the rural vs. the urban.

By the end of the novel, Fancy chooses rural rather than urban life. Although the novel ends in a marriage, there is more than a suggestion that Dick and Fancy will not live happily ever after, as D. H. Lawrence also suggests:

> After a brief excursion from the beaten track in the pursuit of social ambition and satisfaction of the imagination,

> figured by the Clergyman, Fancy, the little school-mistress, returns to Dick, renounces imagination, and settles down to steady, solid, physically satisfactory married life, and all is as it should be. But Fancy will carry in her heart all her life many unopened buds that will die unflowered: and Dick will probably have a bad time of it.[4]

It is never completely clear that the parson can offer "satisfaction of the imagination" for Fancy or that Fancy's "imagination" extends beyond social ambition. Nevertheless, Fancy seems to have made the "right" final choice as far as the readers' sympathies are concerned. She chooses the traditional community and Hardy stresses this. But it is definitely clear that their relationship is not perfectly open and honest.

The book ends with Dick emphasizing the value of honesty in their relationship--"We'll have no secrets from each other, darling, will we ever?" (p. 203) while Fancy is thinking "of a secret she would never tell." (p. 204) This example of dishonesty in Fancy supports Parson Maybold's observation that she "was less an angel than a woman". (p. 181) Because she is a credible woman, she will continue to have her faults: capricious whims and self-indulgence.

Fancy is one of the first in a long line of indecisive females in Hardy's fiction who can never be completely honest with their lovers, as F. R. Southerington points out:

> Her coquettishness, which she acknowledges and to some extent delights in, is a potentially subversive force, and in this and her possession of a secret which she is reluctant to reveal she foreshadows the later heroines.[5]

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[4]D. H. Lawrence, "Study of Thomas Hardy", in Anthony Beal, ed. Selected Literary Criticism of...(New York, 1966), p. 169. Hereafter cited as Lawrence.

[5]Hardy's Vision of Man (London, 1971), p. 47. Hereafter cited as Southerington.

Elfride Swancourt in A Pair of Blue Eyes is much like Fancy Day: accomplished and intelligent but also vain and capricious. She is the next heroine who is forced to choose between three men who are opposite to each other in many ways. Again there is a conflict between the urban, cultured man, Mr. Knight, and the sincere, simple rural man, Stephen Smith, and the man of wealth and influence, Lord Luxellian. However, in A Pair of Blue Eyes, there is an increased complexity in the presentation of the novel's relationships, mainly because the men are more fully drawn than they were in Under the Greenwood Tree. Also, Elfride's harbouring of a secret proves to be more disastrous than Fancy's similar reticence.

She first falls in love with young Stephen Smith and she discovers the power of her feminine wiles along with "a liking to attract him."[6] The implication is that she loves him more for the control she can hold over him than for what Stephen is in himself. She is susceptible to what Hardy calls "woman's ruling passion--to fascinate and influence those more powerful than she." (p. 215) Theirs is a Fancy-Dick relationship: as Fancy played with Dick's emotions, Elfride tantalizes Stephen. She makes a trip with him to London to get married on the sly, then changes her mind at the last possible moment and returns home. Stephen idolizes Elfride as much as Dick first idolizes Fancy. Also, in the same way that Fancy's father first objected to Dick because of his poorer station, Mr. Swancourt objects

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[6]Thomas Hardy, A Pair of Blue Eyes (London, 1920), p. 45. Page references to this text will be given in brackets after all subsequent quotations.

to Elfride marrying Stephen. They both want "gentlemen" or aristocrats as husbands for their daughters.

After Stephen is temporarily but somewhat conveniently removed from the scene by being shipped off to India, Henry Knight is presented as an alternative lover. Because he is a completely different kind of man--cynical, independent, cultured and confident--the nature of his relationship with Elfride is accordingly different. Elfride no longer holds the upper hand, she is subjected by the intelligence and confidence of Knight:

> Elfride's docile devotion to Knight was now its own enemy. Clinging to him so dependently, she taught him in time to presume upon that devotion--a lesson men are not slow to learn. A slight rebelliousness occasionally would have done him no harm, and would have been a world of advantage to her. But she idolized him, and was proud to be his bond-servant. (p. 349)

Knight is another man from the "city" who has come into the rural environment and he completely wins over the naïve country girl: the allure of what he represents is too great for Elfride. However, when Knight becomes suspicious about Elfride's earlier love affairs, she begins to lie more and more in order to protect herself. Despite his liberal attitudes, Knight cannot accept anything but an untouched and "unseen flower" (p. 333) a virgin who is as inexperienced as he is. When he does find out what he thinks is the truth, he refuses to marry her. As Southerington points out: "Knight ...is obviously a first draft for Angel Clare, and in his

idealisation of his own dreams, and his refusal to accept Elfride when she falls below his ideal, he bears more responsibility than any other figure".[7] Elfride loses both Smith and Knight and marries the local aristocrat, Lord Luxellian. But she is not allowed to live happily ever after; she dies about a year later.

Elfride is denied a satisfactory relationship partly because of her own indecisiveness and hedging, and partly because the men in her life are guilty of never seeing beyond their romantic visions of Elfride. True, she plays up to their expectations, but they are never able to view her as a full and rounded woman with as many faults as charms. As Michael Millgate argues:

> It is Elfride's misfortune, like that of later Hardy heroines, to be failed by all the men on whom she depends, from her insensitive and egotistical father onwards. Neither Stephen nor Knight, in fact, wants Elfride for herself, or even (to adapt Yeats) for her light-brown hair. Each seeks an adjunct to his own personality: Stephen a queen, Knight a maiden of spotless purity.[8]

The next flirtatious and vain heroine is Bathsheba Everdene in Far from the Madding Crowd. This novel is usually considered the first of Hardy's major novels and this is partly because the characters reveal added dimensions and depth when compared to the characters in the earlier novels. Bathsheba is the first Hardy heroine to try to stand on her own feet in a man-centred world. Even though Fancy and Elfride

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[7]Southerington, p. 53.

[8]Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist (New York, 1971), p. 76. Hereafter cited as Millgate.

had their own careers in a sense--Fancy as a teacher, Elfride as a writer--they were both dependent on their fathers for support. However, Bathsheba is forced to exist on her own, using her intelligence and wits. But this does not prevent her from also becoming entangled with three different men, and ultimately she becomes entirely dependent on one of them.

From the beginning, Bathsheba is also characterized by her vanity. Yet, just as Fancy or Elfride were not to be entirely condemned for this trait, Bathsheba is also not meant to be wholly censured; that is, as long as she does not toy with others simply to feed her vanity. Bathsheba eventually evolves into a more fully realized character than the earlier two heroines; she becomes something more than a "flirt". Yet it seems that while Bathsheba is cured of her vanity by the end of the novel, she is also robbed of her former vitality, energy and independence.

Initially, she is proud of her independence and wants to avoid any binding emotional ties. "Nobody has got me yet as a sweetheart, instead of my having a dozen, as my aunt said; I hate to be thought men's property in that way, though possibly I shall be had some day."[9] But already she seems resigned to the fact that she cannot remain her own woman, as the last part of her statement shows. And as she admits to Gabriel Oak, her first suitor, as a final discouragement: "It wouldn't do, Mr. Oak. I want somebody to tame me; I am

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[9]Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd (London, 1971), p. 38. Page references to this text will be given in brackets after all subsequent quotations.

too independent; and you would never be able to, I know." (p. 41) When Bathsheba has been "tamed" by the other men in her life, then she accepts Gabriel Oak.

Bathsheba's taming process is a hard fought battle. The battle begins with her taking over her uncle's farm and assuming the duties it entails wholly on her own, after being forced to dismiss the pilfering bailiff. But, despite her position in a man's world, she is not able to control her seemingly inherent female vanity. Piqued at the neglect of Farmer Boldwood, Bathsheba sets out to capture his attention. However, she has no idea how serious a game she is playing: it proves to have more serious consequences for her and others than did Fancy's or Elfride's behaviour. Again, Hardy seems convinced of "woman's ruling passion--to fascinate and influence those more powerful than she." (A Pair of Blue Eyes, p. 45) As Richard C. Carpenter points out: "Bathsheba wants at once to queen it over a man and to be dominated by him, a paradox which lies at the heart of Hardy's capricious heroines."[10] This paradox will occur again and again in Hardy's heroines. Rather than try to explain it though, Hardy merely recognizes its importance and attempts to examine its consequences.

Unfortunately for Boldwood, he is entirely too susceptible to Bathsheba's charms. Having contained himself for so long, he can no longer control the sudden unleashing of his passions.

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[10] Thomas Hardy, (New York, 1964), p. 90. Hereafter cited as Carpenter.

It is to Bathsheba's credit that she at first tries not to encourage him. Hardy recognizes her recklessness and her excessive vanity, but he also acknowledges that she refuses to exploit another man's emotions merely to satisfy herself. He suggests that she is flirtatious and vain almost despite herself:

> Bathsheba was no schemer for marriage, nor was she deliberately a trifler with the affections of men, and a censor's experience on seeing an actual flirt after observing her would have been a feeling of surprise that Bathsheba could be so different from such a one, and yet so like what a flirt is supposed to be. (p. 141)

Boldwood almost wins Bathsheba's hand, but he is supplanted by Sergeant Troy. As passionate as Boldwood is, he is never aggressive or clever enough in his courting. He is another man who would never be able to "tame" her; apparently he is too honest and not enough of a flatterer: "It was a fatal omission of Boldwood's that he had never once told her that she was beautiful." (p. 186) He too, like Knight, is guilty of idealizing the woman he loves to a point where he sees only his illusory conception and never the real woman. This not only makes him extremely vulnerable, it also frightens Bathsheba, as she knows she can never live up to his ideal.

