The Piping of the Shepherd: Meaning as Myth in the Pastoral Novels of Thomas Hardy.

by

David J. Biggs
B.A.(Hons) (Adelaide)

Submitted for the degree of
Master of Arts in the
Department of English
University of Adelaide
February, 1988.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

The aim of the thesis is to demonstrate how narrative techniques in the pastoral novels of Thomas Hardy suggest initial schematic readings which on close analysis have the status of myth rather than truth. The argument falls into two parts.

First, it is suggested that the underlying basis of the schemes of the novels is to be found in the apparent dualism of Hardy's thought, which on closer reading is seen to be a representation of all-pervasive conflict rather than an account of its origin. The dualism of the human perspective is seen to be a function of man's limited knowledge, the notion of consciousness as foreign to the natural world being transcended by the notion of evolution of the "Immanent Will". The narrative techniques of Hardy's narrator are then shown to rely on a subjectivity which denies essential coherence in the texts. The contradictory aspects of narration undermine apparently clear schematic readings of the texts and lead to a recognition of essential conflict in the world of the novels. The initial reading retains the status of myth as a representation of conflict in simple binary terms, the reading process thus being analogous to the growth of Hardy's "philosophy".

The second part of the thesis consists of readings of Hardy's "pastoral" novels (*Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, and

The Woodlanders), demonstrating the breakdown of initial schematic readings in terms of nature and culture, simplicity and sophistication, and passion and reason. The dualism which underlies these readings and suggests classification of the novels as pastoral is also shown to become more explicitly central to the texts as the analogous divisions in the earlier novels are undermined. The reading of The Woodlanders shows it to be explicitly concerned with man's apparent dualism in terms of consciousness and unconsciousness, and with the failure of this concept to account for suffering in terms of origin. In the final analysis the novels suggest that man's reasoning is incapable of explanation, but is capable only of representation.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is made in the text.

I consent to this thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Signed Date 1/2/1988.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the staff of the Department of English for their help during research for this thesis. In particular, I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. David Smith and Mr. Tony Slade, for their patient assistance and advice, and especially for their own continuing enthusiasm for Hardy. I also thank other members of staff for their general friendliness and for their comments on aspects of parts of this thesis.

My deepest thanks are to my wife, Helen, for her patience and interest, both in discussing Hardy and in offering much constructive criticism of the thesis. Most of all I thank her for introducing me to Hardy.

ABBREVIATIONS

All references to Hardy's novels are to *The New Wessex Edition of the Novels of Thomas Hardy*, ed. P.N. Furbank et al., 14 vols (London: Macmillan, 1975). This edition was first published in paperback by Macmillan in 1974-5, and it should be noted that the pagination of the two forms varies, although the texts are the same.

References to the poetry are to *The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy*, ed. James Gibson (London: Macmillan, 1976), and are by poem- rather than page-number.

The following abbreviations are used:

CP -- *The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy*

FMC -- *Far from the Madding Crowd*

HE -- *The Hand of Ethelberta*

Jude -- *Jude the Obscure*

Life -- Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928* (London: Macmillan, 1962).

Mayor -- *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

RN -- *The Return of the Native*

Tess -- *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

TM -- *The Trumpet Major*

TW -- *The Woodlanders*

UGT -- *Under the Greenwood Tree*

INTRODUCTION

> Hardy seems naturally and continuously present in his poetry, even when it is in the form of a tale or spoken in an invented voice. It seems his normal mode of expression. In the novels, too, the voice could only be his own; yet there he gives the impression of a man who would rather be silent than speak[1].

In these opening words of An Essay on Hardy, John Bayley raises three points which are central to any account of Hardy's novels: narratorial presence; expression; and narrative tension. Importantly, he raises these points in a way which emphasises their common reliance on "personality", and his following account of narrative tensions is itself expressed in primarily personal terms as a reluctance to speak, a consciousness of the novelist's position as in a sense putting himself on show. That Hardy himself felt this to be the case is suggested by the lengths to which he went to cut himself off from his reading public.

This self-consciousness strengthens our sense of Hardy's art as essentially "expressive": he could not distance himself from his art in the way that a novelist like James could, but clearly felt his creations to be intimately related to his self. We see the contrast in

---

1. John Bayley, An Essay on Hardy (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), p.1.

the comments of the two novelists on their work. James is concerned primarily with appropriate form, with the finished product of his creation and with the act of creation; whereas Hardy is concerned with an emotional engagement with his characters, an attempt to render experience as presence, with the act of apprehension. If we can in some sense describe James' novels as polished artefacts, then we must think of Hardy's as living expressions, a notion emphasised by the author's own reiteration of his art as "a series of seemings"(Jude, p.27) as flux rather than object.

Hardy's expressiveness was recognised early. We see apprehension of it in the readiness of early critics and reviewers to attack Hardy as an author in personal terms. Yet whereas T.S. Eliot clearly meant it as a criticism that Hardy had "written as nearly for the sake of 'self-expression' as a man well can"[2], we can now see his expressiveness as a major strength of his novels, and a major source of their vitality. In the light of recent trends in criticism and the study of narrative there is a reluctance to identify the expressive narrator with the author Thomas Hardy, but the recognition of the expressive nature of the narration itself, the essential narratorial presence, has become in recent years an essential starting-point for characterisation of the novels.

---

2. T.S. Eliot, After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (London: Faber, 1934), p.54.

The most important implications of this overt narratorial presence are in terms of reading and consistency. It is an undeniable aspect of the reading process that it involves a search for, and assumption of, consistency: even those texts which celebrate inconsistency or uncertainty achieve this emphasis by playing against expectations of consistency. Likewise, if the uncertainties of Hardy's novels ultimately become a vital aspect of the texts, it is through an assumption of consistency that they are initially apprehended.

The factors which deny consistency in Hardy's novels relate clearly to narratorial presence. Since they are "endeavour[s] to give shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impressions"(Jude, p.27), there is no necessity for the novels to be consistent in any strict sense. The notion of personal impressions relies on the overt presence of the narrator in the novels, and thus ensures a coherence based on the personality of the narrator. It is an important aspect of the following discussion of Hardy's novels that this form of coherence does not guarantee formal or logical consistency, but that it does justify the construction of meaning from the texts in terms of the character of the narrator. What we come to apprehend is a set of underlying preoccupations which inform the novels in affective rather than causal terms. The inconsistencies of the texts come to represent an apprehension of the essence of the forms of existence[3].

---

3. "Essence" is here used in the sense of a basic reality which cannot be apprehended in itself, but which

It is important to note that the apprehension of this representational aspect of the texts relies on an awareness of textual inconsistencies or contradictions. These inconsistencies are again something which readers have not been slow to recognise, whether as an object of praise or blame. The most obvious example of a contradictory novel among Hardy's writings is surely Tess, and the vast amount of conflicting criticism of the novel is witness to this. One way to account for these conflicting views is to recognise that each concentrates on elements of the novel which justify its particular reading, but that there are many such sets of elements which are mutually exclusive in strictly logical terms. One particularly controversial aspect of the text -- the notion of Tess's purity -- will be discussed in this study, but it is important to note both the logical inconsistencies of the novel and the fact that much of its power can be attributed to these inconsistencies. The inconsistencies reveal the essentially expressive and affective nature of the novel: elements which are characteristic, though in varying degrees, of all Hardy's novels. The controversy and discussion the novels provoke is testimony to the fact that their inconsistencies are effective: they do not simply make the reader discard the novels, but rather promote emotional engagement through recognition of the narrator's involvement with his stories. Inconsistencies in Hardy do not deny the

---

underlies and determines the nature of perceived forms. This clearly relates to an idealist view of perception.

possibility of reading, but rather alter the terms of reading.

Importantly, this altering of terms is part of the reading process itself. One form of inconsistency in the novels is that they offer terms within which to read them which are ultimately inadequate. This occurs in various ways within each text: for example, in terms of genre expectations and character portrayal. In terms of the present discussion, one of the most important examples of this is Hardy's use of pastoral conventions.

The importance of Hardy's "pastoral" novels, Under the Greenwood Tree, Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, and The Woodlanders, is that they form a sequence of novels which are written with an awareness of the traditional associations of pastoral literature. For this reason, they provide an important source for illustrating Hardy's general relationship to conventional categories or systems of categorising. These four novels relate to the expectations of what may be called "naive pastoral": the suggestion of rural innocence versus urban sophistication; a notion of rural communities as peaceful harmony both internally and in relation to external nature; and above all a suggestion that man and nature are separate but complementary. One of the major aims of this study is to show how the novels relate to this convention and progressively deny these expectations. This is important both in itself and as an instance of Hardy's use of categories. In general,

categories are undermined, but shown to be true as representations of an underlying reality, or as attempted reconciliations of contradictions, the failed reconciliation being expressive of the contradiction itself.

Perhaps the most important of these relationships between Hardy's novels and convention or conventional thought concerns a dualistic conception of nature as conscious and unconscious. This is a particularly relevant notion to the pastoral fiction, since these novels suggest aspects of man's relationship to nature which rely for their expression on an apparent acceptance of a traditional flesh-spirit dichotomy. Indeed, we could say that this distinction underlies the narrator's presentation of both character and relations to nature. Essentially, the division is between the physical and the spiritual or mental, and it is used to examine man's relationship to the physical in himself and in nature. However, as with his use of other conventional distinctions or categories, Hardy's narrator uses this conscious-unconscious dichotomy to express his apprehension of reality as much through contradiction as through consistent, logical analysis. Indeed, the logic of the novels undermines the logic of the dichotomy on which they appear to rely, and which is therefore apprehended by the reader as a starting-point for reading. In this way the affective logic of the novels is achieved by the frustration of reading in causal terms,

and this in turn suggests the nature of conventional terms as representational.

The further importance of the conscious-unconscious dichotomy in relation to Hardy's fiction is that it corresponds to a distinction made elsewhere by the author. Particularly interesting is the fact that in his thought Hardy relies on this distinction, but ultimately discards it for a more comprehensive view which reveals the initial dichotomy as a limited perspective or representation. This common reliance on a particular notion, for much the same purposes, justifies our making a connection between Hardy's "philosophy" and his fiction, not necessarily in causal terms, but rather as analogous expressions of a basic apprehension of the nature of things.

This connection does raise the question of the adequacy of surviving materials for constructing an account of Hardy's views. Clearly Hardy's aim in destroying some records and retaining others was to leave to posterity a particular image of himself and his ideas, and it is more than likely that the particular materials available in relation to his views on the nature of life were chosen to answer contemporary imputations of "fatalism" or "pessimism"[4]. The discussion of Hardy's thought in Chapter 1 of this study will therefore not give much weight to chronology in its account of Hardy's

---

4. For a view of the Life as an attempt to gain a "final hearing" see Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy: A Biography (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p.519.

"philosophy", but will rather be a construct based on the texts as synchronous in that they are filtered through the character of Hardy in old-age. What weight is given to dates relates specifically to the idea of growing dissatisfaction with the conscious-unconscious dichotomy. Even this is of little importance to the overall argument in that this dichotomy comes to be seen as a limited perspective, and therefore its transcendence is not necessarily a temporal matter.

Importantly, the picture of himself which Hardy has left to his readers is of a man continually concerned with the nature of life, with the "large" questions of existence. This is important in that it again justifies analysis of the novels in these terms, though not a reduction of them to these terms. The dangers of such a reduction are demonstrated by Arnold Kettle's assertion that

> Hardy took his philosophy of the Immanent Will very seriously and undoubtedly saw Tess as the victim of "the President of the Immortals". A pessimistic and detrerminist view of the world in which man (and, even more, woman) is at the mercy of an unyielding outside Fate is the conscious philosophy behind the novel[5].

Such a statement reduces the novels to elaborations or demonstrations of a basic "philosophy", and in its

---

5. Arnold Kettle, Introduction to the English Novel, vol 2 (London: Hutchinson, 1953), p.57.

limitations demonstrates the necessity of reading the novels on their own terms. If those terms correspond in some ways with the concerns of Hardy's "philosophy", then the correspondence is not necessarily causal. The crucial point is that a concern with basic questions of existence is central to Hardy's thought, however naive it may sometimes appear. Indeed, such concerns remain basic to human thought whatever their current or recent status as subjects for artistic expression. We must be careful not to judge Hardy as a simpleton simply because he chose to address his concerns directly rather than through concentration on social forms. Given that one aspect of his texts is an emphasis on the illusory nature of all appearances, we should not be surprised that he tries to see past surface and indeed emphasises the man-made nature of all surface appearance.

It is this basic idealism which informs both the nature of the novels themselves and the form of Hardy's "philosophy". The emphasis on a dualistic conception of human nature corresponds to an everyday view of life, which is necessarily transcended because human perception is seen as form-giving. The conventional flesh-spirit dichotomy is used in both thought and novels as a way of representing a basic apprehension of life in conventional terms. The final undermining of these terms expresses Hardy's difference from his predecessors working with the same terms, and also emphasises his perception of the limits of human understanding.

This emphasis is crucial to the form of the texts as "series of seemings" in that it informs an emphasis on expression in terms of essence, since appearance or form are illusory. Hardy sees his art as expressive impressionism, revealing the truth which lies behind surface appearance. Similarly, the transcendence of dualism in his thought is in terms of essence: the dualism is limited, but it has validity as a way of representing essential aspects of nature in binary terms. The apprehension of these aspects relies on an evolutionary view of man's real part in the natural world, and of the nature of the world itself, and we must not underestimate the impact of Darwinian notions on Hardy. In this study this impact is taken as a basis rather than as a subject for analysis: it is assumed that much of Hardy's thought depends in some way on a reading of Darwin in terms of evolution and the "struggle for existence". Whether this particular reading of Darwin is ultimately true to his theories themselves is of little importance beside the effect of that reading as informing an apprehension of reality. Importantly, Hardy's expression of this apprehension depends upon an idealistic view of perception leading to a view of appearance as illusory, but illusory in a mythical way: rather than meaning in itself, appearance represents reality, the essence of all forms.

This emphasis on apprehension of essence has its roots in Romanticism, and the way in which Hardy achieves his expression of essences depends upon the basic element

of narratorial presence. It is through the conflicts of his narrative texts themselves, as narrated by an emotionally engaged observer, that the emphasis on the creativity of perception and its revelation (or obscuring) of essence is revealed. The essence of the narrative corresponds to an apprehension of the essence of reality, and reading this essence relies itself on creative perception to transcend conflicts in the novels and see them as representative. The form of the narrator's presence invokes the presence of the reader in similar terms. The reader follows the narrator in reaching an apprehension of essence through the breakdown of initial terms. In this she/he also follows the pattern of Hardy's thought from dualism (appearance) to a recognition of reality which man attempts to analyse but only represents.