The "taming" of Bathsheba seems to require a man such as Troy. He is ruthless but charming, arrogant but attractive, and has the advantages of being "an educated man" and "well born". (p. 214) Although his personality alone is winning, he is another man from the city whose background and urban

trappings hold fascination for a country woman such as Bathsheba. And for the first time in Hardy's novels, there is a strong suggestion of sexual attraction between man and woman. Previously the display of feelings described between lovers seemed quite innocent, following the lines of conventional courtship rather than suggesting sexual arousal. The imagery and description of the first meetings between Bathsheba and Troy indicate that sexual attraction is the basis of their relationship and of the power that Troy holds over Bathsheba.

Their first contact, described in the chapter, "The Fir Plantation" is physical, with Troy first establishing their sexual nature: "'Are you a woman?...I am a man.'" (p. 182) Then Troy is immediately associated with light, seeming to outshine everything: "The man to whom she was hooked was brilliant in brass and scarlet." (p. 182) This imagery of light symbolizes the power of Troy's personality, which is supported by his actions. He manages to entrap the folds of Bathsheba's dress so that she is helpless to escape, and then he begins to win her over by his flattery. From then on, Troy stands out visually in the novel, dressed in his scarlet clothes and disassociated from the rural background. It is this disassociation that is part of his allure: like Parson Maybold and Mr. Knight he brings an offer of excitement from outside the rural environment.

The scene in "The Hollow amid the Ferns" further empha-

sizes the sexual nature of Troy's and Bathsheba's relationship. The sexual symbolism of the chapter has been discussed by several Hardy critics.[11] This is another ritualistic or ceremonial scene, like the dance scene in Under the Greenwood Tree which serves to define the lovers' intentions. Troy manages to fascinate and subjugate Bathsheba through his sword handling skill, leaving her "powerless to withstand or deny him." (p. 210) He is the first man who has been able to dominate or master her. And in the same way that Elfride sacrificed her individuality and self-assertion to Knight, Bathsheba prostrates herself before Troy:

> Bathsheba loved Troy in the way that only self-reliant women love when they abandon their self-reliance. When a strong woman recklessly throws away her strength she is worse than a weak woman who has never had any strength to throw away. (p. 211)

Finally, when Bathsheba has been reduced, "taking no further interest in herself as a splendid woman" (p. 361), and the two most passionate suitors have been killed, she turns to Gabriel Oak. Throughout the novel Gabriel has been her best friend and protector, and she ultimately decides to come completely under his shield, as perhaps her only final alternative. It is evident that she is not the same woman that she was at the beginning: she no longer wants a wedding in order to show off, she dresses plainly and "she never laughed readily now." (p. 445) Certainly "the taming process" has been complete; it is more than just a matter of her

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[11] See Carpenter, pp. 89-90 and J. I. M. Stewart, Thomas Hardy (London, 1971), pp. 85-86. Hereafter cited as Stewart.

growing and maturing to realize that her proper place is with Gabriel. As in Under the Greenwood Tree, this novel ends with the heroine marrying the good, honest, solid country man; but in neither case is there a completely satisfactory marriage. Although Lawrence is somewhat too simple when he says: "Enter the good, steady Gabriel, who marries Bathsheba because he will make her a good husband, and the flower of imaginative first love is dead for her with Troy's scorn of her." (p. 170), Hardy does make it clear that the nature of their relationship is based on friendship rather than love. "They spoke very little of their mutual feelings; pretty phrases and warm expressions being probably unnecessary between such tried friends." (p. 439) Bathsheba no longer wants to manage on her own; it has proved too difficult. "She was bewildered too by the prospect of having to rely on her own resources again: it seemed to herself that she never could again acquire energy sufficient to go to market, barter, and sell." (p. 435) Therefore she turns to Gabriel and depends upon him. Even though Bathsheba may gain a comfortable, secure life with Gabriel, originally this was not what she was looking for. But she no longer wants the challenges of an independent, spontaneous life so she welcomes security.

From an examination of these three early heroines, a certain pattern emerges which helps to define the typical

Hardy heroine. In fact, it seems that, to a certain extent, Hardy has replaced an earlier Victorian stereotype with a new one--the giddy flirt. His early heroine is intelligent and well-read but she usually finds herself in rural situations where her learning is not particularly applicable, or at least she has difficulty sharing her accomplishments. She usually proves to be a disruptive element in the community because of her capriciousness. As early as 1881, Charles Kegan Paul could offer the following generalization about Hardy's women:

> They are all charming; they are all flirts from their cradle; they are all in love with more than one man at once; they seldom, if they marry at all, marry the right man; and while well conducted for the most part, are somewhat lacking in moral sense, and have only rudimentary souls.[12]

Although the validity of the latter part of his statement is questionable, Mr. Paul does sum up generally the essence of Hardy's new stereotype.

Hardy seems particularly concerned with the element of capriciousness in his women and how they are able to fall in love with more than one man. These three heroines--Fancy, Elfride and Bathsheba--are all offered three different suitors. There are the rural courters--Dick Dewey, Stephen Smith, Gabriel Oak--who are invariably good, solid characters but who seem to lack some innate qualities necessary to attract or captivate a woman. Then there are those men--Mr. Shiner, Lord Luxellian, Farmer Boldwood--who seem to make inroads only through their persistence in courting. And finally there is

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[12]Quoted by Millgate, pp. 320-321.

the cultivated man, usually from the city,--Parson Maybold, Knight, Troy--who poses sometimes irrestible temptation because of the excitement and escape he can offer. It is this allure which is fascinating to the women, more than these men's actual characters. However, in Far from the Madding Crowd, Hardy has introduced a new element into this third type of man--the element of sexual aggressiveness. It becomes increasingly apparent in Hardy's later novels that the sexually aggressive man consistently wins over the heroine, frequently frustrating the hopes of a more passive man. This seems to happen because these aggressive men unleash the women's underlying passions which would otherwise be held in check.

The women's underlying sexuality also seems to manifest itself in their displays of vanity and flirtatiousness. Hardy admits the women's desires to attract and thus their concern with their appearance. And to flirt with a man seems to be one of the only ways to gain power over him. These aspects of female nature are developed in Hardy's later novels and he continues to examine this aspect of the female predicament: sexuality is often seen as a woman's only source of power over a man.

CHAPTER THREE: THE WOODLANDERS

Although The Woodlanders (1887) was published thirteen years after Far from the Madding Crowd (1874), with several other novels intervening between the two, its style and vision are close to the earlier novels just discussed. After the publication of Far from the Madding Crowd, there is the indication in The Early Life of Thomas Hardy that Hardy planned to continue his novel writing with The Woodlanders:

> Criticism like this [on Far from the Madding Crowd] influenced him to put aside a woodland story he had thought of (which later took shape in The Woodlanders), and make a plunge in a new and untried direction.[1]

Many of the same themes are evident in The Woodlanders that we find in the earlier novels; Hardy seems to have returned to the "old direction". In The Woodlanders, there is a decidedly rural setting with the same evocation of a closely-knit community that predominates in Under the Greenwood Tree and Far from the Madding Crowd. Little threat is felt from the city; those characters like Mrs. Charmond and Fitzpiers, who embody the worst aspects of urban or cultivated life, are ultimately ostracized by the rural community. And as F. B. Pinion notes: "To some extent, as the title-page quotation indicates, the novel is a tragic counterpart to Under the Greenwood Tree."[2] The counterpart to Fancy, the cultured woman, is Grace Melbury; and she clearly makes the wrong choice

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[1]Florence Emily Hardy (London, 1928), p. 135. Hereafter cited as F. E. Hardy, The Early Life.

[2]A Hardy Companion (London, 1968), p. 43. Hereafter cited as Pinion.

of husband.

Many of the elements of character and situation found in the earlier heroines are given sharper definition in The Woodlanders. Although Grace Melbury is the central heroine, there are two other female characters who play important roles in the novel: Marty South and Felice Charmond. These latter two are diametrically opposite in character: Marty is definitely an unspoiled child of nature while Mrs. Charmond is the seductive, worldly woman. The antithesis between these two represents one aspect of the main theme of the novel and the main conflict within Grace: nature vs. civilization. This is the same conflict that Fancy, Elfride and Bathsheba experienced. Also, in the same way that these three women were attracted to diametrically opposite men: the rural man vs. the cultivated man, Grace is torn between the "unvarnished" Giles Winterbourne and the cultivated Dr. Fitzpiers. J. I. M. Stewart sees not only these similarities, but also another one that further relates this book to Hardy's earlier novels:

> It is even possible to view the book as a casting back to the modesty of nature exhibited in Under the Greenwood Tree; certainly it has even more of the greenwood to it, and it is again the story of a girl of simple background and some acquired sophistication poised indecisively between suitors of widely differing social pretension. But the two novels have a more radical affinity. They are both very little under the oppression of Hardy's normally nagging cosmic overtones.[3]

These "nagging cosmic overtones" figure more predominantly in the novels to be discussed later.

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[3]Stewart, pp. 128-129.