PART 1: HARDY'S THOUGHT AND ART.

1

DUALISM AND HARDY'S THOUGHT

In 1920, at the age of 80, Thomas Hardy wrote in reference to his own turn of thought:

> All hail to him, the Protean! A tough old chap
> is he:
> Spinoza and the Monists cannot make him cease
> to be.
> We pound him with our 'Truth, Sir, please!' and
> quite appear to still him:
> He laughs; holds Bergson up, and James; and
> swears we cannot kill him.
> We argue them pragmatic cheats. 'Aye,' says he.
> 'They're deceiving:
> But I must live; for flamens plead I am all
> that's worth believing!' (CP, no. 881).

"He" is "Our Old Friend Dualism" of the poem's title, and the playful tone of the poem suggests a relevance to Hardy's own turn of thought: the comedy reveals rather than conceals a living tension in the mind of the speaker, given vivid expression in the personalising of dualism. Indeed, the tension here between intellectual monism and emotional attachment to dualism is evident both in Hardy's own thought and in the responses of many critics.

While it seems clear that Hardy is mocking dualism, and therefore presenting himself as a monist, it is interesting to note that much criticism of his novels relies on a notion of Hardy's thought as dualistic. There are grounds for such a notion, but it can be argued that rather than being the basis of his thought, Hardy's dualism is a troubled, self-contradictory response to his particular form of monism -- a response which reveals both contradictions between the real and the ideal, and also the nature of the "whole" as oppositional rather than harmonious. The notion of an "oppositional whole" is not necessarily a form of dualism, but Hardy's notion of a natural order through conflict can best be grasped emotionally through its reliance on duality. It is therefore necessary to begin by considering the apparent dualism of Hardy's thought, before relating it to his notion of a universe which is self-consistent -- governed by one principle rather than by a basic opposition[1].

---

1. For Hardy as a monist in relation to "Our Old Friend Dualism" see the letter to Caleb Saleeby in The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, vol. 5, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp.78-79 which uses the same phrase; also commentary on the poem in J.O. Bailey's The Poetry of Thomas Hardy: A Handbook and Commentary (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1970), pp.606-7. Some of the more obvious studies which rely on a notion of dualism are: Bayley (Essay), esp. p.46; Lennart Bjork, "Thomas Hardy's 'Hellenism'," Papers on Language and Literature Presented to Alvar Ellegard and Eryk Frykman, ed. Sven Backmann and Goran Kjellmer, Gothenburg Studies in English 60 (Goteborg: Acta Univ. Gothoburgensis, 1985), 46-58, esp. p. 53; Terry Eagleton, "Thomas Hardy: Nature as Language," Critical Quarterly 13, No.2 (1971), 155-162, esp. p.162; J. Hillis Miller, Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970); Roy Morrell, Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way (Kuala Lumpur: Univ. of Malaya Press,1965); and F.R. Southerington, Hardy's Vision of Man (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971).

It is clear from even a superficial reading of Hardy's work that the notion of irreducible and irresolvable oppositions is central to, at the very least, his representation of the world and man's existence in it. We constantly find in his works a refusal to choose between two alternatives, or that the outcomes of specific choices are equally uncertain. Various instances of Hardy's ambivalence -- towards past and present, education, social values, and so on -- will be discussed below, but first it is important to note this ambivalence as summed up by Hardy in his notes:

> Men endeavour to hold to a mathematical consistency in things, instead of recognizing that certain things may both be good and mutually antagonistic: e.g., patriotism and universal humanity; unbelief and happiness (Life, p.282).

This note clearly shows that the ambivalence witnessed in Hardy's writing is a statement of his belief in the impossibility of choosing. At least functionally, Hardy's thought is dualistic in that he sees life as involving essential and unavoidable conflicts of interest based on a particular division between man and nature. To understand the nature of the functioning of this duality as an informing principle of Hardy's art it is necessary to recognise that the distinction between man and nature

is ultimately transcended in his overall "philosophy". However, it is first necessary to examine the formulation of this dualism through Hardy's musings on the nature of human existence, and particularly on the causes of suffering. The distinction between man and nature involves for Hardy a repetition within man of this very distinction, so that man is distinct in having something additional to nature rather than in being wholly divorced from it. It is this internalisation of the primary distinction which allows for the undermining or superceding of the distinction at another level: in this sense the duality is the result of a limited perspective, and this is important to a later account of its functioning as an illusory analytic tool offered to the reader of Hardy's novels.

Distinction between Man and Nature

A first consideration in any discussion of Hardy's ideas is that they are the ideas of a man who, however much he may have felt for the natural world, was concerned primarily with humanity. This very fact points to the dualism of much of Hardy's thought -- it is thought concerned directly with the relation of man to his environment, and hence invokes a notion of difference between the realm of humanity and that of nature. A note of September 1877 makes both the emphasis and its logic clear:

> September 28. An object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature. Hence clouds, mists, and mountains are unimportant beside the wear on a threshold, or the print of a hand (Life, p.116).

The distinction between man and nature is based on consciousness and it is the essentially humanitarian emphasis of the concentration on man which results in this distinction.

It was suggested above that Hardy's apparent dualism results from his thoughts on human suffering. Indeed his whole "philosophy" is based on the recognition of pain and the desire to account for it (and perhaps so reduce it). It is in this sense that Hardy is humanitarian, and the distinction between conscious humanity and unconscious nature enters his thought as a way of explaining suffering. It is also important to recognise that the distinction drawn is in terms of an addition to man over nature. It is this internalisation of the division which allows of its own undermining at another level of thought and also permits the division to retain a function, not as truth, but as an account of the truth: as performative rather than analytic. However, what is important initially is to recognise the impulse behind the distinction Hardy makes: his question remains constantly "Why do men suffer?".

The terms of the answer to this question as formulated in various notes, letters and poems are dictated largely by Hardy's early ties to the church. His approach to his own understanding is through the negation of a mythology which, while ingrained, is found to be fundamentally inadequate. This may help to explain some aspects of Hardy's phrasing which have been taken as evidence of his "pessimism", as if a belief in divine malevolence were the only negation of divine benevolence or providence. We must recognise from the beginning that for Hardy "[t]he world does not despise us; it only neglects us"(Life, p.48). Providence is denied, but what is retained of the old mythology is the distinction between man and nature. The reformulation of this distinction in terms of consciousness and unconsciousness is the first step towards placing the old flesh/spirit dichotomy in an evolutionary framework.

Essentially, Hardy's distinction between conscious man and unconscious nature seeks to explain suffering as the (conscious) recognition of contradictions inherent in (but necessarily unrecognised by) unconscious nature. Any form of consciousness necessarily involves pain for Hardy because natural laws are based on conflict: a consciousness of conflict involves a consciousness of unrealised potential, waste, the denial of ideals. This is the notion which motivates so many of Hardy's poems and which is summed up in the following note:

> November 17. [1883]. Poem. We [human beings]

> have reached a degree of intelligence which Nature never contemplated when framing her laws, and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfactions (Life, p.163).

I say this note "sums up" Hardy's notion of the source of human pain, and in a purely logical sense it does; but we surely lose much of the emotional urgency with which Hardy confronted the question, and hence the personal logic of the answer, if we do not stop to consider the many poems on this subject, among them "The Mother Mourns", to which the immediate context of the Life from which this note is taken refers.

In "The Mother Mourns" (CP, no.76), Hardy (characteristically) uses traditional terminology to emphasise his own differences from the tradition from which those terms are taken. The "Mother" of the poem is "Nature", but not a benign, nurturing Mother Nature. Here Nature is the creator of man, regretting the creation of a creature

> so excelling
> All else of my kingdom in compass
> And brightness of brain
>
> As to read my defects with a god-glance,
> Uncover each vestige
> Of old inadvertence, annunciate

Each flaw and each stain!

The notion of Nature as the creator of man -- that is, the blurring of the distinction between man and nature in terms of origin -- will be important below, but it is equally crucial to see here the stressing of the essential difference that man sees flaws and is therefore dissatisfied:

> For Reason is rank in my temples,
> And Vision unruly,
> And chivalrous laud of my cunning
> Is heard not again!

The disillusion of man in the poem can also be seen as a representation of Hardy's own disillusion with any notion of an order to nature with which man can harmonise or which he can control. The distinction between unconsciousness and consciousness is reflected in the distinction between natural order and the logical order or reason of the human intellect. We may compare also Hardy's comment that "non-rationality seems, so far as one can perceive, to be the principle of the Universe" (Life, p.309).

This distinction between man and all else is reiterated in "The Sleep-Worker" (CP, no.85), where Nature is denied not only benignity, but also consciousness, thus explaining the flaws which are apparent to man's reason. Nature works "unwittingly", and

> Fair growths, foul cankers, right enmeshed with
> wrong,
> Strange orchestras of victim-shriek and song,
> And curious blends of ache and ecstasy

are "unrealized" by their creator.

The attempt to account for pain is basic in all these poems on man's place in his environment, and it is clear that Hardy's perception of the origin of pain is a reflection (in some way) of his own consciousness of conflict in his surroundings -- a perception of the fact that it is only to man as the reasoning animal that conflict becomes pain and suffering. The use of traditional terms for nature stresses both the distinction Hardy draws between man and nature, and also the essential difference of his concept from the traditions he alludes to: by using the notion of an originating "Mother Nature" but denying her consciousness Hardy denies the existence of any principle of order (in human terms) in the universe; he also evokes a sense of personal anguish at the impossibility of finding such an order. This is the emotional power of the poems -- the reiterated denial of order (and examples could be multiplied almost endlessly) gives a strong sense of a personal desire to find order, to find a more rational explanation of pain, and a sense of loss at not being able to accept traditional explanations. It cannot be

overstressed that for Hardy, man is the only conscious element of a blind universe.

Yet as noted above, while man is unique in the universe it is through an addition, a supplementary characteristic which allows for analysis and self-analysis[2]. This means that man is unique but not wholly distinct from nature. The division is internalised so that man becomes himself an embodiment of his own division from nature in his duality. At the level of human life, or the limited perspective of "how things are now", this internalisation does not invalidate or detract from the division itself: there are still two incompatible and conflicting principles at work, it is simply that they are contained within man himself. What this accounts for is the emphasis Hardy places on conflicting aspects of character in his novels: to generalise at this stage, aspects pertaining to reason and passion respectively[3] . This division also helps to explain Hardy's ambivalences in the novels, and their presentation. This will be discussed below, but first it is important to see in general terms how Hardy sees the dichotomous nature of human character functioning in the world, and to suggest how his characters are influenced by their own duality.

---

2. See Miller (Distance), p.4. Miller's characterisation of the ways of seeing in the novels (by characters and narrator) as motivated by a detachment from the world but an orientation towards it suggests this function of consciousness -- for man everything is "a spectacle viewed from the outside", but he is part of that spectacle. Consciousness manifests itself as (illusory) distance.
3. See: Miller (Distance), p.18; Southerington (Vision), p.75.

It is somewhat difficult to illustrate Hardy's notion of the effect of duality upon action without referring immediately to the novels. Some idea may be obtained, however, by considering the implications of the following note of 1882:

> February 16. Write a history of human automatism, or impulsion -- viz., an account of human action in spite of human knowledge, showing how very far conduct lags behind the knowledge that should really guide it (Life, p.152).

This is clearly an early formulation of the notion behind The Dynasts, which will be considered more fully below in terms of the ultimate denial of duality. Importantly, this note retains the focus on human action as such which is abandoned in many of the later notes for a more general perspective. For this reason it serves to illustrate the divided nature of man -- the "knowledge" which should guide action is clearly an aspect of consciousness, whereas the "automatism" suggested implies unconscious activity. We may also note that "impulsion" may link unconsciousness to natural (basically sexual) urges, a connection which is explicit in the novels. There is thus the suggestion ("should really guide it") that duality is a problem which can be at least partially resolved by a particular proportioning of the elements involved -- a suppression of one aspect by the other.

That such a proportioning is itself problematic for Hardy is one of the essential points to be developed in regard to the novels, but it is important to note that a reconciliation is at times presented by Hardy as feasible, if difficult to obtain because of natural inconsistency:

> May 1 [1902]. Life is what we make it as Whist is what we make it; but not as Chess is what we make it; which ranks higher as a purely intellectual game than either Whist or Life (Life, p.314).

This would again seem to suggest the need for reason to be the ultimate deciding factor in action, and hence to suggest the possibility of it not being so. It is in the novels though that duality of character is most apparent[4].

Perhaps Hardy's most explicit comment on his dualistic conception of human nature is that found in the 1895 Preface to Jude, a novel which exemplifies the conception clearly. He says it is a novel

> 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

4. For an account of the novels as a treatment of choosing, or making the most of life, see Morrell (Will).

> and spirit; and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims (Jude, p.27).

There is nowhere in Hardy's writing a clearer definition of the terms in which he sees the conscious-unconscious division occurring in the human character. This is clear in the novel itself on many different levels. If we concentrate on the contrast between Jude's relationships with Arabella and Sue we can (simplistically) see Arabella as flesh and Sue as spirit. The recognition that this is a simplification of the characters of the women demonstrates that they too have divided being. We can further see the contrast between Jude's intellectual aims (reason) and his relationships with Arabella and Sue (passion). This is not the place to discuss these contrasts fully, merely to note their prominence in the novel as an indication of Hardy's conception of character. This prominence is, however, also indicative of another aspect of Hardy's dualism -- his use of this initial dualistic approach to character as a means of exploring irresolvable conflicts of interest and value. His method here is essentially analogical, as witnessed by his aims in Jude:

> Of course the book is all contrasts -- or was meant to be in its original conception. Alas, what a miserable accomplishment it is, when I compare it with what I meant to make it! -- e.g. Sue and her heathen gods set against

> Jude's reading the Greek testament; Christminster academical, Christminster in the slums; Jude the saint, Jude the sinner; Sue the Pagan, Sue the saint; marriage, no marriage; &c., &c. (Life, pp.272-273).

Clearly, just how these contrasts and Hardy's ambivalent attitudes to the terms of such contrasts relate to his dualism needs some clarification.

Duality and the Recognition of Ambivalence

It was suggested above that Hardy's use of contrasts is analogical -- he contrasts various attitudes, values, or the values to himself of things by presenting them as related to different terms of his duality of character, either by analogy or in terms of origin in the individual or collective character. Hence, "analogical" is something of an exaggeration or simplification, but it would also be an exaggeration to suggest that the terms of Hardy's contrasts and his refusal to choose are always clearly and directly linked to his dualism. Thus, for example, the contrast between "Christminster academical" and "Christminster in the slums" mentioned above can be read in terms of the duality conscious-unconscious, but only by a simplification of the terms of the contrast. Christminster academical can be equated with consciousness, because its activities are essentially those of the mind; however, this is to concentrate fully

on what may be a main feature but is not the only feature of academic life. Likewise, to equate Christminster in the slums with a total lack of consciousness is equally to simplify a predominance of unconscious impulse into a lack of conscious motive or thought. It is in this sense that the contrasts work both by analogy and by causal link with the distinction between man and nature and the two aspects of character dictated by the nature of that distinction. It is the simplification inherent in this method of presentation which enables Hardy to communicate his ambivalence concerning the terms he contrasts. First, ambivalence can be seen as a refusal to choose between the terms, a refusal motivated by the impossibility of reconciling man's duality by any particular balance between essentially incompatible terms. Second, ambivalence can be presented as the impossibility of ever consigning a given attitude, value, or action unequivocally to one or the other term of the conscious-unconscious dichotomy. Thus, even given a decision to value, say, consciousness over unconsciousness, this does not necessarily make evaluation of a particular element of life possible because it will always be dictated by partly natural and partly cultural influences.

Perhaps the clearest example of this ambivalence is the judgement of Tess as "innocent" or "pure". To discuss this issue fully would be to anticipate my later argument, so the present discussion will be merely preliminary and somewhat limited. To pursue Hardy's

presentation of Tess to its logical ends is to recognise that his dualism is transcended, but the recognition of ambivalence is a necessary first step in this direction: the way in which Hardy uses his dualism requires an initial attempt to read the text as self-consistent[5].

The question of Tess's purity rests firmly on Hardy's distinction between man and nature. The distinction is used in this connection as a means of criticising human morality, thereby suggesting that Tess's lack of purity in terms of that morality need not necessarily correspond to an absolute lack of purity. This denial of any absolute value to human morality was one Hardy frequently relied upon:

> That which, socially, is a great tragedy, may be in Nature no alarming circumstance (Life, p.218).

This is, in fact, understated: nature is unconscious, and therefore the notion of tragedy, which depends on suffering, is irrelevant; but this is a secondary issue. What Hardy implies is that human morality has no natural basis, but is purely conventional, and therefore open to absolute criticism. This is the sense of the narrator's

---

5. A full account of Tess's "purity" would involve a dialogue with previous criticism which is unnecessary at present; but see: John Holloway, The Victorian Sage (London: Macmillan, 1953); Morrell (Will); Southerington (Vision), pp.123-35; David Lodge, Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 164-188; J. Hillis Miller, Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), 116-146.

assertion that Tess "had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly" (Tess, p.114). To be effective, this criticism must also rely on the duality of Tess's nature -- upon a realisation that she is part of her environment and that human laws which deny that aspect of her nature are unacceptable. But this does not make Tess "pure" in any meaningful sense. If Hardy's use of the word in connection with Tess were merely to deny it any value other than social, then it would be unproblematic. However, this does not appear to be the case. The recognition of Tess's natural urges (for example, in the garden at Talbothays[6]) certainly keeps in the reader's consciousness the fact that this is an undeniable aspect of her nature, but it has no moral bearing whatsoever. By this I mean that it gives us no basis for reversing society's judgement on her in terms of any higher authority. This higher authority is explicitly denied in Hardy's refusal to accept Wordsworth's notion of "Nature's holy plan" (Tess, p.49), as also in his basic denial of any consciousness other than human. Consistency, then, would demand that Hardy can do no more than establish the conventional nature of Tess's impurity. That this is his only aim may seem reasonable until we consider the case of Alec d'Urberville, in which narratorial attitudes seem to rely

---

6. A source of much disagreement, see: Holloway (Victorian Sage); Morrell (Will), pp. 89-93; Lodge (Language), 179-187; and Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), pp. 200-1.

on a notion of absolute morality. If morality is purely conventional, then why does the narrative consistently present Alec as a villain? Why is the conventional judgement of Tess waived, but that of Alec allowed to stand?

A plausible answer might be that Alec makes use of the power given him by his social standing to take advantage of Tess's weaknesses. In this sense Alec acts within the social frame, exploiting its inconsistencies for his own ends, whereas Tess acts without knowledge or intention[7]. However, this does not fully account for the tension in the narrative between denial and acceptance of "natural" purity. What is important to note is that it is Hardy's initial distinction between unconscious nature and conscious man, and more particularly the internalisation of that distinction, which enables him to have it both ways: to affirm Tess's purity but deny Alec's. That this ambivalence may be taken further to suggest the impossibility of a consistent reading will be discussed below in regard to Hardy's overall world-view. But first it is useful to consider a somewhat different example.

This next example is chosen for two reasons: first because it makes an interesting preliminary to the analysis of character in the "pastoral" novels (even though it is later than all but one of them); and second because it is more closely linked to the internalisation

---

7. For a similar recognition of inconsistency in the judgement of Alec, and a similar account of motives for it, see Southerington (Vision), pp.127-128.

of the conscious-unconscious distinction than the examples given above. It is necessary to recognise how Hardy's dualism affects his attitudes in general, and to the value of changes in particular (for example, change in rural life, the value of education), and these will be discussed in relation to the "pastoral" novels; but it is equally important to recognise that this dualism is intimately linked to the narrator's relationship with his characters. The tension between sympathy for characters and the recognition of essentially self-destructive tendencies in them is an important factor in almost all Hardy's novels, and no more so than in his portrait of Michael Henchard, "A Man of Character"[8].

Hardy's sympathy for Henchard reveals itself immediately we meet him walking the road with his wife and child. Perhaps "sympathy" is too strong a word here, but the detailed description given of Henchard contrasts with the generalisations applied to Susan, who

> had the hard, half-apathetic expression of one who deems anything possible at the hands of Time and Chance except, perhaps, fair play (Mayor, p.38).

---

8. For Henchard's self-destructiveness see Frank R. Giordano Jr., "I'd Have my Life Unbe": Thomas Hardy's Self-destructive Characters (Univ. of Alabama: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1984). Especially interesting in the present context is p.81: "Henchard becomes vulnerable to 'Chance' and 'Change', the forces in Hardy's world that determine life when human reason and will are inactive or unavailing".

In contrast, Henchard is specifically distinguished from the type he may seem to represent, in a description which is characteristic of the narrator's interest in the particularity of those characters who really take hold of his imagination:

> The man was of fine figure, swarthy, and stern in aspect; and he showed in profile a facial angle so slightly inclined as to be almost perpendicular. He wore a short jacket of brown corduroy, newer than the remainder of his suit, which was a fustian waistcoat with white horn buttons, breeches of the same, tanned leggings, and a straw hat overlaid with black glazed canvas. At his back he carried by a looped strap a rush basket, from which protruded at one end the crutch of a hay-knife, a wimble for hay-bonds being also visible in the aperture. His measured, springless walk was the walk of the skilled countryman as distinct from the desultory shamble of the general labourer; while in the turn and plant of each foot there was, further, a dogged and cynical indifference personal to himself, showing its presence even in the regularly interchanging fustian folds, now in the left leg, now in the right, as he paced along (Mayor, p.37).

As well as the interest of the narrator, which is perhaps most forcefully reiterated in the almost sentimental account of Henchard's death at the end of the novel, this passage prefigures the essential qualities which create interest while also distancing Henchard from the narrator. Henchard is "swarthy" and has a "cynical indifference", both terms highly suggestive of the self-destructive tendencies of the man, which we may relate primarily to his passionate, headstrong nature -- put simply, his excess of passion over reason. It is this which creates distance and sympathy. There is no doubt that Hardy does not present this character study as an example of the "correct" attitude to life, but it is equally clear that Henchard has a fascination for the narrator because of his very representation of unbridled passion, of "nature" in man. In this sense Henchard's fascination for narrator and reader is a fascination with how wrongly a man can act, and how self-destructive nature without reason can be.

The possibility of such a reading of character will be central to my later argument, and it is clear that this reading rests on the apparent centrality of dualism in Hardy's conception of character; but it is crucial to note that this reading involves a simplification -- Henchard may be passionate, but he is not wholly without reason -- which means that we cannot read the novels as attempts to choose between nature and reason, but must rather see them as suggestions of the impossibility of choosing or attaining a stable balance. It will be

suggested below that it is ultimately impossible to read Hardy's novels consistently in terms of the duality which we are invited to use, but that the attempt to read in these terms reveals an essential feature of the novels. The implications of this for Hardy's "philosophy" are either essential dualism or a transcendence of dualism which makes its use in the novels "performative" rather than analytic. The notion of the "Immanent Will" and notions allied to it give good grounds for adopting the second alternative, making consciousness a part of man's nature which repeats and intensifies rather than contradicts the conflict and waste of animal nature. This requires some examination of the concept of the "Immanent Will".

Transcendence of Dualism

As a preliminary to consideration of the "Immanent Will", we can begin with two notes of Hardy's made before The Dynasts had begun to take shape as such. Firstly, a view of history:

> October 20 [1884]. Query: Is not the present quasi-scientific system of writing history mere charlatanism? Events and tendencies are traced as if they were rivers of voluntary activity, and courses reasoned out from circumstances in which natures, religions, or what-not, have found themselves. But are they not in the main

> the outcome of passivity -- acted upon by unconscious propensity? (Life, p.168).

Here man seems to be placed firmly under the control of nature's "logic", despite his consciousness, although we should note that consciousness (by its negation in this instance) remains divorced from nature. However, the notion of consciousness and its association with reason can be seen to be undergoing modification from the examples cited above. This is clearer in the note on a "Mode for a historical Drama"[March 1880]:

> Action mostly automatic; reflex movement, etc. Not the result of what is called motive, though always ostensibly so, even to the actors' own consciousness (Life, p.148).

Here consciousness seems to be much nearer to its basic meaning of "awareness", and therefore may be thought of rather as an extra sense with which man is endowed than as a distinct principle acting in opposition to nature. Indeed, in the notion of the "Immanent Will", as particularly exemplified in a letter of June 2, 1907 to Edward Wright, consciousness is described in such terms that it becomes part of nature. The Will itself is articulated in such a way that man is absorbed into nature and denied any absolute free-will. The Will is "a vague thrusting or urging internal force in no predetermined direction"(Life, p.334). Free-will is

denied by this concept, and by man's total absorption into the notion of the Will:

> The will of a man is . . . neither wholly free nor wholly unfree. When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it) he is not individually free; but whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free, just as a performer's fingers are free to go on playing the pianoforte of themselves when he talks or thinks of something else and the head does not rule them (Life, p.335).

We should note that this notion denies man free-will of himself: his will functions always as a part of the Will, and therefore in relation to the rest of the Will, whatever its state. In other words freedom is denied the individual because the effectiveness of his will as such depends upon the state of the relational system of which it is a part; that is, on factors beyond his control. It should also be clear that Hardy's attempt to use the notion of equilibrium to salvage some limited free-will is necessarily doomed because of this notion of the individual will as part of an overall Will. Equilibrium is a possible state of the Will, but not one which can be predicted by the individual. In other words, the individual does not know that his will will be effective

as such prior to his actions. The piano analogy does not help Hardy in this case, because it is a mistaken analogy, relying as it does on a notion of nature as directive (as the brain is directive of the fingers) rather than unconscious.

This denial of free-will to man, and the denial of the reality of apparent motive, is important in that it establishes man as part of nature. This point is even clearer if we consider Hardy's notion of the evolution of consciousness. Consciousness is in the Hardyan world-view the distinguishing feature of man, and the notion of it as the result of evolution has crucial implications:

> That the Unconscious Will of the Universe is growing aware of itself I believe I may claim as my own idea solely -- at which I arrived by reflecting that what has already taken place in a fraction of the whole (i.e. so much of the world as has become conscious [i.e. man]) is likely to take place in the mass; and there being no Will outside the mass -- that is, the Universe -- the whole Will becomes conscious thereby: and ultimately, it is to be hoped, sympathetic (Life, p.335).

This is clearly an indication that human consciousness is not a principle distinct from nature, but part of it through evolution. This does not deny the duality of man, but it alters our perspective on it. Consciousness is not

a principle in opposition to "nature", but is rather an awareness of "nature", and hence an awareness of contradictions inherent in Nature[9]. Thus, man's duality is a projection of his consciousness: it is not an actual duality, but a duality posited as an attempt to resolve irresolvable conflicts. Hardy recognises that it is consciousness (as awareness) which enables us to recognise contradictions in nature, and uses it as one term of a duality which would explain those contradictions as an opposition of principles: the duality is expanded by analogy to explain all human conduct in terms of passion and reason. This projected duality has further weight in that it corresponds to an intuitive distinction between reason and passion; that is it corresponds to man's own perspective on his action as

---

9. See Robert Y. Drake Jr., "The Woodlanders as Traditional Pastoral," Modern Fiction Studies 6, No. 3 (1960), 251-257, p.252: "Hardy viewed both nature and man as grounded in the same dualism". The question is whether the grounding is a dualism or monism; I suggest that Drake takes as dualism the essential conflict which I take as a single principle.

Mary Jacobus also notes the tendency in Hardy's thought to link man and nature -- "Hardy shows particular interest . . . in a subject of topical concern, the attempt to establish mind or consciousness in the context of scientific rationalism" -- but dismisses it: "Attracted though he was by the hypothesis of 'mind-stuff', he could find no rational justification for believing in a transcendental or unifying consciousness linking man to man, to Nature, or to God" ("Tree and Machine: The Woodlanders," Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy, ed. Dale Kramer (London: Macmillan, 1979),116-134, pp. 129 & 131). This seems to be missing the point completely: the unity is in the "substance" of the underlying reality, that is the Immanent Will in which (and from which) consciousness evolves,not in consciousness itself. Cf. Ernest Brennecke, Jr., Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind (London: Unwin, 1924), p.66 where Hardy's thought is characterised as "Idealistic Monism". See also Miller (Distance), p.12.

free within limits set from without (by nature). This is the perspective of Hardy's analysis of the origin of suffering and how best to avoid it -- consciousness sees action as the result of motive. However, this perspective is transcended in Hardy's thought, and the notion of man's duality is seen to be the result of limited perspective: an attempt to resolve actual contradictions. The duality may thus be seen as symbolic of the contradictions inherent in existence, not as an analysis of their actual origins. This is not to suggest that Hardy necessarily saw all these tendencies in his own thought, merely that they are there.