The Woodlanders is not one of Hardy's most successful novels and the fault seems to lie partly in his portrayal of Grace and in the way he ultimately resolves her dilemma. Hardy later seemed to recognize this shortcoming as he said that Grade:

> never interested him much; he was provoked with her all along. If she would have done a really self-abandoned, impassioned thing...he could have made a fine tragic ending to the book, but she was too commonplace and straight-laced and he could not make her.[4]

One reason that Grace may seem to be so uninteresting is that she is so rarely allowed to act on her own free will. Everyone around her--her father, Dr. Fitzpiers, Giles Winterbourne and Mrs. Charmond--seems to have more influence over her life than she exerts herself.

First of all, her father seems to be the person who chiefly shapes her destiny. He is responsible for sending her to the fashionable boarding school and promising her to Giles Winterbourne in order to make reparation for a past wrong to Winterbourne's father. It is his intention "to give her the best education he could afford, so as to make the gift as valuable a one as it lay in his power to bestow".[5] He seems to see Grace as an investment or a commodity to barter with as he begins to have doubts about the arrangement he has planned:

> 'But since I have educated her so well, and so far above the level of the daughters hereabout, it is wasting her to give her to a man of no higher standing than he.' (p. 21)

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[4]Stewart, p. 133.

[5]Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders (London, 1969), pp. 21-22. Page references to this text will be given in brackets after all subsequent quotations.

Giles is apparently not "good" enough, materially that is, for Melbury's daughter, in the same way that Dick was regarded as not suitable for Fancy nor Stephen wealthy enough for Elfride. The fathers of these heroines all try to decide what is best for their daughters without any regard for their daughters' actual wishes. Grace is the first one to succumb willingly to her father's direction.

Apparently schooling has had an even more detrimental effect on Grace than it had on either Fancy, Elfride or Bathsheba. Grace, at the beginning, is a snob, feeling herself superior to the rough and rural Giles Winterbourne:

> Cultivation had so far advanced in the soil of Miss Melbury's mind as to lead her to talk of anything save of that she knew well, and had the greatest interest in developing: herself. She had fallen from the good old Hintock ways. (p. 47)

Her alienation has gone so far that Grace can no longer fit into the community of Little Hintock. She can feel at ease in the artificial company of Mrs. Charmond but she is unable to enter into the spirit of Giles' Christmas party. Even the dance, the important country ritual described in Under the Greenwood Tree, is now beneath her: "Grace had been away from home so long, and was so drilled in new dances, that she had forgotten the old figures, and hence did not join in the movement." (p. 81) Kind-hearted as Mr. Melbury might have been in his intentions towards his daughter, wanting to raise her above the common, he does not realize that her roots in the community are really the most important element in her life.

It is this realization that both father and daughter eventually come to. However, it is only after Grace encounters the true superficiality of the cultivated way of life as embodied in Mrs. Charmond and Dr. Fitzpiers, that this realization comes about.

The initial attraction of Fitzpiers, like the attraction of Maybold, Knight and Troy, is his foreign nature and his aristocratic background. But besides these attractions, Grace seems to be sexually attracted to him and it is this power, like Troy's, that wins her. Again, a ritual situation symbolically establishes the nature of the relationship between Grace and Fitzpiers--the midsummer Eve run through the woods--and it also reveals why Winterbourne fails in his courting of Grace; he is not aggressive enough.

The scene is set up so that Fitzpiers supplants Giles's position in order to intercept Grace: "Fitzpiers had quickly stepped forward in front of Winterbourne, who disdaining to shift his position had turned on his heel." (p. 153) This is typical of both men: Fitzpiers, like Troy, is the aggressor; Winterbourne, like Gabriel Oak, passively steps down. The description of Grace's capture further emphasizes the nature of the Fitzpiers-Grace relationship:

> Stretching out his arms as the white figure burst upon him he captured her in a moment, as if she had been a bird.
> 'O!' cried Grace in her fright.
> 'You are in my arms, dearest, 'said Fitzpiers;' and I am going to claim you, and keep you there all our two lives!'

She rested on him like one utterly mastered; and it was several seconds before she recovered from this helplessness. (p. 153)

It is clear that Fitzpiers immediately assumes control over Grace and although it flusters and frightens her, "it had been enough; new relations between them had begun". (p. 154) From then on, he continues to disturb and influence Grace because of the feelings he arouses in her:

That Fitzpiers acted upon her like a dram, exciting her, throwing her into a novel atmosphere which biassed her doings until the influence was over, when she felt something of the nature of regret for the mood she had experienced--could not be told to this worthy couple in words. (p. 164)

Fitzpiers, himself, never seems to be fully aware of his power; he seems to accept women and their fascination with him as a natural course of events. And one woman is just as attractive as the next to him as his experiences with Suke Damson, then Grace and then Mrs. Charmond, illustrate. He even admits his fickleness to Winterbourne:

'Human love is a subjective thing...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 young lady had appeared instead of the one who did appear, I should have felt just the same interest in her....' (p. 122)

He is also guilty of the same shortcoming that many of the men in Hardy's novels are: he unfairly idealizes a woman to match his conception of her. Of course, the real woman inevitably disappoints him. In Chapter XVII Hardy details the imaginative process that men like Fitzpiers go through, ideally building up a woman to suit their dreams. The real woman is

dismissed from their thoughts: "and at length the rustle of a woman's dress, the sound of her voice, or the transit of her form across the field of his vision, will kindle his soul with a flame that blinds his eyes." (p. 129) In the next scene, Grace does appear to Fitzpiers as if in a dream and he is as much excited by his "vision" as by the actual presence of Grace.

Once the novelty of Grace's charm wears off, Fitzpiers succumbs to the fascination of Mrs. Charmond. As an artificial, vain woman, Mrs. Charmond represents one side of Grace's nature. Grace always felt that Mrs. Charmond was the one woman in the community who shared her interests, culture and learning. However, as Grace moves towards self-awareness, she begins to realize Mrs. Charmond's superficiality. Fitzpiers does not acquire the same insight for it seems that Mrs. Charmond is irresistible to most men. She especially appeals to Fitzpiers' theatrical nature as everything about her seems to be an act or facade. She buys Marty South's hair for a wig and this later proves to be her undoing with Fitzpiers. Every scene with Mrs. Charmond seems to be very carefully arranged by her to attain the maximum effect so that she will have a proper stage upon which to perform. In one of their first meetings "Fitzpiers was much surprised to find thatthe window curtains were closed and a red-shaded lamp and candles burning, though out of doors it was broad daylight." (p. 204) Mrs. Charmond plays up to the scene, lamenting the boredom of her life. But the effect

of the room is destroyed when natural light is allowed in and Fitzpiers "regretted that he had killed the rosy passionate lamplight by opening the curtains and letting in the garish day." (p. 206) Both Fitzpiers and Mrs. Charmond are bored with life since they cannot seem to find a central interest in their lives nor a community that they can call home. It is this ennui that leads them to each other; the passions that they share bring some excitement into their parched lives. Eventually they become so dominated by passion that they abandon rationality. Hardy reveals that Mrs. Charmond, at one point:

> had never so clearly perceived till now that her soul was being slowly invaded by a delirium which had brought about all this; that she was losing judgment and dignity under it, becoming an animated impulse only, a passion incarnate. (p. 241)

And Fitzpiers is no better; in deserting his wife and his profession he receives the severest censure from the community for his weakness.

Once Grace fully recognizes the true pretension of the cultivated life that Fitzpiers and Mrs. Charmond represent, she is able to return to her original nature. "The consciousness of having to be genteel because of her husband's profession, the veneer of artificiality which she had acquired at the fashionable schools, were thrown off, and she became the crude country girl of her latent early instincts." (p. 213) Once the "natural" side of Grace triumphs, she returns to Giles, as she is now able to see his true worth and goodness. But she is

not to be as fortunate as Bathsheba; her husband is not conveniently shot so that she is free to marry. The social machinery will not operate either to free her from a selfish, inconsiderate husband; the divorce laws are still too inflexible.

As Grace's character is stripped to its essentials, she comes closer in character to Marty South--Mrs. Charmond's complete opposite. Her father notes this tendency with some despair:

"She told me only this day that she hates refinements and such like, All that my trouble and money bought for her in that way is thrown away upon her quite. She'd fain be like Marty South--think o' that! That's the top of her ambition! Perhaps she's right." (p. 235)

Throughout the novel Marty, like Giles, has been a figure of endurance and industry. Although she also loves Giles, she never speaks of her feelings and as a result she is unfulfilled in love. At the beginning of the novel, she cuts off her hair after hearing of Giles' love for Grace and thus, symbolically, denies her sexuality. Her hair had been her one claim to beauty and by cutting it off, she indicates that she no longer desires to attract. She further denies her femininity by constantly doing men's work. However, Grace recognizes after Giles' death that:

Marty South alone, of all the women in Hintock and the world, had approximated to Winterbourne'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. (p. 340)

Grace could never come as close to Giles as Marty had done

because she retained too much of her cultured influence. This becomes apparent when she runs to Giles for shelter from her husband and he is forced to sleep outside while she remains alone in his hut. Even when alone in nature, she adheres to her sense of propriety and Giles's prolonged exposure to the elements kills him. Grace does ~~not~~ admit "how selfishly correct I am always--too, too correct". (p. 322), but it is too late for Giles, when she does relent.