Further, this symbolic duality can be seen to function in the novels in much the same way as it does in Hardy's general thought -- as a limited perspective. Thus, the novels may be read in terms of the duality, but ultimately this proves to be an unacceptable reading because of contradictions within the texts themselves. This limited reading is necessary, though, for the novels to play out Hardy's own questioning of existence. The novels (in their reading) attempt an analysis of action in terms of man's duality only to frustrate that analysis and thus reveal the initial duality as symbolic of inherent contradictions, an all-pervasive conflict which manifests itself in contradiction. The contradictions of the texts reflect the contradictions Hardy perceived in the world. These contradictions are revealed through Hardy's narrative techniques.

2

NARRATION IN HARDY'S NOVELS

To understand the ways in which Hardy's narrative techniques enact and rely on the dualism of his thought on one level, and the transcendence of that dualism at another level, it is necessary to make some primary analysis of Hardy's narrative as such. It is well established that much of the force and effect of Hardy's writing relies on the manipulation of narrative perspectives, and it is thus upon the relation of narrative to setting and character which I will focus[1]. However, it is as well to establish immediately that this notion of perspective will be looked at in terms of the narrator as onlooker and (conscious) mediator of the object described. The justification for this is given by Hardy himself, and it is an important factor in reading Hardy to acknowledge the constant "presence" of the narrator and the essentially subjective nature of his narration[2]. This requires some clarification, and is best approached through Hardy's notion of his art as impressionist.

---

1. For the importance of "point of view" in Hardy see esp.: Penny Boumelha, Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form (London: Harvester Press, 1982), pp.35,67, & 111; Lucille Herbert, "Hardy's Views in Tess of the d'Urbervilles," ELH 37, No.1 (1970), 77-94); Dale Kramer, Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy (London: Macmillan, 1975), p.31; Southerington (Vision), p.36; and see below note 10 on voice.
2. On narrative presence in Hardy see Richard H. Taylor, "Thomas Hardy: A Reader's Guide," Thomas Hardy: The Writer and his Background, ed. Norman Page (London: Bell & Hyman, 1980), 219-258, p.220, and note 10 below.

Hardy saw himself as "impressionist" in the sense that he was attempting to convey to the reader of his novels an impression. This impression was not to be an object itself, nor a detached, objective representation of that object, but rather an impression of the object as seen by the artist[3]. This necessarily relies on an idealist conception of perception as individual and creative rather than objective. The notion can clearly be traced to the Romantics, and is stated explicitly by Hardy in an early note:

> Aug. 23 [1866]. The poetry of a scene varies with the minds of the perceivers. Indeed, it does not lie in the scene at all (Life, p.50).

While this particular formulation may be ambiguous -- it is possible Hardy refers here only to sensibility as creator of emotional overtones in an image -- the point is made much more clearly in Tess (albeit by the narrator):

> At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed a part of her own story. Rather they became a part of it; for the world is only a

---

3. We should note that the objects most frequently called upon as examples are landscapes. This does not deny relevance to all types of perceived objects, but it is a significant indication of the bent of Hardy's imagination, as witnessed by the emphasis of J.B.Bullen's The Expressive Eye: Fiction and Perception in the Work of Thomas Hardy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

> psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were (p.114).

It is important to note that despite the generalisation of the subjectivity of perception in this passage, the immediate context places the emphasis on mood. This does not undermine our sense of Hardy's affirmation of the individuality of perception, but it does point to one of the most important ways in which that notion is used in the novels: as a way of putting emotion into scenes through the apprehension of the narrator's emotions as he observes[4]. That this is Hardy's aim can be seen in one of his notes on Turner:

> January 9 [1889]. . . . Turner's water-colours: each is a landscape plus a man's soul . . . . What he paints chiefly is light as modified by objects. He first recognises the impossibility of really reproducing on canvas all that is in a landscape; then gives for that which cannot be reproduced a something else which shall have upon the spectator an approximate effect to that of the real (Life, p.216).

The emphasis on individuality of perception makes clear that the desired effect is a representation not of the

---

4. I cannot agree with the characterisation of Hardy's narration as "uninvolved spectatorship" -- Millgate (Biography), p.42. There is distance, but not lack of involvement.

object, but of the subject confronted with the object. Since the artist cannot give the real, he gives what he sees, the reader thus being given a response to an object. This is an approximation to actually looking at the object since every looking is a response: it is "simply" that the response is that of another rather than the self[5]. This has important implications in terms of meaning in Hardy's art, since the only consistency we are justified in expecting is that given by the character of the narrator and his "idiosyncratic mode of regard" (Life, p.225).

However, before turning to meaning we need to consider Hardy's techniques in general, and in this connection it is important to note that his impressionism both requires and allows him to foreground the narrator as observer. Narrative perspectives are thus dependent on and controlled by one overall perspective. That perspective -- the character of the narrator -- is a persona; but a persona whose informing attitudes coincide with attitudes expressed in Hardy's notes. That is to say, the narrator does not equal Hardy, but is a reduction, a (limited) perceiving character formed on certain of Hardy's own attitudes or simplifications of those attitudes. This notion is supported by recent work on general theories of narrative.

In his Story and Discourse, Seymour Chatman gives the following representation of communication in narrative:

---

5. This is a temporary formulation; see below Chapter 3.

Real Author -->

[Implied Author -> (Narrator) -> (Narratee) -> Implied Reader]

--> Real Reader [6][the part in brackets is the narrative text].

This seems to me particularly susceptible to the criticisms levelled by Rimmon-Kenan, the implied author and implied reader being constructs from the text (ie. "after the fact") rather than participants in the "communication situation"[7]. Rimmon-Kenan thus reduces the "narrative communication situation" to something more like this:

Real Author --> [Narrator -> Narratee] --> Real Reader;

arguing the absolute necessity of narrator and narratee (which Chatman's brackets make optional), and making the implied author "a set of implicit norms rather than . . . a speaker or a voice"(p.88).

These two examples highlight the centrality of narration and narrator in literary texts, and suggest

---

6. Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978), p.151.
7. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics (London: Methuen, 1983), pp.86-89.

that meaning in Hardy's novels must rely on the character of the narrator and be constructed in terms of an implied author as a set of norms accounting for the narration. It will be suggested below that such a construct reveals Hardy's narrator as a reliable mediator of those ideals (albeit through a conjunction of limited impressions), and that the set of ideals constituting the implied author corresponds to a subset of the notions expressed by Hardy outside the novels; that is, the notion of dualism and its transcendence discussed above[8]. However, the character of the narrator and his relationship to the stories narrated is crucial to an understanding of the relation between the abstract notion and the narration. It should also be clear that any reference to Hardy's own ideas bears no simple relation to the character of the narrator.

In discussing the character of the narrator of Hardy's novels, it will be assumed that the narrator is the same for each novel. This is clearly a distortion: every novel has its own individual, unique narrator; but, as the examples given will show, there are enough common points of character in Hardy's narrators to justify the construct of one single narrator whose actualisations in the different novels can be seen as the result of nuances of voice dictated by growing experience and different subject matter. Certainly, these differences could just

---

8. This is only one possible set of ideals for the implied author, although it may well be basic in informing the texts as wholes and thus allowing for other sets of ideals to be apprehended.

as easily be seen as distinguishing factors between different narrators, and in this sense the choice is arbitrary. The choice is motivated by the aim of representing the narrators of the novels as coming closer and closer to an explicit identification with the implied author. It is simply a convenient abbreviation to talk in terms of a developing individual narrator. This said, the discussion will be directed first of all to demonstrating those characteristics of Hardy's narrator which seem to be constant and distinguishing. This discussion is facilitated by a distinction between narration concerning setting and that concerning character.

Setting

Perhaps the two best-known commonplaces in Hardy criticism concern Hardy's "pessimism", and his use of landscape to present his pessimistic view of life by showing nature's indifference to man and its essential harshness. Contrastingly, there is the notion of Hardy's love of the Dorset countryside. These issues are not raised to be answered as such, or in order to seek a resolution between the two views of Hardy's relation to landscape, but rather to observe that for a writer with such a reputation he allows his narrator very few comments on landscape from his (the narrator's) own perspective. Ultimately, this points to the manipulation of perceptual viewpoint but rarely conceptual viewpoint. In other words, the narrator really looks with his own

eyes even when adopting the visual position of a character. Indeed, all descriptions of landscape are essentially the narrator's, but this can only be shown by an analysis of viewpoint based on a preliminary discussion of the narrator's own voice where it cannot be seen as anything else. It is merely mentioned at this stage, and this is crucial to the discussion of meaning in Hardy, that the bulk of narration is tied to character through (perceptual) viewpoint shifts. That which is not so tied is the present subject. It should be noted that in this general discussion of narrative those novels (UGT, FMC, RN, TW) which will be treated in greater detail in part II are omitted.

Consider the opening of A Laodicean:

> The sun blazed down and down, till it was within half-an-hour of its setting; but the sketcher still lingered at his occupation of measuring and copying the chevroned doorway, a bold and quaint example of a transitional style of architecture, which formed the tower entrance to an English village church. The graveyard being quite open on its western side, the tweed-clad figure of the young draughtsman, and the tall mass of antique masonry which rose above him to a battlemented parapet, were fired to a great brightness by the solar rays, that crossed the neighbouring mead like a warp of gold threads, in whose mazes groups of equally

> lustrous gnats danced and wailed incessantly (p.36).

This is not pure landscape, but then the narrator rarely presents us with a view without highlighting the presence of man: indeed that is one of his characteristics, to prefer human significance to the purely natural. What we should note is that the description also makes the reader aware of the narrator's essential "presence" in, or in front of, the scene he describes. This is achieved by a kind of "cinematic" technique -- moving from the sun to the sketcher, drawing back to take in the church and graveyard, the mead and ultimately the sun's rays again. The effect is to suggest a view from one specific position, rather than a generalised account of a scene visited many times or well-known. This is not to say that the narrator does not convey at times a sense of past acquaintance and knowledge of his scenes, but he always also conveys a sense of immediate presence on the occasion being described[9]. The second (and more important) means through which the narrator makes his presence felt is the unashamed subjectivity of the description, from the display of architectural knowledge to the central concentration on effects of light. This concentration is itself an indication of subjectivity through selection; but that is an inevitable aspect of

---

9. The use of the masculine in reference to Hardy's narrator is dictated largely by his greater emotional engagement with female rather than male characters. This is a general impression only, and such engagement may inevitably be heightened by male readers.

verbal narrative: what is particular here is the use of imagery -- "like a warp of gold threads" -- which demonstrates the acceptance, and indeed valuation, of subjectivity. The narrator wishes to convey how he saw the scene.

This subjectivity is further highlighted by the generalisation on the effect of the setting sun in the third paragraph:

> There are few in whom the sight of a sunset does not beget as much meditative melancholy as contemplative pleasure, the human decline and death that it illustrates being too obvious to escape the notice of the simplest observer (p.36).

Despite being presented as a generalisation, this account gives a sense of being, rather, the narrator's own response to the scene, further emphasising that he is a self-conscious observer, concerned to show the effect of the scene on himself as well as the scene itself. He denies objectivity by highlighting his presence through selection and response. We should also note that the generalisation given is subjective despite the narrator: indeed his uneasiness in his own subjectivity in general terms (which was absent in the specific instance) both accounts for the generalisation and manifests itself through the forced nature of the language, its overstatement. The reflection of human states in

description is another crucial characteristic of the narrator, as is his melancholy. In general, the infusion of mood into the narrative is achieved through the narrator's self-consciousness: the mood is his as he contemplates action or scene. The negative side of this self-consciousness is the escape into forced generalisation and over-elaboration of argument[10].

It has been suggested that Hardy's narrator is self-conscious and consciously subjective, and it is important to give a limited account of his subjectivity: a suggestion of the types of things that appeal to him, and how he conveys a personal impression of scene through selection. This is important in understanding the

---

10. This account of the narrator as self-conscious may help to account for the various notions of tension in Hardy's narration, of a split in the narrator's voice. See esp.: Lance St. John Butler, Thomas Hardy (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), p.45 for a split between "educated" and "uneducated" narrators; Bayley (Essay), for a split between "noticer" and "interpreter"; Miller (Distance), p.10 for engaged and detached narration; Norman Page, "Hardy and the English Language," Thomas Hardy:The Writer and his Background, ed. Norman Page (London: Bell & Hyman, 1980), 151-172, p.157 for "loving exactness" versus "self-conscious formality"; Penelope Vigar, The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality (London: Athlone Press, 1974), p.43 for a tension between impressionism and reliance on stock emotional effects; and for a tension between "story-teller" and "sage" see Ian Gregor, The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction (London: Faber, 1974), p.33. For stability of voice (detached) see J. Hillis Miller, The Form of Victorian Fiction (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp.10-11, and Millgate (Biography), p.42; for a number of voices see Lodge (Language); and for a recent relation of "necessary detachment and painful involvement" to the "narrative and thematic inconsistencies of Tess" see Jakob Lothe, "Hardy's Authorial Narrative Method in Tess of the d'Urbervilles," The Nineteenth Century British Novel, ed. Jeremy Hawthorn, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 2nd series (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), 156-70, p.169.

manipulation of mood by the narrator in that the impression of the whole which we are given is the personal impression of the narrator immediately confronted by the scene he is describing, and giving freedom to his imagination before it. This can be illustrated by looking at three passages from A Pair of Blue Eyes. The first is from chapter thirty:

> It was night in the valley between Endelstow Crags and the shore. The brook which trickled that way to the sea was distinct in its murmurs now, and over the line of its course there began to hang a white riband of fog. Against the sky, on the left hand side of the vale, the black form of the church could be seen. On the other rose hazel-bushes, a few trees, and where these were absent, furze tufts -- as tall as men -- on stems nearly as stout as timber. The shriek of some bird was occasionally heard, as it flew terror-stricken from its first roost to seek a new sleeping-place where it might pass the night unmolested.
>
> In the evening shade, some way down the valley, and under a row of scrubby oaks, a cottage could still be discerned. It stood absolutely alone. The house was rather large, and the windows of some of the rooms were nailed up with boards on the outside, which gave a particularly deserted appearance to the

> whole erection. From the front door an irregular series of rough and misshapen steps, cut in the solid rock, led down to the edge of the streamlet, which, at their extremity, was hollowed into a basin the water trickled through. This was evidently the means of water supply to the dweller or dwellers in the cottage (pp. 301).

What we notice here is that the narrator is again giving an impression of his actual presence on the scene. We look with him from a vantage point high in the valley down into the valley, gradually closing in on the focus required by the narrative: the cottage. But we never see the valley: indeed the selection in this passage is so extreme that we have only what stands out from the valley. This is another instance of the narrator's interest in light in that only those aspects of the valley thrown into relief by the general obscurity are noticed, and again in imaginative fashion: the "white riband of fog"; the silhouetted church on one side and bushes on the other; the furze tufts "as tall as men"; and the shrieks from which terror is inferred (obviously this last instance is not visual). The narrator's perception and mode of presentation suggest that what cannot be seen may as well not be there -- sparseness, isolation and obscurity are the characteristics of the valley which he wishes us to apprehend. And again this is for the purposes of contrast, to highlight visually the

cottage, the trace of humanity, to which the scene is moving. In contrast to the obscurity of the valley, the cottage is noticed in detail; the general sense of isolation is carried over into this paragraph, but the narrator's renewed interest in detail (albeit detail which suggests an analogous isolation to the rest of the valley) suggests that the valley exists for the cottage. This is a crucial characteristic of the narration: scene, however interesting in itself, is justified in human terms as background. The narrator can therefore be said to have an interest in nature, but that interest is always anchored in an overriding interest in humanity. Effects of nature are important as they reflect perception: important as things seen, not as things. Nature is important as it affects and reflects man's state: it is background, both literally and symbolically.

Two other examples from A Pair of Blue Eyes confirm the general impressions of the narrator given above:

> The rain had ceased since the sunset, but it was a cloudy night; and the light of the moon, softened and dispersed by its misty veil, was distributed over the land in pale gray.
>
> A dark figure stepped from the doorway of John Smith's riverside cottage, and strode rapidly towards West Endelstow with a light footstep (p. 241);

> It is an evening at the beginning of October,

> and the mellowest of autumn sunsets irradiates London, even to its uttermost eastern end. Between the eye and the flaming West, columns of smoke stand up in the still air like tall trees. Everything in the shade is rich and misty blue (p. 282).

Here again we note the sense of a present observer, conscious of his own perception as expressed in selection. The narrator's "idiosyncratic mode of regard"(Life, p.225) is obvious in the concentration again on the effects of light, the quality of light and colour. The unashamed use of imagery is again seen: in "misty veil", and "like tall trees". This narrator is not concerned to give objectivity nor exhaustive detail. The essence of his description is precisely to capture what he, as a man, sees as the essence of a scene: an essence which is also an importance for man as it is an essence of mood in the observer. The narrator wishes to convey no more than the scene as he actually perceived it: that is as he saw it and reflected upon it. This combination of presence and consciousness is summed up in the presence of "the eye" (I) before the scene -- an impersonal eye is for Hardy an impossibility. Which raises the question of the extent and quality of the narrator's knowledge, how it affects his narration, and how it is manifested.

Narrator's Knowledge

One of the most immediately apparent aspects of the narrator's knowledge is his intimate, personal knowledge of his area, that is to say Wessex (and London where necessary). The sense we are given is of a man both inside and outside his scene, of a man who has lived in Wessex describing it for those who have not[11]. This is seen in terms of landscape and society. The narrator's knowledge of social divisions is substantial: he plays upon them by making lower class characters elements of setting rather than conscious actors; he draws on them in satirizing landowners and labourers; he suggests his own allegiances in his choice of central characters from the middle, artisan class (those caught between classes); and he often chooses stories which revolve around some aspect or implication of the class system, the presence of which is emphasised in the telling. We may take as an example Two on a Tower in which much of the interest of the love story derives from the presence of class distinctions and class-consciousness: distinctions emphasised by harsh satire of the church, as ever in Hardy a major seat of class-consciousness. Obviously it is a simplification to see the story wholly in these terms, but it is important to note the narrator's choice of subjects which highlight his own preoccupation with class.

However evidence of the narrator's preoccupation with class is not restricted to choice of subject (which

11. Cf. again Lodge's analysis of various aspects of the narrator's voice in (Language), p.169.

may be seen as a choice of the author or implied author rather than the narrator); it is also clear in his relation to minor characters, who function as setting. We can see something of the narrator's complex social attitudes in his patronage of labourers. These characters function in a way as clowns in Shakespeare: they provide humour in their own foolishness, and any wider significance their words or actions may have is despite themselves. The narrator's attitude to them is condescending, to say the least. Witness the exchange over Susan Henchard's pennies in The Mayor of Casterbridge:

> 'Well, and Martha did it, and buried the ounce pennies in the garden. But if ye'll believe words, that man, Christopher Coney, went and dug 'em up, and spent 'em at the Three Mariners. "Faith," he said, "why should death rob life o'fourpence? Death's not of such good report that we should respect 'en to that extent," says he.'
>
> 'Twas a canibal deed!' deprecated her listeners.
>
> 'Gad, then, I won't quite ha'e it,' said Solomon Longways. 'I say it to-day, and 'tis a Sunday morning, and I wouldn't speak wrongfully for a zilver zixpence at such a time. I don't see noo harm in it. To respect the dead is sound doxology; and I wouldn't sell skellintons

> -- leastwise respectable skellintons -- to be varnished for 'natomies, except I were out o' work. But money is scarce, and throats get dry. Why <u>should</u> death rob life o' fourpence? I say there was no treason in it.'(p.141).

The narrator is clearly not telling of his own class here; but we can also sense that there is a tension between sympathy for the "peasants" and a false interpretation of them for the sake of fitting in with the expectations of readers who are also not of this class. Nevertheless, the patronage evident is an indication of difference: sympathy in itself implies distance. Indeed, the narrator reproduces in his own character the social distinctions which he recognises in his subjects, even while he makes fun of the labourers' simplistic acceptance of distinction: "leastwise respectable skellintons".

What this pervasive recognition and exploitation of social codes shows is one aspect of the narrator's self-cast role as mediator, in that he is mapping for the reader an unknown or unfamiliar landscape. The narrator of Hardy's novels is always an interpreter: he interprets individual scenes in terms of his own self-conscious presence, and overall settings in terms of his superior knowledge. These are two aspects of the same characteristic -- the desire to present impressions as such -- and we will see it again in relation to

character. But first consider the narrator's superior knowledge of his chosen communities.

The Well-Beloved provides an interesting example of a setting which must constantly be interpreted, and shows the narrator's consciousness that he is interpreting unfamiliar ground for the reader -- an implied reader who would know little of such an isolated place, and still less of its customs. This is true of much of Hardy's Wessex, in that much of what the narrator aims to describe would have been unknown to his intended audience since he is concerned with areas of experience outside of theirs both socially and geographically, but it is particularly true of the Isle of Slingers. A few examples will suffice, beginning with the opening of the novel:

> A person who differed from the local wayfarers was climbing the steep road which leads through the sea-skirted townlet definable as the Street of Wells, and forms a pass into that Gibraltar of Wessex, the singular peninsula once an island, and still called such, that stretches out like the head of a bird into the English Channel. It is connected with the mainland by a long thin neck of pebbles 'cast up by rages of the se', and unparalleled in its kind in Europe (p.28).

It is interesting to note here the characteristic use of imagery -- "like the head of a bird" -- to convey the

personality of perception; but more to the present point the narrator is clearly conscious of his need to interpret the unknown in terms of the known. The scene is defined both in terms of and in opposition to recognised common knowledge of the intended audience -- "that Gibraltar of Wessex", "unparalleled in its kind in Europe". Other examples of superior knowledge which needs to be conveyed are parenthetical remarks, for example: "there being but half-a-dozen christian and surnames in the whole island" (p.29); "The island called the Beal, or, by strangers, the Bill" (p.33). The narrator is both a native and a stranger to his scenes. We could perhaps say that the act of narrative in the novels is a "return of the native" in the sense that the narrator knows Wessex, is a native of it, but is also now a native of the society for which he interprets -- or perhaps he is both inside and outside both areas. There are numerous examples, but the main point to note is the sense of personal experience in all aspects of narration, the desire to show how one man sees, the recognition of the need to interpret, and also the sense of immediacy, of pleasure in perception and in the presentation of the act of perceiving. This is a constant factor in narration in Hardy's novels, and is particularly important in considering the narrator's relationship with his characters.

Narrative and Character

Descriptions of Character by the Narrator

The sense of narrative immediacy is important in relation to character portrayal in that the narrator conveys a sense of having met his characters. This sense is heightened by the sense that the most fully realised characters in the novels are those in which we feel the narrator has most interest[12]. Again he is concerned to give us a personal impression. Clearly this involves a super-human narrator, not necessarily in terms of penetration into mental states, but in terms again of presence, in the sense that the narrator has known these people (socially), has been present at all the most important times of their lives, whether narrated fully or simply referred to.

The essentially "personal" narration which we have seen above, and which is carried over into description of character can be illustrated with reference to Chapter 2 of Tess. I say "carried over", but it is perhaps closer to the truth to say that Hardy's novels spring from an essential interest in character, particularly vivid characters. The narrative arises from the conjunction of landscape and character in action, the central issue being character. As suggested above, landscape is presented in explicitly human terms of interest. But to

---

12. Cf. Bayley (Essay), p.149: the sense of characters being found "standing in the quarry".

return to characters as such, consider how Tess is singled out as a feature of interest.

First the women of Marlott are seen as an interesting group:

> In addition to the distinction of a white frock, every woman and girl carried in her right hand a peeled willow wand, and in her left a bunch of white flowers. The peeling of the former, and the selection of the latter, had been an operation of personal care (p.38).

The narrator's interest is conveyed in his noticing of detail, and in the recognition of individuality within the group -- "an operation of personal care". We should also note the suggestion of previous acquaintance ("had been"), of knowledge of the group through personal presence.

The narrator is (socially) omnipresent, telling us what interests him in the scene. And it is the younger women who hold his attention:

> The young girls formed, indeed, the majority of the band, and their heads of luxuriant hair reflected in the sunshine every tone of gold, and black, and brown. Some had beautiful eyes, others a beautiful nose, others a beautiful mouth and figure; few, if any, had all. A difficulty of arranging their lips in

> this crude exposure to public scrutiny, an inability to balance their heads, and to dissociate self-consciousness from their features, was apparent in them, and showed that they were genuine country girls, unaccustomed to many eyes.
>
> And as each and all of them were warmed without by the sun, so each had a private little sun for her soul to bask in; some dream, some affection, some hobby, at least some remote and distant hope which, though perhaps starving to nothing, still lived on, as hopes will. Thus they were all cheerful, and many of them merry (p.39).

Elements to note in this description are: the effects of reflected light on the girls' hair; noticing of individuality in terms of beautiful parts of the girls; interpretation of self-conscious acts in terms of country way of life (an interpretation by a man accustomed to such ways for readers not so accustomed); and knowledge of inner lives of the girls. Importantly this last aspect is presented almost as surmise from observation and generalisation rather than as the result of actually penetrating the girls' minds. The tell-tale expression here is "perhaps", the note of a narrator who wants to make clear that he is giving his readers well-founded impressions rather than self-evident truth as available to an omniscient narrator. The narrator's way of seeing

the inside lives of his characters will be discussed more fully in terms of point of view. For the moment it is important to emphasise that the narrator shows what interests him in characters and describes them basically as an (intelligent) outside observer.

What interests the narrator in Chapter 2 is Tess, and she is singled out from the group as the focus of interest:

> She was a fine and handsome girl -- not handsomer than some others, possibly -- but her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape. She wore a red ribbon in her hair, and was the only one of the white company who could boast of such a pronounced adornment (p.39).

Again this is impression: Tess is the girl of the group who makes the most profound impression on the narrator. The cause of this is unclear, or rather it is personal to the narrator, part of his character as much as Tess's. It is explicitly not just beauty, and the red ribbon is more a symbol of what has already been noticed than a cause of the noticing. Why Tess's mouth and "innocent" eyes should attract the narrator and speak eloquence to him is not important; what is important is the impression, the sense that Tess did on this occasion attract the narrator. It is presence and perception that count here[13].

---

13. In this context it is interesting to note the sense in which there is no true apprehension of Tess, but only

The description of Tess which follows reinforces this sense of attracted observation; even when the narrator is describing Tess in general terms we get the impression that he is inferring from extended observation, not seeing into her psyche to characterise and explain:

> Tess Durbeyfield at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience. The dialect was on her tongue to some extent, despite the village school: the characteristic intonation of that dialect for this district being the voicing approximately rendered by the syllable UR, probably as rich an utterance as any to be found in human speech. The pouted-up deep red mouth to which this syllable was native had hardly as yet settled into its definite shape, and her lower lip had a way of thrusting the middle of her top one upward, when they closed together after a word.
>
> Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes;

---

misapprehension. Tess comes to seem a subject who cannot be divorced from the mode of perception which realises her: she is "read" in different ways by Alec, Angel, the narrator, and finally the reader. The novel both asserts the need for true apprehension of Tess's individuality and at the same time appears to deny this possibility.

> and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now and then.
>
> Yet few knew, and still fewer considered this. A small minority, mainly strangers, would look long at her in casually passing by, and grow momentarily fascinated by her freshness, and wonder if they would ever see her again: but to almost everybody she was a fine and picturesque country girl, and no more (p.40).

This description is notable for the fact that it is external description. Clearly it hints at the narrator's apprehension of Tess, but only through externality. The narrator infers Tess's lack of "experience", and in the generalisation which ends the description casts himself as one of those who is fascinated by her. This partly justifies his interest, his elaborate noticing and inference, but only by demonstrating how personal it is. What is important is that he does not attempt direct access to internal facets of Tess which will prove significant: he is concerned to observe, and he lets observation of crucial moments in Tess's story reveal those internal characteristics to which he does not have access except through observation. The sense to be conveyed is that Hardy's narrator is fascinated with his characters as objects of observation, and that he knows them only as a man knows acquaintances. His method of internal analysis is again linked to observation and inference, and is achieved by a certain manipulation of

point of view which does not deny the personality of the narrator[14].