The ending of the novel strains credibility considerably. It is hard to accept the return of Grace to her husband and Hardy himself was fully aware of this flaw:

> You have probably observed 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. [6]

Even though Fitzpiers seems to have reformed, Hardy implies (in the words of Mr. Melbury) that the change is not permanent:

> 'But let her bear in mind that the woman walks and laughs somewhere at this very moment whose neck he'll be coling next year as he does hers to-night; and as he did Felice Charmond's last year; and Suke Damson's the year afore!' (p. 376)

It is significant that what re-unites Grace and Fitzpiers is a man-trap, which is set out to injure him but instead almost captures her. Thus the marriage "trap", which should work to subdue Fitzpiers, will instead probably, again, only injure Grace.

In the end, Marty South is left alone with Giles. She is a sexless figure, "almost like a being who had rejected

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[6] F. E. Hardy, The Early Life, p. 289.

with indifference the attribute of sex for the loftier quality of abstract humanism." (p. 379) As a figure of endurance and resignation who remains loyal to Giles after his death, she emerges as the only surviving noble individual in the novel. Grace has again sacrificed her "natural" side by returning to her husband and his society and abandoning Giles. Only the woman of nature, Marty, wins what she wants at the end.

Although many of the elements in The Woodlanders are the same as those in the earlier novels, Hardy's portrayal of Grace and her predicament represents a considerable advance. The earlier heroines were all well educated and intelligent but this did not prevent them from integrating themselves with a closely-knit community. However, Grace's educational background brings about her deracination and she can never achieve full integration into the community. Also, for the first time, we see the social laws--in this case the divorce laws--working in direct opposition to the heroine. Bathsheba also made a mistake in her first marriage but fate operated to free her. In Grace's case, fate does not come to her rescue nor do the social laws; she must remain tied to her husband.

With the early heroines, there was also an examination of female sexuality which is developed further in The Woodlanders. This time Grace is completely trapped because she falls for a sexually aggressive man. She admits that, had Giles been more aggressive, he would have won her: "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." (p. 301) Like Bathsheba, she can hold power over a more passive man but the sexually aggressive man holds the ultimate power over her. Such a man seems to release the passions within her that are beyond her control. Grace needed to retain more of the Marty South within her and less of the Mrs. Charmond. This is the first time that the split which Hardy sees in female nature has been so clearly represented. This sense of inner division becomes even more important in the later novels.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

In creating the character of Eustacia Vye in The Return of the Native (1878), Hardy draws a woman equal in power and force to a character like Catherine Earnshaw in Wuthering Heights. Both are rebels against convention and society, both are dominated by their passions and both seem to share an urge towards self-destruction. Both are the type of individual that society can never accept or understand because of their fervid determination to fulfill their desires. Because of Eustacia's power as a character her "heroic, if not divine, stature has been commented upon by every critic who has ever written about The Return of the Native."[1] Certainly Eustacia is the most captivating figure in the novel and she is Hardy's first direct exploration of an openly passionate woman.

Eustacia is not the only woman in the novel but she is certainly the most compelling. Her counterpart is Thomasin Yeobright who, as Hardy told his illustrator in 1878 is "the good heroine, and she ultimately marries the reddleman, and lives happily."[2] Thomasin's character is never as interesting as Eustacia's because she is so consistently good, gentle and virtuous. She never diverges from these qualities. On the other hand, "Eustacia is the wayward and erring heroine--she marries Yeobright, the son of Mrs. Yeobright, is unhappy,

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[1]Weber, p. 103.

[2]Millgate, p. 140.

and dies."[3] In these two opposing characters, a duality of natures is set up, similar to that discussed in The Woodlanders between Mrs. Charmond and Marty South. Where Bathsheba, Fancy, Elfride and even Grace revealed a similar duality within themselves, in this novel a split between two women is dramatized: Eustacia embodies the passionate, vain and flirtatious female nature, whereas Thomasin consists of those virtuous, complacent qualities typical of so many earlier Victorian heroines.

Another way in which this conflict can be expressed is in terms of the forces of Paganism vs. those of Christianity as they operate within these women. Many of Hardy's descriptive passages evoke either explicit pagan or Christian images and the novel can be viewed as a "defeat of the pagan and the triumph of the Christian."[4] Paganism, for Hardy, seems to imply a lust for life and an expression of feeling that Christian convention does not allow. Hardy says himself of the maypole rite in the novel:

> Indeed, the impulses of all such outlandish hamlets are pagan still: in these spots homage to nature, self-adoration, frantic gaieties, fragments of Teutonic rites to divinities whose names are forgotten, seem in some way or other to have survived mediaeval doctrine.[5]

Elsewhere, in describing a dance, Hardy says: "For the time Paganism was revived in their hearts, the pride of life was all in all, and they adored none other than themselves." (p. 266) Certainly, the term pagan as used here, could be applied to Eustacia. She wants to live her life to the full and she is

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[3]Millgate, p. 140.

[4]Millgate, p. 135.

[5]Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (London, 1971), p. 390. Page references to this text will be given in brackets after all subsequent quotations.

not willing to accept any of the restraints that Christian convention inevitably imposes. Often compared to a Greek goddess, Eustacia obviously wins Hardy's admiration because she is so bravely passionate and unconventional.

Most of Hardy's heroines, or at least those he admires, are fundamentally discontented with their lots in life. Fancy, Elfride, Bathsheba and Grace all express dissatisfaction with their immediate environment and they are never sure of their feelings towards the men in their lives. They are all searching for some kind of fulfillment and gratification that is not immediately accessible and thus they frequently seem to clutch at straws or unrealistic hopes. Any man like Parson Maybold, Troy, Knight or Fitzpiers who seems to be able to offer an escape becomes immediately attractive to them. Throughout his novels, Hardy seems to acknowledge implicitly that the women in his society do lack proper outlets for their desires, ambitions, feelings and passions. Eustacia provides the best example of a woman destined for deeper, intenser feelings but confined to the desolation of Egdon Heath. Her closest predecessor is Bathsheba who attempts to rebel against her position but eventually gives in to the strictures of her society.

In Eustacia, Hardy presents his supreme example of the capricious woman. He never condemns her; instead he traces the emotional, mental and social processes that contribute to her behaviour. Unlike Mrs. Charmond, who indulges in passion

and love affairs merely for passion's sake, Eustacia's passions are a vital part of her nature which must be satisfied. Unfortunately, neither of the men in her life is fully equal to her.

Like Fancy, Elfride, Bathsheba and Grace, Eustacia has a choice between two men who are again diametrically opposite: the amorous and impetuous Damon Wildeve and the idealistic and learned Clym Yeobright. Damon Wildeve is a paler version of Troy; he is never able to assume the same power that Troy possesses and he is constantly at the beck and call of Eustacia. Clym's attraction for Eustacia lies in his culture and learning acquired in the romantic centres of Europe. Yet Clym wants to become another Gabriel Oak or Giles Winterbourne--tied to the land and in harmony with the natural environment. But he never realizes that he cannot deny or ignore his urban experience which tends to have a corrupting influence on the kind of life he wants to lead. Clym's fervent idealism and his inability to see things pragmatically or realistically anticipate the disastrous characteristics that Hardy reveals in Angel Clare in Tess of the d'Ubervilles. What needs to be discussed in considering The Return of the Native, however, is to what extent Wildeve and Clym fail Eustacia and to what extent she fails them.

As indicated earlier, Hardy has a great deal of admiration for Eustacia but this does not prevent him from seeing her shortcomings. Hardy begins by contrasting the relationships

between Thomasin and Wildeve and Eustacia and Wildeve. Thomasin, because of the conventions of society, is at the mercy of Wildeve. Her situation has been so compromised that she must marry him or suffer the indignity of a questionable reputation. But Thomasin also realizes the indignity of her present state: "Here am I asking you to marry me; when by rights you ought to be on your knees imploring me, your cruel mistress, not to refuse you, and saying it would break your heart if I did." (p. 51) With Eustacia, the situation is reversed to a certain extent: she is more the "cruel" mistress and Wildeve is partially under her control. Like Bathsheba, Eustacia, as Carpenter puts it, "wants at once to queen it over a man and to be dominated by him"[6], but it seems that Wildeve is unable to dominate her.

In the chapter "Queen of the Night", Hardy undertakes a lengthy description of Eustacia which establishes her as a seemingly typical romantic heroine. The embellishment of the chapter is so excessive that critical opinion generally dismisses it as overblown and unnecessary.[7] However, since Hardy goes into such detail and length, the chapter is surely important in establishing the character of Eustacia and on these grounds, it should not be hastily dismissed. In certain

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[6]Carpenter, p. 90

[7]Millgate: "From the "Queen of the Night" chapter as a whole emerges not a portrait of Eustacia but a confused impression which subsequent dramatisation does not sufficiently resolve." (p. 134).
Carpenter: "Where these clash, as in the portentous "Queen of the Night" section, the novel is the loser." (p. 102)
Stewart, p. 103.

places, where the prose seems overblown, it is possible that Hardy is being ironic. For example:

> She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman. (p. 73)

> The mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss. Some might have added, less to kiss than to curl. (p. 74)

> She had Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries, and their light, as it came and went, and came again, was partially hampered by their oppressive lids and lashes; and of these the under lid was much fuller than it usually is with English women. (p. 74)

Hardy continually seems to undermine the ideal, romantic image of Eustacia, thus reducing her romantic aura. And he emphasizes that, whatever her beauty and power might be, it is wasted on Egdon Heath. There is an obvious discrepancy between this romantic conception of her, which she herself seems to share, and her actual situation on a barren heath where exoticism is entirely lost. She has an imagination that stretches beyond the heath and Hardy stresses the isolation and desolation of her position. Yet, perhaps the most important aspect of Eustacia which the chapter establishes is the following:

> 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. (p. 77)

By most Victorian definitions, Eustacia would be hereby classed as a wanton, immoral woman, as indeed she is by Mrs. Yeobright and the townspeople who view her as a witch. But Hardy is able to go beyond these limited moral judgements of

Eustacia and see her real motivations and intentions. He does not necessarily approve of her actions but he does try to understand them. Eustacia, with her search for impassioned love, anticipates many of the heroines of D. H. Lawrence like Ursula, Connie or Lou Witt who also seek fulfillment beyond the kind of love conventionally allowed by society. And as artificial as her romantic pose may at first seem to be, Eustacia is eventually able to proclaim it with sincerity:

'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.' (p. 289)

In her relationship with Wildeve, Eustacia plays with his heart purely for her own gratification. She has the appearance of a goddess but the whims of a selfish woman. Perversely, when Wildeve becomes more inaccessible, he becomes more attractive to her:

The man who had begun by being merely her amusement, and would never have been more than her hobby but for his skill in deserting her at the right moments, was now again her desire. Cessation in his lovemaking had revivified her love. (p. 103)

And she probably would have won him away from Thomasin had Clym Yeobright not appeared. On the surface and from village rumours, Clym seems to be the kind of man she seeks.

But, from the beginning, the Eustacia-Clym relationship is doomed, although the villagers see them as a perfect match: "Both of them one mind about niceties for certain, and learned in print, and always thinking about high doctrine--there

couldn't be a better couple if they were made o' purpose." (p. 115) However, it is clear that their relationship is built on illusion and not on understanding. Eustacia is "half in love with a vision" (p. 126) of Clym before she even meets him. Because he has come from Paris, she feels he can offer her all the excitements of the city she has so long dreamed about. It is significant that once again, the lovers meet in a communal ritual. These rituals are usually pagan in origin and the interactions of the lovers within them symbolize their deeper intentions and the nature of their relationships. Thus, the vying for a partner in a dance signifies the deeper intention of vying for a partner in life. Also, in a ritual situation, the lovers are usually able to release their deeper, hidden emotions as they become caught up in the intensity of the moment. In this case, Eustacia dresses up as a mummer in hopes of meeting Clym. It is a moon-lit night, Eustacia is disguised, and Clym is allowed to imagine what sort of woman is beneath the costume of the Turkish Knight. At the same time, Eustacia resolves to love Clym "believing that she must love him in spite of herself." (p. 149)

When they actually do talk to each other in the open, the opposition in their natures is evident to the reader, but unfortunately, hidden to them. For Eustacia, "the heath is a cruel taskmaster" (p. 193), but to Clym "it is most exhilarating, and strengthening, and soothing." (p. 193) Eustacia hates

both people and nature; Clym idealizes them both. Yet after the meeting, both are determined to adapt each other to their respective schemes: Clym is resolved to make a teacher out of Eustacia; she wants to convince him to return to Paris. What keeps them together is not their understanding of each other but the physical passion they share. They decide to get married in a moment of passion (p. 214) and once married, they are happy as long as they exclude themselves from the realities of the world. "They were enclosed in a sort of luminous mist, which hid from them surroundings of any unharmonious colour, and gave to all things the character of light." (p. 245) The marriage begins to break down once they try to impose their wills on each other. They are both visionaries but their dreams are completely divergent, although equally unrealistic. Eustacia's hope of gay Parisian life is as unlikely as Clym's hope of teaching the heath people. Because neither of them will bend in their wishes, they grow farther and farther apart. Clym becomes almost blind, which symbolizes his limited understanding of his wife, mother and the people on the heath. Although his ambitions are noble and more worthwhile than those of Eustacia, he does not realize that, in bringing himself down in life, he is also dragging down his wife. He does tell her that he does not intend to return to Paris but she also makes it clear that the heath life is not for her. He should realize that a spirit like hers would not be content to reduce her life to bare essentials. Because of the nature of the

marriage commitment, the wife is forced to adapt to her husband's way of life. Clym should have realized this before committing Eustacia to a life that she would find a drudgery.

One influence on his life that Clym never adequately acknowledges is the influence of his mother. She is a sceptical realist but she cannot dissuade her son from his disastrous course. Even though she misjudges Eustacia's character, considering her only "a hussy" (p. 201), she does see that they will only be unhappy together. Mrs. Yeobright perceives that her son's idealism is excessive and she predicts: "Your fancies will be your ruin, Clym." (p. 182) What Clym does not realize is how much he is attached to her. Therefore, when he discovers how Eustacia accidentally turned away his mother, he overreacts. He expels Eustacia without granting her any benefit of the doubt.

However, he had, in a sense, expelled Eustacia long before by not allowing her to fulfill herself. She rediscovers what she seeks in life at yet another pagan ritual: the village festival. This time Wildeve is there and the excitement and movement of the dance reawaken the past feelings they had shared. Wildeve seeks pleasure and excitement and is able to respond to that element in Eustacia. She is tempted, after her final expulsion, to run off with Wildeve but she never goes through with this. Whether Eustacia commits suicide or not remains ambiguous, but judging from her last speech, it

seems that death would not be unwelcome to her:

'How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me!... I do not deserve my lot!' she cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt. '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!' (p. 361)

In the character of Eustacia, Hardy has drawn the supreme female rebel, but does not allow her to win her battle. He realizes that society would also never allow her to triumph. She is openly passionate and therefore viewed suspiciously. Women like Susan Nonsuch consider her a witch and victimize her in public by sticking needles in her arm. Even more than Grace, Eustacia is restricted by social conventions. She wants to escape the heath but the only way she can is with a man; a woman cannot strike out on her own, as Bathsheba's case showed. Hardy makes it more and more apparent that women are fundamentally alienated in a conventionally repressive society unless they conform to their expected marital and social roles. In the case of Eustacia, her passions are too strong to be confined to the desolation of the heath and she is not permitted to discover an outlet for them. She refuses to be "tamed" as Bathsheba had been, so death is her only recourse. Hardy has moved a long way from Under the Greenwood Tree where the community was a benevolent force and Fancy's choice to join it proved the correct one. If Eustacia had similarly attempted to adapt herself to the heath community, it would involve a death worse than the one she chose, for it would be a death of the spirit.

CHAPTER FIVE: TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891) contains Hardy's most important insight into the place of woman in the society of his times. Continuing the tradition of Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth (1853), Tess provides a new treatment of the sufferings of the fallen woman. Fictional convention had generally established little hope for the woman led astray by clever seducers; once fallen, she could not look forward to any kind of "rally" or any further romantic experience. However, Hardy changed this and provided a re-evaluation of purity by emphasizing Tess's purity as well as revealing the harsh and limited judgements of society upon her. His radical subtitle "A Pure Woman", "Faithfully Presented", indicates his intention to assert her virtue and innocence.

If we recall the critical comment quoted previously in the introductory chapter about Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth, we can see how much Hardy has progressed in the portrayal of the fallen woman. Part of the criticism of Ruth was that: "If she [Mrs. Gaskell] designed to awaken the world's compassion for the ordinary class of betrayed and deserted Magdalenes, the consequences of Ruth's error should not have been made so innocent, nor should Ruth herself have been painted so perfect."[1] In Tess, the heroine's "error" or seduction is certainly not

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[1] W. R. Greg, as quoted in intro. to Ruth, p. xvii.

presented as the result of total innocence, nor is Tess the ideal, perfect woman that Ruth was. However, Hardy strongly stresses the fact that Tess is made to pay for her "sin" too extensively and that society's judgements on an individual are far too rigid, unbending and intolerant. And this is particularly true of the judgements upon a woman who is wronged by men both physically and spiritually.

The criterion used by Hardy to judge Tess's purity throughout the novel is not the criterion of society but that of nature. Hardy realizes that society's standards are too harsh and that by nature's standards Tess has done little wrong. In many ways, Tess is a composite of the best in Hardy's heroines as Richard C. Carpenter points out:

> Tess is outstanding among Hardy's heroines because she is the only good woman who has the role of a protagonist. She has none of the caprice and egotism of a Eustacia or a Sue Bridehead; she is instead the ideal ingenue--Tamsin Yeobright, Marty South--brought centerstage. Unlike these others, however, she is more vitally alive; specifically, she is more female, more sexual, more passionate....Beautiful with a full-bodied femininity, staunch in character, passionate in emotion, Tess is Hardy's vision of an ideal woman.[2]

To say, however, that Tess is Hardy's "ideal" is unfair, both to his other heroines whom he also admires and to his portrayal of Tess. For Hardy never seems to want to draw an ideal woman; as suggested previously, Hardy is as much or more concerned with the imperfections which make his female characters human and therefore interesting. What seems to be Tess's chief imperfection or flaw is her passivity. In this respect, she

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[2]Carpenter, p. 129.

is the opposite to Eustacia. Where Eustacia attempted to assume an active role in controlling her life, Tess is acted upon, willing in many instances to accept a passive position. Yet her passivity makes her downfall more terrible; had she attempted, like Eustacia, selfishly to assert her will, the fact that society reacts against her would be more understandable. But Tess is almost self-less; like the animals in nature that she is frequently associated with, she is too often the victim and undeservedly so. And she is especially vulnerable to victimisation because she is a woman with few defenses. She has not been sufficiently prepared for the problems she has to face.