Point of View

In one sense, the point of view in Hardy's novels is unchanging: it is the narrator who speaks at all times, except in the case of direct speech of characters, and perhaps here also but on a different level. However, if we use point of view in a more basic sense of actual position of perception, then the point of view is constantly shifting in Hardy's novels. We may say perhaps that the perceptual point of view changes, but that the conceptual point of view does not. Yet, given Hardy's view of perception, this is not quite right either, for the narrator does not adopt his characters' eyes, which would entail at least some adoption of their minds, but rather places his own eyes where the story shows theirs to be:

> She had been watching the base of a cloud as it closed down upon the line of a distant ridge, like an upper upon a lower eyelid, shutting in the gaze of the evening sun (HE, p.37).

---

14. For characterisation as external see Vigar (Illusion), p.38, and Bayley (Essay), p.101, who suggests that Hardy's narrator gives the sense of knowing his characters only socially. Bullen (Expressive Eye), p.12 notes that "[u]nlike James or Virginia Woolf, Hardy rarely permits us to see through the eyes of a character; instead, he uses sunlight, darkness, firelight, or lamplight as emblems of states of consciousness or moral enlightenment".

Here the narrator indicates what Ethelberta is looking at, but gives his view of it: the selection and mode of description are unmistakably those of the narrator looking with his own eyes.

However, this is not to say that the narrator is denied access to the minds of his characters, simply to say that the kind of access is not direct, not a narration of what goes on in the particular mind. The difference results again from the narrator's desire to foreground his own perception in the sense of giving his impressions. This includes impressions of the characters' minds, but always given from the narrator's point of view. Thus, we may say that the character's perception becomes part of the spectacle being observed by the narrator; rather than narrating the thoughts of a character, what the character observes, the narrator is concerned to observe the character observing. The implications of this are crucial: the narrator registers an impression of mood, of the character's perception, without adopting it; this impression has the form of reflection on the character's act of perception affecting the narration: this effect may be ironic, sympathetic, and so on. The important factor is the element of distance maintained by the narrator always keeping his own voice: however much it may be affected by his reflection on characters that voice is his own. This is the element of consistency in the novels, but because the narrator allows his feelings to influence the narration,

giving always impressions, it is a minimally functional consistency. It has less consistency, say, than "objective" narration including records of character thought, or the adoption of a single viewpoint that coincides with a character's. Because the subjectivity is located outside the story, in the narration of an observer affected by what he sees, it is impossible to construct an objective account of the world of the novels. If the subjectivity were located inside the story (that is to say, in a character), then we would at least be able to construct some notion of the real because we would see events of the story having an effect (in terms of voice) within it rather than outside it. This has important implications for meaning in Hardy's novels.

Before turning to meaning it may be as well to restate the narrator's relation to characters' subjectivity and give a simple example. The narrator may be seen to be performing two functions when "adopting a character's point of view":

1/. looking with his own eyes from the character's position;

2/. looking at the character in the act of perceiving -- this may involve observation of the character's thoughts.

What is important is to note that the narrator gives his own impressions of the two objects of his perception. This may be seen in the account of Festus Derriman's

attempt to avoid battle. The narrator describes the scene in which Festus finds himself, describes the yeoman's fear, and finds in that fear an object of humour:

> Just as he reached the old road, which he had intended merely to cross and avoid, his countenance fell. Some troops of regulars, who appeared to be dragoons, were rattling along the road. Festus hastened towards an opposite gate, so as to get within the field before they should see him; but, as ill-luck would have it, as soon as he got inside, a party of six or seven of his own yeomanry troop were straggling across the same field and making for the spot where he was. The dragoons passed without seeing him; but when he turned out into the road again it was impossible to retreat towards Overcombe village because of the yeomen. So he rode straight on, and heard them coming at his heels. There was no other gate, and the highway soon became as straight as a bowstring. Unable thus to turn without meeting them, and caught like an eel in a water-pipe, Festus drew nearer and nearer to the fateful shore (IM, pp.218-19).

The narrator's distance from his character is crucial in his presentation of the comedy of this scene. Likewise sympathy is allowed by the same fact:

> The great silent ship, with her population of blue-jackets, marines, officers, captain, and the admiral who was not to return alive, passed like a phantom the meridian of the Bill. Sometimes her aspect was that of a large white bat, sometimes that of a grey one. In the course of time the watching girl saw that the ship had passed her nearest point; the breadth of her sails diminished by foreshortening, till she assumed the form of an egg on end (TM, p.279).

The voice is unmistakably that of the narrator, but his sympathy for Anne reveals itself in his own melancholy thoughts on the ship's passing, which may be seen as a (more knowledgeable) echo of her own sadness. The death of Nelson and the ship as "phantom" are the narrator's rendering of the impression made upon him by the scene, including Anne and her feelings. This technique is typical of the narrator, though this is a simple example. Nevertheless, it stresses once more that the subjectivity of the narrator is always in evidence. This cannot be ignored in an account of the reader's apprehension of meaning.

3

MEANING IN HARDY'S NOVELS

The foregrounding of subjectivity in the form of the narrator's presence as a perceiving subject concerned to convey impressions has important implications in a consideration of meaning in a text made up of those impressions. The question is one of degree: Hardy's concentration on the world as created in perception makes his narrator's stance particularly overtly subjective, but all narrators are personae, and hence all narratives are subjective. The differences between "objective" and "subjective" narrators can be summed up in terms of an attitude to the intended audience of the narration: an "objective" narrator places himself within the group which makes up his audience, using terms of reference shared by that group; a "subjective" narrator may well be distanced from his audience (as evidenced in Hardy's narrator by the change of tone when interpreting in terms of the audience's expectations), and he uses overtly personal terms of description. It is the overt nature of the subjectivity which is important. This characteristically manifests itself in Hardy in the notion of "seemings"(Jude, p.27) which may not be consistent with each other: the "objective" narrator aims to remain impersonal by adopting particular (shared) terms of reference and remaining consistent within them. Thus the question is partly one of degree, but because of Hardy's extreme views on the individuality of perception

(which result in the extreme subjectivity of the narration), the question of "communication" in the novels is particularly urgent. If the narrator is concerned to convey "seemings", personal impressions, in what sense can these be said to mean; and what is the relationship between the reader and the "objects" observed by the narrator; how do these "seemings" relate to the narrative as a story and its generation of meaning as such; can even events be taken at face value or is the mediation such as to effect understanding of them also?

To begin with, we may say that the subjectivity of Hardy's narrator is an effect of the way in which he (the narrator) chooses to objectify his impressions. The notion of conveying impressions to the reader thus becomes more complicated than the simple account given earlier. The narrator does not convey his impressions before the object, but rather a limited objectification of those impressions. The excess of personal meaning apparent in language which goes against the conventions of "objective" narration serves as an indication of personal reaction, and also produces in the reader an analogous personal reaction to the text. This is in no way to suggest identity between the impressions of the narrator and those of the reader, but rather that the text both relies on and provides in its reading an instance of the individuality of perception. Conversely, this does not imply that all readings are possible or equally valid, but that only a certain part of the text,

certain aspects, is constant between readers. In the case of Hardy's texts, the basic elements are readily grasped as shared meaning -- what happens, certain visual aspects of character and setting, certain of the narrator's attitudes -- but the emotional significance or motivation for action and description can be read in various ways. The notion of conveying impressions is thus a denial of the possibility of objectivity, and a recognition that shared meanings do not give a full account of meaning. Hardy's "impressionism" is thus an effect of his writing in that it highlights the excess of meaning in any utterance over what can be accounted for as shared. What the reader apprehends is: shared, "objective" meaning; also a notion that the excess (personal) meaning of the narration points to a meaning _to_ the narrator; and an excess individual to the reader which transforms the narration in the reading. This excess arises from those same factors which indicate the narrator's subjectivity.

The foregoing is meant as an account of the effect of subjectivity in the verbal texture of Hardy's novels, but the notion of excess meaning is a useful way of analysing the contradictoriness of the novels (seemings as not necessarily consistent when objectified), the way excesses of various kinds affect our reading of meaning in the various elements of the novels, story and discourse[1].

---

1. The terms "story" and "discourse" are adopted from Chatman (_Story and Discourse_), and Jonathon Culler's chapter "Story and Discourse in the Analysis of Narrative" in his _The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction_ (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 169-187.

First, we need some notion of how stories "mean". Firstly we need to note that different kinds of stories may mean in different ways, depending centrally on the certainty of the actual events narrated. Clearly construction of meaning will be on different terms if some crucial events are unclear, or if there are a number of constructions of one event, from those used to make meaning of a sequence of known events. Equally clearly, the mode of telling influences construction of meaning in that a sequence of events may be narrated out of sequence. The notion of stories meaning therefore relies on the whole narration having been already read, and is thus not necessarily easily related to the experience of reading. Nevertheless, some idea of meaning in the inferred story of a novel is an important starting place for meaning in novels as such.

In discussing Hardy's stories we should note first that they are generally sequences of known events which give at least the impression of wholeness: the events are generally not ambiguous in themselves, and we do not have the impression of important events being left out of the narration. The only major exception to these generalisations is the rape/seduction of Tess, concerning which the narration is uncertain. Elsewhere events are presented with at least enough certainty that what happens is clear; even if the way of telling raises other issues it does not usually question the "factual" basis

of the event as such. This clearly does not necessarily imply certainty of meaning, merely a clear basis for one kind of meaning in the text. That this meaning is an abstraction from a story abstracted from the text means that it may never exist in itself within the reader's understanding of the text; but it is nevertheless an important ground upon which or against which other, more obvious meanings are read through the discourse.

In Hardy's novels that ground meaning, or minimal possible meaning, takes the form of an inferred sequence of cause and effect. Other considerations are of course raised by this inference, but the necessary first step is that reading in terms of causality. This is the case with any narrative of known events without gaps (and also many with gaps), that the story means in the sense that it forces the reader to attribute motives, or other types of cause, to account for the sequence. In this sense the story generates a number of possible secondary narratives to account for itself, these possibilities being modified or chosen according to the ways in which the story is presented: the order of narration, characterisation, verbal texture, and so on. What the stories in Hardy's novels give us is the notion of single meaning: the idea that, because the events themselves are clear and unique, we will be able to construct a single valid causal sequence to account for the novel as a whole. The suggestion is that the overall meaning of the text will be in some way an amplification of the meaning of the

story as a causal sequence. That this is not ultimately the case is due to the subjectivity of narration.

However, before turning to these implications of the narrator's subjectivity, consider the way the story means in The Mayor of Casterbridge. If we take merely the beginning of the story, we have a man walking to a fair with his wife and child, becoming drunk and selling both wife and child. The next day he begins a search for the pair and also swears an oath not to drink for twenty-one years. Eighteen years later the wife and her child set out to look for the man, and they find that he has become mayor of Casterbridge and a wealthy corn-dealer in that town. Even the bare outline of this much of the story is enough to set the reader thinking, drawing inferences from these events and in that sense creating meaning. Certain assumptions about the character of Henchard and of Susan are necessary to account for this sequence of events, assumptions which are likely to be much the same if inferred from an outline of the whole story. These assumptions may not be clear-cut. For example, we may recognise two possible reasons for Henchard's rising in Casterbridge society: we can either attribute it to the same aspects of his character as make him sell Susan, or we can assume that it springs from his oath and therefore the suppression of those aspects. In terms of story alone there is no way of choosing between such options, and it is therefore true to say that the story as such does not mean; rather it gives a number of possible meanings, or limits the possible meanings of the text.

What makes the choice of meanings possible is the discourse: the method of describing Henchard and his actions leads the reader to choose to attribute those actions to one or another motive and aspect of character. Thus meaning does not come from story or discourse, but rather from between the two, in their interaction. The discourse, like the story, may suggest meanings independently, but they only mean within their (textual) context. Explicit judgements or generalisations from the narrator only mean in relation to the story he is telling[2]. Meaning is therefore read from the interplay of story and discourse, but the story in Hardy's novels is important in giving grounds for reading in causal terms. The kind of story the narrator tells encourages the reader to find meaning in notions of origin in character and outside forces and their interaction. This is illustrated in Henchard's attempts to ruin Farfrae by speculation in his dealings. The stories, being fairly simple chains of events (simple in the sense of clear), also suggest unity of meaning: for example notions that Hardy's characters are controlled, either by the constancy of their own character or by fate, or both, or that actions are based on choices (conscious or unconscious) between natural and cultural impulses. But to respond to the novels solely in these terms is to

---

2. Clearly the word "meaning" is shifting its own meaning in this account. If we must give a specific notion of meaning it is perhaps that meaning is nothing more or less than the answer to the question "why?"; whether it be "Why do these events happen?" or "Why does the portrayal of these events have certain effects on the reader?".

ignore their presentation as discourse. The story may be a useful abstraction in examining the interplay of certainty and uncertainty of meaning, but only when taken in combination with a study of the different kinds of meaning generated by discourse. The "meaning" of a novel can only be adequately described in terms of this combination and the possible inconsistency within it. I would suggest that the difficulty in reading Hardy arises from the illusion of certainty given by the story, combined with a subjective discourse which denies certainty and is, more importantly, emotionally rather than logically motivated. The "impressions" of the discourse do not necessarily exist in stable relationship with the causal sequence of the story. This must be illustrated by first examining the various meanings of the discourse.

Discourse

There are a number of ways in which the relationship between the story told and the way it is told creates meaning; or, more strictly, enables and in part determines the creation of meaning by the reader. These different ways of meaning are basically brought about by the relationships between the one story and various aspects of the discourse. Some examples of these aspects might be (and these are the three which are most important for the present discussion) narrative organisation of the story, narrative commentary on the

story, and description of setting. There is no suggestion that these aspects of narration are central or primary in any sense other than in reference to a particular reading of Hardy's novels.