Tess is constantly driven to the limits of her endurance by external forces. Nevertheless, her lack of resistance to these forces allows her to be pushed too far. She is very like Elfride Swancourt; at crucial moments, her indecision and acquiescence to expediency proves to be fatal. Hardy seems to suggest that Tess acquires her passive tendency from her parents when he describes her as: "an almost standard woman, but for the slight incautiousness of character inherited from her race."[3] Certainly her parents' submission to the machinations of fate is extreme as they drift from one catastrophe into another. Tess does attempt to be more assertive but her actions often prove to be in vain.

Tess's downfall begins when she encounters Alec d'Uberville

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[3]Thomas Hardy, Tess of the d'Ubervilles (London, 1971), p. 110. Page references to this text will be given in brackets following all subsequent quotations.

and here her submissive nature affords her little protection or defense. Indecision constantly hampers her from taking a firm stand against him; she knows she should resist his advances but she also knows she cannot afford to offend him, for her family's sake. Alec is the type of man like Troy or Fitzpiers who seems to have magnetic sexual attraction for women. Certainly Tess is not immune to his charms and her attraction to him is not surprising. Hardy knows how susceptible women are to flattery such as his; one of the chief preoccupations of Fancy, Elfride, Bathsheba and Eustacia is with their physical attractiveness and those men who express their open admiration and flattery are the most sexually successful with them. Tess's feeling for Alec is "a half-pleased, half-reluctant state." (p. 52) Yet she later admits that she felt a definite though brief attraction towards him: "My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all." (p. 94) She is as much dazed by his charms as by his social position as an aristocrat. But Tess never consciously entices him; she is largely ignorant of her own charms and the consequences of insufficient guardedness. She is also too innocent, gentle and naïve to be able to repel Alec absolutely; that is, until she is pushed too far. Then her innate sense of self-protection causes her to react or rebel. This is first revealed when Alec kisses Tess against her will, giving "her the kiss of mastery" (p. 67) and Tess instinctively wipes the kiss off, temporarily nullifying its effect. She is capable of striking out but only when her

sense of personal dignity is affronted. Her final act of rebellion is foreshadowed in the following scene:

'I didn't understand your meaning till it was too late.'
'That's what every woman says.'
'How can you dare to use such words!' she cried, turning impetuously upon him, her eyes flashing as the latent spirit (of which he was to see more some day) awoke in her. 'My God! I could knock you out of the gig! Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says some women may feel.' (p. 94)

Unfortunately, that thought never does occur to Alec. He persists in his pursuit of Tess, not content with her rejections as sufficient answers to his suit. He finally overcomes her when she is most vulnerable; she has placed her trust in him and fallen asleep, unable to offer any resistance. His rape of Tess shows how little respect he has for women; women like Car Darch are readily accessible to him but he indiscriminately assumes that Tess is just as willing to succumb to his charms. He cannot see her as the innocent girl she really is, partly because "it was a luxuriance of aspect, a fulness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was." (p. 52)

Throughout the novel, Alec is portrayed as a diabolical figure or a melodramatic villain, sometimes excessively so, especially when he insists on addressing Tess as "My Beauty". Yet, in this way, he assumes an almost symbolic role and he seems to be the culmination of one type of male figure in Hardy's fiction: the Troy-Fitzpiers-Wildeve kind of man. Sexually aggressive, yet cultured, he expresses the extreme

kind of corrupting influence that city bred culture has upon the rural environment. This is implied even in his surname, d'Urberville--of the city--which is opposed to Tess's surname--Durbeyfield--of the fields. Alec is motivated by his bodily lusts, seeking gratification for his senses and desires without thought or conscience. He is the type of man who attempts to gain complete mastery over a woman: that is, complete physical mastery as Tess realizes: "See how you've mastered me!" (p. 95) And one of Alec's final threats to Tess is: "Remember, my lady, I was your master once! I will ~~never~~ be your master again. If you are any man's wife you are mine!" (p. 373) Because of his wealth, he is able to buy Tess, knowing that she will do almost anything to help her family. She goes to d'Urberville initially in order to help her family financially when Prince is killed and again after her father's death. Alec takes unfair advantage of her helpless situations and completely overpowers her freedom to act. Tess is the first woman in Hardy's novels to be so relentlessly hounded by a man. But although Alec is able to master her physically, he is never able to master her spirit. By the end of the novel, as Angel recognizes, Tess completely divorces her body from her spirit: "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 disassociated from its living will." (p. 425) Once Tess realizes that Alec is attempting

to violate her spiritually, by keeping her from the man she loves, she rebels against him absolutely. Tess has limitless patience as far as physical suffering goes, but when her freedom of spirit is denied her, she reacts. This is why she murders Alec; he has won her body, she will not allow him to win her heart and spirit from Angel.

It is significant that Angel Clare wins Tess spiritually while Alec d'Uberville only wins her physically. It seems that an integration of body and soul, which Tess seeks to realize, cannot be achieved or cannot survive in a society such as the one Tess is compelled to live in. Men seem to want either a woman's body or a woman's heart--never both. Thus, a woman such as Tess is forced to split the two elements of her nature. Hardy himself, in his defense of her, also seems to finally split Tess into body and spirit. But he does not do this to divide her nature; rather he does it in order to support his thesis that a woman violated in body can still be pure in spirit. Unfortunately, for Tess though, she is violated both physically and spiritually by two different men and as a result she cannot survive. She must finally escape her earthly oppression through death. What remains to be examined is how Tess' spiritual exploitation by Angel Clare contributes to her death.

Angel Clare has his predecessors in Hardy's novels in men like Knight and Clym Yeobright: the idealistic intellectuals

who seem to be out of touch with reality. Angel, and what he does to Tess, represent the danger to a woman of an idealistic man who cannot see things as they are. Like Knight and Clym, Angel builds up an ideal image of the woman he loves that is shattered when certain facts about her are revealed. He constantly thinks in terms of abstract generalities rather than in terms of a real person: "he was ever in the habit of neglecting the particulars of an outward scene for the general impression." (p. 141) Idealism, in the mind of someone like Angel Clare, can be a terrible force, almost a perversion, since it denies vital elements in human nature. What Angel denies is the physical nature of both himself and Tess and he is unable to accept Tess as a woman who has sexual feelings. Angel, in his eventual condemnation of Tess, expresses many of the attitudes of his society, which supposedly he had rejected. He had disclaimed the rigid dogmatism of his father and the religious snobbery of his brothers in his attempts to disregard traditional social conventions, yet finally he proves to be firmly bound to them. When he first contemplates marriage with Tess, he returns home to seek approval. After the separation from her, he again returns home to decide his future course. In his convictions he is as blind as those he disdains.

Angel first sees Tess as the epitome of purity and femininity and he never alters his original impression of her: "What a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature that

milkmaid is!" (p. 142) Tess is indeed a daughter of Nature but not in Angel's terms. In the fertile and abundant surroundings of the dairy, she seems to merge perfectly with nature because of her freshness and vitality. But Angel raises her to an entirely unrealistic level so that: "She 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 half teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them." (p. 153)

Much of the imagery depicting their early relationship is connected with Adam and Eve in Paradise. Hardy emphasizes Tess' sensuous nature in the following passage:

> 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. (p. 195)

In the paradisal situation of the dairy, Angel begins to be able to respond to this element in Tess. But once the serpent enters in the form of Tess's confession about her past with Alec d'Uberville, the relationship is destroyed. Like Knight, Angel is unable to accept the knowledge of another man in his lover's life, an extreme sexual fastidiousness or jealousy on his part. What is especially repugnant is the way in which this double standard operates. Angel confesses that in the past, he had indulged in a brief, frivolous, sexual encounter

and expects Tess to forgive him for this. However, he refuses to accept Tess after her confession, even though she had not willingly or consciously participated in the sexual act. He condemns her, only because his image of her has changed and says that "the woman I have been loving is not you." (p. 260) He saw in Tess only what he wanted to see; when he is forced to realize that there is something more, he dismisses her. Once he rejects her mentally, he also rejects her physically as "his affection itself was less fire than radiance, and, with regard to the other sex, when he ceased to believe he ceased to follow: contrasting in this with many impressionable natures, who remain sensuously infatuated with what they intellectually despise." (p. 273) Then, after he has deserted her, he becomes even more hypocritical in asking Izz Huett to come with him to Brazil, his rationalization being, "I have been badly used enough to wish for relief." (p. 305) It never occurs to him how badly used Tess has been.

Where Alec masters Tess sexually, Angel masters her intellectually so that her thinking and ideas are merged with his. Like Clym with Eustacia, Angel wants to teach Tess his ideology and philosophy of life and he has a far more receptive pupil in Tess than Clym ever had in Eustacia. In fact, "his influence over her had been so marked that she had caught his manner and habits, his speech and phrases, his likings and his aversions." (p. 233) Again, Tess too readily sacrifices herself

to an unworthy man. She too is guilty of misconception; she regards Angel as a super-human figure incapable of folly or cruelty. "At first Tess seemed to regard Angel Clare as an intelligence rather than as a man." (p. 148) As she begins to love him he does not become any less ideal to her. "She loved him passionately, and he was so god-like in her eyes." (p. 209) It is this blind love of Angel that allows Tess to submit to the agonizing life at Flintcomb-Ash, stubbornly defending him against any suggestion of imperfection "with a triumphant simplicity of faith in Angel Clare that the most perfect man could hardly have deserved, much less her husband." (p. 361) Even Alec recognizes the extent to which Tess has been mastered intellectually by Angel:

> 'The fact is,' said d'Urberville drily, 'whatever your dear husband believed you accept, and whatever he rejected you reject, without the least inquiry or reasoning on your own part. That's just like you women. Your mind is enslaved to his.' (p. 361)

So, by the end of the novel Tess is totally divided: her body is enslaved to Alec, her mind to Angel. Even though she does share some happy, blissful moments with Angel after the murder of Alec, they cannot last. Again the two lovers retreat to a paradise situation, isolated from the real world so that "all is trouble outside there, inside here content." (p. 437) Tess still idolizes Angel: "he was still her Antinous, her Apollo even". (p. 432) This time though, Tess realizes that the real world will inevitably intrude and that "this happiness

could not have lasted." (p. 444) It means that Hardy wants the reader to realize that Tess could never gain a happy life, in this world at least. As he pointed out after the publication of the novel:

> You ask why Tess should not have gone off with Clare and 'lived happily ever after'. Do you not see that under any circumstances they were doomed to unhappiness? A sensitive man like Angel Clare could never have been happy with her. After the first few months he would inevitably have thrown her failings in her face.[4]

With the death of Tess, the division of her body and soul is indeed complete. Hardy seems to want to imply that, although her body is sacrificed, her soul will survive in her younger sister, 'Liza-Lu. Tess says of her, in bequeathing her to Angel: "She has all the best of me without the bad of me; and if she were to become yours it would almost seem as if death had not divided us." (p. 442) Thus Tess's purity may live on even after society destroys her body.

In his portrayal of Tess, Hardy has developed a woman with an "appetite for joy" (p. 218) and a need for full, unselfish love. However, she is doomed to suffer because of one physical act that society condemns without lenience or tolerance. Besides, she is never allowed fulfillment or completeness because the men in her life want only a part of her. The depiction of her downfall constitutes a severe reproach both to Victorian social conventions generally and to particular attitudes that men have towards women.

In Eustacia, Hardy drew a female rebel who is ultimately subdued by her society. In Tess, he draws a completely different woman; although she is still capable of passionate feeling equal to that of Eustacia, she is a passive individual who

[4]Southerington, p. 132.

never attempts to assert her will nor make demands. Eustacia knew the full power of her charms; Tess is ignorant of hers. She is kind and well-meaning but these qualities do not help her in a seemingly hostile society. Fancy, Elfride and Bathsheba all lived in relatively benevolent communities in which they became fairly well integrated and accepted. However, Tess is ostracized and victimized for a"fault" for which she was not even responsible. Fancy, Elfride, Bathsheba and Eustacia were all able to employ their sexuality to a certain extent to gain some power over their lovers. However, with Tess, her sexuality is used against her and is exploited. This time the split we have seen represented by Marty South and Mrs. Charmond--the spirit vs. the body--is imposed upon Tess by her lovers. This division of her nature ultimately destroys her. Hardy continues to examine the destructiveness of this dichotomy in his final novel Jude the Obscure.

CHAPTER SIX: JUDE THE OBSCURE

Jude the Obscure (1895), Hardy's last novel, can be seen as his final presentation of many of the problems and issues raised in his earlier works. In his Preface to the first edition of Jude, Hardy says that it is:

> A novel addressed by a man to men and women of full age; which attempts to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity; to tell, without a mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit; and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims.[1]

Certainly the earlier novels were also concerned with the "deadly war waged between flesh and spirit" and "the tragedy of unfulfilled aims". Added to these two central concerns is the issue of the social laws which are at war with the individual; this conflict comes to the fore in Jude in Hardy's presentation of the marriage laws. In his Postcript to the novel, Hardy says of marriage:

> My opinion at that time, if I remember rightly, was what it is now, that a marriage should be dissolvable as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the parties--being then essentially and morally no marriage--and it seemed a good foundation for the fable of a tragedy. (p. vii)

Jude is Hardy's severest condemnation of the institution of marriage although earlier novels such as The Woodlanders, The Return of the Native and Tess of the d'Urbervilles also illustrate the frequently unsatisfactory nature of the marriage contract. Hardy recognizes that human relationships are not

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[1] Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (London, 1957), p.v. Page references to this text will be given in brackets after all subsequent quotations.

always permanent yet the marriage contract enforces permanency.

The heroine of the novel is Sue Bridehead and her portrayal provides a central focus for Hardy's presentation of these problems. Hardy says of her that: "Sue 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 till now."[2] Although Hardy says that he has never drawn a character like Sue before, certainly some elements of her nature are perceptible in his earlier heroines. As Michael Millgate observes: "The character of Sue, at first sight one of the most innovatory aspects of the book, is in some respects only a more extreme, much franker treatment of a type Hardy had portrayed many times before."[3] Sue is as capricious as Fancy, Elfride, Bathsheba or Eustacia and just as charming; she is just as indecisive and is equally stubborn in defending her decisions once they are made. And Sue seems to be strongest in two elements that the other heroines also possessed but were never allowed to develop fully: intelligence and learning. In Jude, Sue is at least the intellectual equal, if not the superior, of the men in the novel. For the first time, Hardy has portrayed a woman able to stand on her own intellectually, who does not have to look up to her men for guidance. In a sense, she is the portrayal of a new "breed" of woman as Hardy seems to have realized. In 1912 he cites, or invents, "an experienced

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[2]F. E. Hardy, The Later Life of Thomas Hardy (London, 1930), p. 42. Hereafter cited as F. E. Hardy, The Later Years.

[3]Millgate, p. 320.

reviewer" in Germany who:

> informed the writer that Sue Bridehead, the heroine, was the first delineation in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year--the woman of the feminist movement--the slight, pale 'bachelor' girl--the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing, mainly in cities as yet; who does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession, and boast themselves as superior people because they are licensed to be loved on the premises....Whether this assurance is borne out by dates I cannot say.[4]

Part of Sue's problem is that her stance is new, yet, and not readily accepted by society. Her downfall, however, emerges from an imbalance in her personality: in Sue's nature there is too much stress on the intellectual and a neglect of the physical. She is as much a victim of herself as of the rigid society in which she must function.

Sue's opposite in the novel is Arabella Donn who embodies the sensual, passionate nature that Sue lacks. It seems that Hardy's novels go through a process of refinement so that the dualities contained within the characters of the earlier heroines are eventually split into separate female characters by the time Hardy writes this final novel. To some extent, this splitting into contrasted natures was seen in The Woodlanders, in the case of Mrs. Charmond and Marty South, and in The Return of the Native with Eustacia and Thomasin Yeobright, but never before had the contrast been so strong. Hardy states that his intention was indeed to draw contrasts:

> Of course the book is all contrasts--or was meant to be in its original conception.... e.g. Sue and her heathen gods set

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[4]Stewart, p. 197.

[5]F. E. Hardy, The Later Life..., p. 42.

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.[5]

And, of course, the contrast to be examined here is the one between Arabella and Sue.

D. H. Lawrence makes a valid comparison between Tess and Jude that also points out the nature of the Arabella-Sue contrast:

> Jude is only Tess turned round about. Instead of the heroine containing the two principles, male and female, at strife within her one being, it is Jude who contains them both, whilst the two women with him take the place of the two men to Tess. Arabella is Alec d'Urberville, Sue is Angel Clare. These represent the same pair of principles.[6]

It is perhaps unfair to the distinct individualities of these two women to see them as merely representing opposed principles, yet this element in their presentation is certainly there. They are like separate halves of a divided nature so that if they were to be merged together, they would make a whole character. As Lawrence puts it: "the two women added together made One Bride."[7] Arabella and Sue represent the same division of body and spirit that was forced upon Tess. This time, as Lawrence has indicated, it is Jude who is pulled by the opposing forces.

Jude encounters Arabella, "a complete and substantial female animal" (p. 44) and is initiated into sexual experience with her. He is trapped by his experience as he succumbs to Arabella's sensual powers and then he is tricked into marrying

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[5]F. E. Hardy, The Later Life..., p. 42.

[6]Lawrence, p. 198.

[7]Lawrence, p. 211.

her. Arabella knows that she wants Jude and will go to any lengths to gain him:

'I must have him. I can't do without him. He's the sort of man I long for. I shall go mad if I can't give myself to him altogether!' (p. 55)

She is as passionate as Eustacia but also as artful and artificial as Mrs. Charmond. Her favourite trick is to create dimples by sucking in her cheeks and like Mrs. Charmond, she has a wig, which disgusts Jude. Arabella reflects the widespread thinking that marriage is the height of ambition for a woman and the only significant goal for female action. "She had gained a husband; that was the thing--a husband with a lot of earning power in him for buying her frocks and hats when he should begin to get frightened a bit, and stick to his trade, and throw aside those stupid books for practical undertakings." (pp. 64-65) Once she tires of Jude because their natures diverge so completely, she leaves him for greener pastures. But she leaves Jude still trapped in a social convention that will plague him forever.