(a) Narrative Organisation

The first, most obvious meaning of narrative organisation is simply the way the narrative organises the events of the story: whether the "natural" order of the events is maintained. The answer to this question with regard to Hardy's novels is generally yes, the order of events in the narrative is the same as that in the story. There are some notable exceptions to this, but almost always involving only one crucial event: the account of Manston's origins in Desperate Remedies; Manston's murder of his wife; the account of Dare's origins in A Laodicean; the non-death of Sir Constantine in Two on a Tower; the death of the first Elizabeth-Jane in The Mayor of Casterbridge.

The first three examples are of events withheld specifically to create suspense, and in this context it is important to note that they are clear gaps in otherwise fairly full causal sequences. They are gaps of which the reader is aware as he/she tries to account for the events of the story in causal terms. They therefore reinforce the notion of simple, single meaning within the texts by highlighting the construction of causality in

that they make this act a part of the text as well as of its reading.

The other two examples are of gaps of which the reader is not aware. They have the effect of limiting the reader's knowledge to that of the characters most directly influenced by the gap. (Needless to say, this is limited knowledge in this one respect; in other respects the reader has greater knowledge than the characters.) This is also true of the first three examples, but the crucial difference is in terms of knowledge of the gap as a gap: in the first examples both the reader and characters have this knowledge, in the last two neither have it. The effect of these gaps is only apparent once they have been filled: they then directly alter the probable course of the narrative. Importantly however, these deviations from the story sequence are hardly deviations at all in the sense that the unknown is an essential part of the story: it is necessary to convey the fact that these events were unknown by the characters. This could equally be achieved either by the means Hardy adopted or by narrating the events and simply stating the characters' lack of knowledge of them. That the narrator adopts the method he does is an indication that he wishes the reader's construction of meaning to coincide with, or be on the same terms as, that of the characters. This search for meaning within the texts as, to some extent, a reduplication of the characters' search for meaning in the same fictional world is important to an understanding of the novels. Importantly the

organisation of story sequence in narrative sequence encourages the expectation that this meaning will be the establishment of a unique causal sequence.

Another factor in the organisation of the narrative is the way in which it is told, or the extent to which the narrator is prepared to or wishes to amplify the basis of his story, giving it wider significance. The two ways in which this is most often achieved by Hardy's narrator are my other two aspects of narration, namely description and narrator's commentary. However it is important to note here the large extent of such amplifications in the novels, as that is certainly a part of the organisation of the narrative. There are numerous asides by the narrator, explaining, interpreting, and so on, which will be examined below. As far as description is concerned, it could almost be said that description is the organising principle of the narratives. This has been noted, in other terms, by Vigar in her description of the scenes of the novels as static, and her assertion that "it is the Impression of the book which remains, a vision of moments which remain distinctly in the mind, a string of outstanding incidents"[3]. The narrator describes events rather than narrates, an impression reinforced by the many and elaborate descriptions of setting. Again this will be discussed below, but it may be as well to note in advance that both these aspects of narration amplify and restrict the meaning of the novels in their relationship with the story. I am concerned to note the type of

3. Vigar (Illusion), p.15.

amplification they bring about, but that does not mean I fail to recognise their restrictions or clarifications of meaning: they both resolve and create ambiguity in the texts.

(b) Narrative Commentary

Some of Hardy's narrator's methods of commenting on the stories he tells have already been suggested in connection with point of view. Just as the construction of causal sequence in the novels relies on viewing aspects of character as motivating forces, or causes, so the commentary on the story by the narrator concerns those aspects primarily. This commentary relies on the narrator's distance from his characters, his feelings towards them, and is essentially a response to their (apparent) motives. The simplest way to illustrate this commentary and to suggest its importance in establishing meaning is by way of example.

An interesting example of the narrator's commentary with regard to character and motive is his view of Knight in love in A Pair of Blue Eyes:

> He was intensely satisfied with one aspect of the affair. Inbred in him was an invincible objection to be any but the first comer in a woman's heart. He had discovered within himself the condition that if ever he did make up his mind to marry, it must be on the certainty that

> no cropping out of inconvenient old letters, no bows or blushes to a mysterious stranger casually met, should be a possible source of discomposure. Knight's sentiments were only the ordinary ones of a man of his age who loves genuinely, perhaps exaggerated a little by his pursuits. When men first love as lads it is with the very centre of their hearts, nothing else being concerned in the operation. With added years, more of the faculties attempt a partnership in the passion, till at Knight's age the understanding is fain to have a hand in it. It may as well be left out. A man in love setting up his brains as a gauge of his position is as one determining a ship's longitude from a light at the mast-head (pp. 200-1).

This elaborate commentary relates simply to Knight's decision that it is safe for him to love Elfride. Its primary importance is therefore in reinforcing the sense of Elfride as helpless victim in the novel, the victim of Knight's own confused character, and in this sense Knight is to blame for Elfride's unhappiness. But the ambivalence in the narrator's attitude to Knight makes the attribution of blame problematic. The narrator seems both to mock Knight's fastidiousness and to recognise his helplessness in the hands of love. Thus on the basis of this commentary Knight's fastidiousness may cause Elfride

pain, but Knight himself cannot be blamed for that in terms of the choice he makes. It is a deluded choice, but not a malicious one. And yet Knight does seem to be blamed. This ambiguity, slight though it may be in this instance, is due to conflicting aspects of commentary in the novel which have no simple relationship to the story. It is pointless to exaggerate the ambiguity in this case, but it does point to the fact that meaning is derived from the interaction of story and commentary, and also to the possibilities of ambiguity resulting from attempting to find correspondence between a single story line and a number of conflicting descriptions of motivation or rationalisation by the narrator.

(c) Description

Turning to the descriptive passages in Hardy's novels we find a similar dual function in terms of meaning: the relationship between description and story produces meaning both by narrowing options and by amplifying them. The setting of an event helps to account for that event: indeed the settings of Hardy's stories can very often be seen as a determining force behind certain choices made by characters or limitations placed on them. In this sense, the meaning of the stories can be seen as specific to the locality in which they are enacted. This is read as a causal relationship, and again reinforces the claims of the story to be read as a unique chain of events with clear significance. Indeed, part of

this claim is unquestionably true: the narratives are readily explicable as a chain of events, and in the sense of what happens to the characters meaning is clear. However, the significance of the events, or meaning in a more useful sense, is less clear. The construction of meaning from events in terms of why they happen appears to be clear: at least it is possible to make a clear reading in these terms; but to do so we must ignore certain elements of the narration. With specific regard to description, we must note that the narrowing of options suggested by some passages is inconsistent with the apparent causal sequence of the story; and perhaps more importantly the amplification of significance inherent in some descriptions offers a reading inconsistent with a simple reading of the story. These are two sides of the one coin, for generally the narrowing of options is in exactly the same terms as the amplification of significance in that the reader is encouraged to read the story as a particular instance of a general observation.

The problem of meaning in Hardy's novels is thus an incompatability between the two aspects which produce the conditions for meaning: story and discourse. We should note that this is directly attributable to the subjectivity of narration. While the story as simple sequence encourages apprehension of single meaning, the discourse is a series of disparate "seemings" or impressions. The significance of a particular part of the text may be consistent with the story, in that it may be

a valid interpretation of it, but because the text is a series of seemings we may be offered incompatible interpretations at different times. To put this another way, because of the subjectivity of the (interpreting) narrator, what is a valid local interpretation may not be a valid total interpretation. The ambiguity of Hardy's texts is therefore a function of narrative subjectivity in the form of an excess of interpretations. As has been noted by previous critics, Hardy's texts are overdetermined[4].

To return specifically to description, the excess meaning of the narrator's subjective, poetic language encourages the reader to recognise the narrator's apprehension of significance in a scene and to invest the scene with his/her own significance along the lines given by the narrator. This significance, as suggested above, will be both local and general -- a significance by which to read the given event and also the overall sequence. This may not be possible, or it may be possible to create from different local contexts a number of possible but

---

4. See: Bayley (Essay), p.2 -- "His text may come increasingly to strike us as an affair of collaterals, effects not isolated from but independent of each other, with a purpose and intentness of their own"; Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist (London: Bodley Head, 1971), p.278 -- "His method is not to blend together the disparate constituents of the fiction but to leave them -- individual, identifiable -- in permanent suspension. If there is incongruity, Hardy himself is not disturbed by it". Miller (Fiction), p.128 also notes the tension between story and discourse: "the emphasis on . . . linear sequentiality . . . implies a causal relation among the elements"; "Hardy's novels are puzzling not because they contain no self-interpretative elements, but because they contain too many irreconcilable ones". It should be clear that certain aspects of Miller's study of repetition lie behind my reading of Hardy.

incompatible general readings. But as well as functioning individually with regard to their context, descriptive passages may function as series through the repetition of descriptive terms[5]. To take an example which will be particularly significant to my later discussion, there is a strong series established in The Woodlanders of descriptions in terms of decay. What is particularly important about these sequences is that the repetition encourages the reader to use the terms of the series as a valid way of interpreting the total text. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is only one such chain per novel, or that any given chain provides a valid reading of the novel. It may be that there are a number of such chains of description each offering terms of reading incompatible with those offered by the other chains. It may also be that the terms offered by a certain sequence do not enable a consistent reading of the text. Again, this possible inconsistency is dependent upon the subjectivity of narration which manifests itself in impressions which are in some personal way valid at a given time but are not necessarily valid except in terms of the individual act of perception.

To recapitulate and generalise, the reader's construction of meaning from the novels, in terms of significance, relies on the relationship between story and discourse. We can perhaps describe the story as a text against which, or with which, other "parallel" texts

5. Cf. Miller (Fiction) again.

-- aspects of the discourse -- are read to produce meaning. One of the most important ways in which these parallel texts are produced is by forming chains of commentary or description through repetition of terms. However, the subjectivity of narration in Hardy's novels both relies on and creates an excess of meaning both in the individual instance and in the parallel texts formed by the reader. The multiplicity of meanings thus produced, some reinforced by repetition to take on greater significance than others, undermines the unity of meaning suggested by the sequential story. The experience of the texts is thus an illusion of readability which is ultimately denied. I would suggest that this is a repetition in the reading of Hardy's own attempt to read the world. This is reinforced by the fact that one of the readings of the texts most strongly recommended is in terms of the very duality of man which Hardy posits in his notes. The failure of these terms to enable consistent readings of the texts is analogous to the transcendence of the duality in Hardy's thought. The texts therefore present in their reading a world which frustrates understanding in analytic terms. The reading of the novels enacts Hardy's search for consistency and his failure to find it anywhere but in an all-pervasive conflict. This can be demonstrated by readings of Hardy's "pastoral" novels: Under the Greenwood Tree, Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, and The Woodlanders. In these novels we can trace the process by which Hardy's texts become increasingly subjective at the

same time as they progressively undermine the duality on which the "pastoral" fiction apparently relies.

PART 2: THE PASTORAL NOVELS OF THOMAS HARDY.

4

UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

Under the Greenwood Tree is an important novel in relation to Hardy's work as a whole in that it is the first instance of what is perhaps his forte: the depiction of a rural community. This in itself justifies a simplistic classification of the novel as pastoral, and is indeed the basis of a definition of pastoral on which most criticism of the novel depends. The exclusive concentration on a specific community and its invasion by outside forces enables a reading in terms of oppositions between nature and culture: the rural community becomes in its invasion a microcosm, a representation of the invasion of nature by culture[1]. The analogy between such an opposition and a dualistic conception of man in the world should be clear.

The dominance of such readings of Under the Greenwood Tree can be demonstrated by two examples. First, from David Wright's introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel: "as the rural landscape and the ways and traditions of its inhabitants are elaborated and realized, the urban disruption of it is better seen. There comes a clash between urban and rural values and modes of life; the latter is inevitably defeated"[2]. In The Pastoral Novel, Michael Squires makes a similar point

---

1. The possible gender implications or connotations of these terms are recognised in the present study, though not dealt with explicitly. They are an important factor in regard to the conventional or traditional nature of the terms with which Hardy works.
2. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 11-22, p.20.

in relation to Under the Greenwood Tree, Far from the Madding Crowd, and The Woodlanders:

> These novels are pastoral because they reveal a sharp rural-urban or simplicity-complexity contrast, a rural perspective on urban life, intense nostalgia for a Golden-Age past, a withdrawal from sophistication and industrialization that implies criticism, patient creation of a pastoral world, and, altering tradition, a sympathetic realism that achieves verisimilitude yet softens rural coarseness to make country life palatable to urban society[3].

These two examples are not wholly representative. Much criticism of Hardy recognises that his rural communities contain within themselves the seeds of conflict, but it is important to recognise the possibility of reading Hardy's pastoral novels as naive pastoral: a dramatisation of simple oppositions such as nature and culture which can be seen to be based in a simple distinction between man and unconscious nature[4].

---

3. Michael Squires, The Pastoral Novel: Studies in George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and D.H. Lawrence (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), p.108.
4. Other studies suggesting that Hardy's rural communities are invaded from outside are: George S. Fayen Jr., "Hardy's The Woodlanders: Inwardness and Memory," Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 1, No.4 (1961), 81-100, esp. p.81; W.J. Keith, "A Regional Approach to Hardy's Fiction," Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy, ed. Dale Kramer (London: Macmillan, 1979), 36-49, esp. p.42; and Noorul Hasan, Thomas Hardy: The

Under the Greenwood Tree is particularly open to such reading in terms of an invasion analogous to the fall of man: a fall which in Hardyan terms is represented by the possession of consciousness as the cause of suffering. However, even in this apparently simple text there are elements which undercut this reading and give it the status of myth rather than truth: the invasion becomes a dramatisation of existing conflicts rather than an explanation of them. But, as suggested above, the seemingly obvious, causal reading is necessary to establish the force of the mythic, performative reading which results from the nature of the texts as overdetermined. It is thus necessary to look at the terms of the apparent invasion of the community of Mellstock.

This invasion centres around the characters of Fancy Day and Parson Maybold. The two strands of the plot are formed of the attitudes and responses of the community to the newcomers, and as such can be seen as explorations of

---

Sociological Imagination (London: Macmillan, 1982), esp. p.99.