Jude realizes his trap particularly acutely when he meets his cousin, Sue Bridehead. Even before he meets Sue, he is guilty, like other foolish lovers in Hardy's novels such as Dick Dewey, Mr. Knight, Clym Yeobright and Angel Clare, of idealizing her:

To be sure she was almost an ideality to him still. Perhaps to know her would be to cure himself of this unexpected and unauthorized passion. A voice whispered that, though he desired to know her, he did not desire to be cured. (p. 105)

Much as Jude and Sue love each other, however, they are never

able to achieve a satisfactory union.

From the beginning, Sue is presented as a spiritual creature who has rejected the social code and established religion of her time while attempting to assert her own individuality. It is indicative of the dichotomy contained within her that she worships both the pagan gods of Apollo and Venus as well as Christ: she is a pagan in conscious belief but a Christian in life. Her subscription to the ideals of paganism proves to be purely theoretical; it does not stand up to the shock of experience.

In her relations with men, Sue admits that she is able to merge with them--on an intellectual and spiritual level, as she says: "I have mixed with them--one or two of them particularly--almost as one of their own sex." (p. 154) Lawrence discusses this aspect of Sue's nature:

> Sue wished to identify herself utterly with the male principle. That which was female in her she wanted to consume within the male force, to consume it in the fire of understanding, of giving utterance.[8]

By denying the female within her, Sue is denying an essential part of herself. In seeking to fulfill her spiritual demands, she neglects the physical aspect of her nature. Part of her difficulty, of course, is caused by her society which does not allow her proper outlets for her desires. She holds the view that Victorian society is a male-dominated world and feels that in order to assert herself, the subjugation of her female nature is necessary. She does not feel that a recon-

[8]Lawrence, p. 207.

ciliation between male and female forces is possible.

Sue and Jude are truly soul-mates, but because Sue misunderstands the power and importance of human passion, their relationship can never survive. She demands far too much from her partners without giving enough of herself; she does not realize that life cannot exist on a purely intellectual or spiritual level. She virtually kills the student she first lived with because: "'he said I was breaking his heart by holding out against him so long at such close quarters; he could never have believed it of a woman.'" (p. 155) Then, she marries Phillotson, seemingly out of pique with Jude, and when the shock of physical commitment becomes too much, she leaves him. She sees Phillotson only as a kindly father/teacher and she fails to take the necessary physical union involved in marriage into account. Not only is the effect of this damaging to Phillotson, it is also damaging to Sue's own psyche. Because she is so totally unprepared for sexual union, she develops a terror of it that proves to be ruinous and perverse. This attitude is carried over into her relationship with Jude; she delights in their spiritual union, but the thought of a physical union disgusts her. And she has the mistaken conviction that human relationships can reach a certain plateau without attaining greater depths: "My liking for you is not as some women's perhaps. But it is a delight in being with you, of a supremely delicate kind, and I don't

want to go further and risk it by--an attempt to intensify it!" (p. 250) She fears that sexual union would be a barrier to their relationship rather than an enhancement, or a deepening of it. The only factor that forces her to unite sexually with Jude is her fear of losing him to Arabella.

In Sue, Hardy also comes to grips once more with the nature of woman's capriciousness. This is an element that predominates in most of his heroines and Sue becomes the supreme example of it. Hardy really seems to be questioning women's motives in keeping their lovers and admirers dangling or deliberately exposing them to hurt, as when Sue asks Jude to give her away in marriage to Phillotson:

> How could Sue have had the temerity to ask him to do it--a cruelty possibly to herself as well as to him? 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 were they more heroic? Or was Sue simply so perverse that she wilfully gave herself and him pain for the odd and mournful luxury of practising long-suffering in her own person, and of being touched with tender pity for him at having made him practise it? (pp. 182-183)

Sue constantly plays her game of tantalization, then rejection, usually through letters. But it does not seem clear whether she is fully aware of the game she is playing and how disastrous it can prove to be. Like Elfride Swancourt, she does not fully comprehend the effect she has on men and their emotions. But by the end, she does seem to have some understanding of her actions:

> 'At first I did not love you, Jude; that I own. When I first knew you I merely wanted you to love me. I did not exactly

> flirt with you; but that inborn craving which undermines some women's morals almost more than unbridled passion--the craving to attract and captivate, regardless of the injury it may do the man--was in me; and when I found I had caught you, I was frightened. And then--I don't know how it was--I couldn't bear to let you go--possibly to Arabella again--and so I got to love you, Jude. But you see, however fondly it ended, it began in the selfish and cruel wish to make your heart ache for me without letting mine ache for you.' (p. 365)

Therefore, it seems that Hardy is suggesting that this"craving to attract and captivate" is inherent and almost beyond a woman's control. Its motives are self-fulfillment rather than cruel victimisation but hurt is, unfortunately, the inevitable result. This explains Fancy's behaviour towards Parson Maybold, Elfride's towards Stephen, Bathsheba's towards Boldwood and Oak, Grade's towards Giles, Eustacia's towards Wildeve and Clym, and perhaps to some extent, Tess's towards Alec d'Urberville.

Although Sue constantly tries in her own way to struggle against the codes of society, she finally gives in to their pressures. She loses her struggle against the social majority because she allows her Puritanical background to arouse her sense of guilt: "'We must conform!... All the ancient wrath of the Power above has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!'" (p. 354) Once Sue sees her struggle as a struggle against God and not society, she accepts her own defeat. When she asserts: "'Self-renunciation--that's everything!'" (p. 357) and remarries Phillotson, she is denying her individual identity and her rights.

The only good that Sue's sacrifice gains is that it redeems Phillotson in the eyes of the world. What she does is accepted as right and proper by society, while the true agony of her decision goes largely unrecognized. The terms in which Sue is spoken of by Gillingham and Phillotson show to what extent she is degraded. She almost becomes a commodity that can raise or lower Phillotson's social position:

'I was always against your opening the cage-door and letting the bird go in such an obviously suicidal way. You might have been a school-inspector by this time, or a reverend, if you hadn't been so weak about her.' (pp. 378-9)

Certainly Hardy underlines the fallacy of Sue's gesture when she says: "The self-sacrifice of the woman on the altar of what she was pleased to call her principles was acquiesced in by these two friends." (p. 381) That a woman with Sue's potential and intelligence is driven to such lengths indicates a definitely pessimistic view of woman's social situation on Hardy's part. True, Sue weakens before the forces of society and denies herself a vital part of life, but she is also largely a victim of social pressures beyond her control: the marriage laws, sexual mores, and the general oppression suffered by women in Victorian society. A despairing note is sounded when duty is reduced to this:

'I don't think you ought to force your nature. No woman ought to be expected to.'
'It is my duty. I will drink my cup to the dregs!' (p. 409)

It is significant that the woman who seems to survive

most successfully is Arabella--with her insensitivity and opportunism. She exploits men more than they exploit her. Because she shuts out moral or spiritual concerns, she seems to be able to snatch a limited happiness, selfish as she is. Her actions cannot be condoned: they only provide a further grim comment on the nature of a society that dooms its more sensitive members such as Jude and Sue to misery, while the insensitive ones like Arabella and Vilbert manage some degree of self-satisfaction. Arabella's use of her sexuality seems to be one of the only ways in which a woman can gain power in a narrow and stultified society. Hers is not a harmless flirtation as is the case with some of Hardy's earlier heroines; she uses flirtation as a tool for her own ends and there is nothing whimsical about her employment of it. Sue was not willing to sacrifice her principles in such a way and therefore she proves to be the loser as Arabella fully realizes, in her last statement: "'She's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will till she's as he is now!'" (p. 423)

CONCLUSION

From Hardy's early novels to Jude the Obscure we can observe an increasing depth of exploration on Hardy's part of both the female personality and woman's social position as well as a deepening sense of woman's personal and social predicament. His early heroines--Fancy, Elfride and Bathsheba--became almost a new stereotype ("the giddy flirt") replacing earlier stereotypes of the Victorian heroine. But even in the character of Bathsheba, Hardy is beginning to enlarge his scope. Fancy and Elfride involved studies of capricious female nature; in Bathsheba, Hardy begins to examine the restrictions placed upon a woman who attempts to act as an equal in a male-centred world. With Grace, it appears that Hardy sees the community as an increasingly antagonistic force as Grace's education, meant to be a boon, proves to be a hindrance to her social integration. Also it becomes evident that social laws work against woman, serving only to entrap her in untenable positions. Eustacia's attempt at self-realization and fulfillment of her passionate nature proves to be futile because she is seen as a disruptive outsider and her self-assertion cannot be accepted by society. As a child of nature, Tess can feel a part of the natural environment but she is deceived and destroyed by the social environment. By the time of writing Tess, Hardy no longer

sees the community as beneyolent to a woman when it ostracizes her for a wrong that was not of her doing. Finally in Jude the Obscure, society is seen as the ultimate antagonistic force as it destroys both a man and a woman who had merely tried to build their own personal happiness. Because they did not follow the conventions of society, they were alienated and then spiritually destroyed. In Jude, Hardy also makes it clear that society is antagonistic to both man and woman; woman is no longer the only victim, as Jude says:

> Still, 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; just as a woman in a crowd will abuse the man who crushes against her, when he is only the helpless transmitter of the pressure put upon him. (p. 297)

This is what Hardy finally wants his readers to realize: that woman's place in society will be improved only when man's is too. Through his exploration of women intelligent enough to be aware of their situation, Hardy acknowledges that there is not only a female predicament, but an individual human predicament caused by the coercion and repression of society. This stance was not as prominent in Hardy's earlier novels; this final vision evolves most strongly in his last novel, Jude the Obscure.

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