Drake ("Traditional Pastoral") and Andrew Enstice, Thomas Hardy: Landscapes of the Mind (London: Macmillan, 1979), esp. p.37 both see Hardy's rural communities as inherently flawed, but also retain a notion of them as invaded from outside. Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy (New York: Collier Books, 1973), p.30 suggests that Hardy uses past and present, tradition and modernism, to criticise each other. Perry Meisel, Thomas Hardy: The Return of the Repressed (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972) sees conflicts arising from differing needs of the individual and the community (esp. p.82). Other accounts of the communities as inherently flawed are: Merryn Williams, Thomas Hardy and Rural England (London: Macmillan, 1972), esp. pp.174 and 192; and George Wing, "Hardy and Regionalism," Thomas Hardy: The Writer and his Background, ed. Norman Page (London: Bell and Hyman, 1980), 76-101, esp. p.92.

possible outcomes from the confrontation of nature and culture, simplicity and sophistication. The confrontation between Fancy and the villagers takes the form of an attempt (in the person of Dick) to assimilate her to local ways and values, and is essentially witnessed in a conflict of attitudes on the part of the lovers. The love of the pair is virtually taken for granted, and the interest of the romance is whether or not Dick can succeed in overcoming those aspects of sophisticated culture that he sees as obstacles to their happiness, and whether Fancy is prepared to disregard her urban expectations. The response from the rural community's traditional values to Fancy's urban values is to try to win her back to the old ways. In contrast, the confrontation between Maybold and the quire is played out in terms of a direct attack on traditional rural ways by utilitarian urban values. It is the traditional way of life which much resist in this case.

Whatever other issues may be raised by various aspects of presentation and details of plot, these readings as invasion are important in establishing the terms in which the novel must be analysed in the first instance. It is through the breaking down of this reading as it is extended that the text provides a more adequate account of its action, but it is crucial to apprehend this initial opposition of nature and culture, tradition and innovation, sentimental value and utilitarianism, and to see how the reading is supported in the novel as an obvious starting point for a closer reading. It is also

important to see this opposition as a presently occurring invasion.

Dick and Fancy

Fancy's otherness is evident before we meet her. Her introduction as subject of conversation among the members of the quire provides a pointed contrast between her and the members of the local community. The difference between her "small, light, and prettily shaped" boot and the deformed last from which a working man's boots are made suggests a contrast between manual labour as the basis of the community and intellectual pursuits and self-consciousness as the basis of urban culture (p.43). It is interesting to note that the rural community is here represented by Fancy's own father, and this has important implications when we look at the community itself, but initially this ancestry serves to further distinguish Fancy from the villagers by emphasising the extent of her change: the gulf opened between her and her own family by her training and new-bred culture. Fancy may be the game-keeper's daughter, but she is seen primarily as the new schoolmistress who is distanced from the villagers because of her urbanisation. Even Geoffrey Day himself views her in this way. If she is a native, then she is a transformed native who represents in her own person the very invasion of nature by culture which she effects in Mellstock.

This basic opposition between Fancy and the villagers is reiterated in a number of analogous ways, all of which can be seen as stemming from a basic division between simple living within nature and a more sophisticated way of life relying on the mind. This simplicity-sophistication opposition is seen most clearly in the contrasting attitudes of Dick and Fancy in love. Simplicity is seen in Dick's instinctual abandonment under the influence of love, contrasting with Fancy's self-conscious distance from her emotions: simplicity is equated with passion, sophistication with reason. Other analogous contrasts appear between simple acceptance of communal values and individuality, and between the material and the spiritual -- education and official religion being linked in the schoolmistress's training and her function as church organist. This spiritual aspect of Fancy as opposed to the material natural life of the quire members is suggested by tranter Dewy on his first sight of her: "As near a thing to a spiritual vision as ever I wish to see!"(p.53). Fancy as organist demonstrates the sophistication of urban culture and religion compared with rural values in the contrast between "the crowded chords and interludes it was her pleasure to produce" and "the simple notes [the quire] had been wont to bring forth"(p.167).It is significant that the organist is an individual replacing a group. Indeed, the essential difference between the urban Fancy and the local community is an attitude to self: simple acceptance of a self defined in relation to community or

self-conscious desire for individual recognition. Fancy introduces to Mellstock an individualism which relies on artificially constituted contrasts as opposed to "natural" solidarity and emphasis on common values[5]. Nowhere is this more apparent than in her resistance to Dick's wooing: her attempts to prevent her individuality from being dissolved into membership of the community. This would seem to strengthen the notion of culture as created by man's reason in somewhat precarious opposition to nature: it requires an act of will to prevent nature reasserting itself. Importantly, even in this early novel Hardy is unwilling to give grounds for choosing between these elements even on the level of an initial schematic reading. The course of the romance suggests oppositions but gives no grounds for unqualified judgements.

The interest, and comedy, of Dick's wooing of Fancy arises principally from this confrontation of simplicity and sophistication. It is clear early in the story how the pair feel about each other, but whereas Dick takes his emotions for granted Fancy must reconcile hers with her desire to be admired generally, and specifically by those of higher social standing than Dick Dewy. Social considerations will be left aside for the present, for it is chiefly in Fancy's vanity that she is presented as

---

5. Cf. Andrew Enstice, "The Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge," The Novels of Thomas Hardy, ed. Anne Smith (London: Vision, 1979), 9-22, p.11: "Like the African tribal group it [the community of Mellstock] is the perfect organisation for the individual to whom life is a matter of practicality, day to day survival and simple pleasure in an existence that is relatively predictable from cradle to grave. In this situation the society itself is the justification for life . . ."

representative of self-conscious culture. This vanity is witnessed on three closely consecutive occasions: Fancy partially admits it after Dick's recognition of her self-consciousness under observation while returning from Budmouth -- "Dick, I always believe flattery if possible -- and it was possible then. Now there's an open confession of weakness. But I showed no consciousness of it"(p.129); her indecision over dresses which worries Dick because she wants to look good even though he won't see her (pp.139-40); and her preoccupation with altering her dress when Dick has asked her to go nutting with him (pp.142-44). Dick's simplistic attitude in love is contrasted with Fancy's persistent consciousness of her own individuality in relation to other individuals: her cultivated sensibility desires admiration as an end in itself. It is this which makes Maybold's proposal so tempting: she already has Dick's admiration, so Maybold's is more, not less, desirable.

Ultimately Dick has his way, and Fancy forgoes the pleasures of flirtation for her love of Dick, and (perhaps more important) his love of her. In terms of a naively simple reading of the novel, nature has subsumed culture, brought to heel the wayward individualism of the city. This is exemplified in Fancy's acceptance of traditional customs in her marriage to Dick, even though they go against the cultivated standards with which she is now familiar. She is conscious of stooping in her marriage, but the "natural" communal values of love and tradition are reaffirmed by her choice. But even on this

simplistic level, viewing the story of Dick and Fancy as a defence against outside invasion, there is no simple judgement. Fancy's grudging acceptance of local tradition and her remaining secret both suggest that the invasion has been partly successful: it has at least altered the community even by assimilation to it. Equally though, the basis of the community remains unchanged. What is important in this initial reading is that it relies on a notion of nature and culture in opposition. This is the basic reading which must be used to analyse the novel as a whole, even though in the end this basis is undermined. The temporary necessity of such an approach is again demonstrated in a superficial look at Maybold as an invader from the city.

Maybold and the Quire

Maybold is presented as an invader of the rural community mainly through his position in relation to the quire. He is responsible for deciding on the change in church music which effectively signals the end of the quire. Linked to this primary aspect of invasion is his interest in Fancy. In this he can be seen as an outside influence acting to thwart the intentions of the community represented by Dick's courting of Fancy. However, there are two aspects to consider here: there is a sense that Maybold and Fancy belong together because they are both outsiders, and this reinforces the notion of them as invaders and thus of Maybold's interest in

Fancy as an outside threat to Dick's intentions; but on the other hand because they are both outsiders it is rather Dick who is trying to invade their world and thwart Maybold's intentions. On close analysis the latter perspective is more important in that the conflicts involved in Dick's courtship centre on permanent class distinctions rather than a present invasion, and this will be considered below. But while Maybold's part in Dick's romance does not actually present him as an invader, the link between him and Fancy does. In close reading the link is social, but the mere fact of the link gives it thematic force. Simply because the pair are associated their distance from the community is emphasised.

This connection between the parson and the schoolmistress forms the only real link between the two strands of the narrative in Under the Greenwood Tree. There is no formal link, but rather a thematic one: both Maybold and Fancy are outsiders. Thus Fancy's influence on Dick and Maybold's decision to replace the quire are analogous invasions, but they are not causally connected. It is important in this context to note that Fancy as the object of Dick's love and Fancy as organist are separate, as are Dick as Fancy's lover and Dick as a member of the quire. The participation of each in each strand of the story has no causal connection. The success or failure of Maybold in replacing the quire has no influence on Dick's romance. This strengthens the thematic link between the two elements of the story, and makes a reading in terms

of invasion a necessary first reading in that it provides this link. Yet in providing a link between romance and the replacement of the quire, the notion of Fancy and Maybold as invaders also stresses their separateness on this level: once we begin to associate Fancy and Maybold more closely we move away from this perspective of individual invaders. It is therefore necessary to examine Maybold's impact on the community as, at least in the first instance, totally separate from his interest in Fancy.

Maybold is an invader from the very beginning in the sense that the community, as represented by the quire, is suspicious of him. When the parson seems to make no sign of response to the quire's carolling, old William sees this as a "bad sign", and when he does answer and demonstrates his sharp hearing there is a mixed response: Mr Penny asserts it "a sign he's a proper clever chap", but Reuben Dewy suspends judgement in his response, "We shall see that in time"(p.57). There is in the community, and particularly in the Dewy family, an instinctive resistance to and suspicion of the newcomer simply because he is an outsider. The community is immediately on the defensive.

This suspicion is heightened when Maybold decides to replace the quire with an organ, and in their meeting on the subject the members of the quire give vent to their grievances against the new parson. These are all centred upon the fact that Maybold attempts to change the way in which the church has functioned in Mellstock in the past.

Mr Penny lists the changes the parson has made: "The first thing he done when he came here was to be hot and strong about church business"; "The next thing he do do is to think about altering the church, until he found 'twould be a matter o' cost and what not, and then not to think no more about it"; "And the next thing was to tell the young chaps that they were not on no account to put their hats in the christening font during service"(pp.84-85). Finally, the parson's most unwelcome change is, as the tranter puts it, "to turn us out of the quire neck and crop"(p.85). Maybold invades the community from outside and mounts an attack on traditional ways of life, at least from the point of view of the quire. He is explicitly contrasted with the late vicar Mr Grinham, who fitted in perfectly with the community by not attempting to change it or interfere in daily life: "there was this to be said for he, that you were quite sure he'd never come mumbudgeting to see ye, just as you were in the middle of your work, and put you out with his fuss and trouble about ye"(p.85). Maybold on the other hand is a nuisance because of his earnest application to his duty as parson. He represents in this self-conscious culture as opposed to the traditional values of the local community which are based on a certain complacency in the rhythms of the natural world: note the division of the novel according to the seasons.

Given these criticisms of the new parson by the quire the decision to replace the quire itself is simply the most radical of a number of changes, and is symbolic

of a general invasion of the local way of life. The quire's doomed attempt to save itself, or at least prolong its existence, demonstrates the success of the invasion of the rural community by urban values: the simplicity of tradition is replaced by a sophisticated and self-conscious, but at the same time utilitarian and unemotional, set of values epitomised by the sophisticated correctness of Fancy's organ playing. The quire's failure to survive is not, at least on the surface, through any fault of its own. However, the discussion about parson Maybold alluded to above provides an interesting instance of details leading away from such a reading in terms of nature and culture but leaving that reading the status of a mythical representation of a permanent state. The tranter accepts that "your pa'son comes by fate"(p.85), and in doing so he restates the fact that the coming of a new parson constitutes an invasion, but he also implicitly acknowledges an inevitability inherent in the social framework of the village. But before turning to this, and as another way of reaching the same point of departure, it is profitable to consider the other side of the initial oppositional reading: the community of Mellstock as representing nature.

The Rural Community as Nature

As suggested above, the contrast between the urban newcomers, Fancy Day and parson Maybold, and the members

of the Quire of Mellstock is in terms of sophistication and individuality versus simplicity and community. The rural community is thus presented as natural because it is simple, and also because its harmonious collectivity is analogous with natural order. This relies on a convention of pastoral which is ultimately denied by Hardy's narrative -- the simple harmony of nature -- but which he nonetheless uses to establish the grounds for his story. This sense of naturalness is enhanced by the simple relations of the villagers to natural processes as opposed to urban distance from the physical basics of life. It is in this sense that the traditions of the community can be seen as more natural than those of the city. There is a naive assumption that ways of life evolved in close contact with physical nature are therefore natural in a way denied to urban culture. These traditions emphasise the collective over the individual and can be demonstrated by looking at relations among the members of the quire, and also their relations to the natural world.

The closeness of the Mellstock community to nature is indicated in the opening words of Under the Greenwood Tree: "To dwellers in a wood . . . "(p.32). The opening establishes the scene of the story, and also indicates the narrator's relationship with story and scene. The narrator is both inside and outside his scene and his characters: he knows his area intimately, but he is able to render in self-conscious terms the everyday experiences of the non-reflective natives. While the

narrator is concerned to demonstrate the closeness to nature of his "dwellers in a wood", the first such dweller met is busy singing of sheep-shearing and is not at all reflecting on his present surroundings. However, this difference of attitude emphasises the very closeness to nature which is our present concern. Dick's simplicity in taking for granted and leaving unthought his own intimate knowledge of his surroundings is all the more pointed because of the relative sophistication of the narrator in being able to put such knowledge into words. The narrator as interpreter understands Dick's sensibility, gives the sense of having shared it in his own past, but is outside such simplicity now. As a member of the urban society for which he interprets the narrator represents urban sophistication in opposition to natural simplicity. In this he may be producing a stereotype, drawing on pastoral expectations -- Dick sings "in a rural cadence" -- but he nevertheless gives the stereotype at least a limited validity. The limits to this validity are determined by the extent to which the narrator is ultimately inside or outside the sophisticated society for which he interprets. The point here is that his distance from his "rustics" sanctions an initial reading of them in simplistic terms as traditional "peasants". The tensions in the narrator's portrayal of both rural and urban characters will be examined below, but for the present it is important to note that he is not a member of the rural community and can therefore read for us its relation to nature.

However, the narrator does very little to actually suggest a particular relationship between the villagers and nature. The novel's opening and its division into parts according to the seasons both suggest a simple relationship between the community and nature, but little is said to justify it. This is important though, because the analogy between community and nature is based on pastoral convention. Since it is not denied, the conventional assumption is initially undisturbed. The few scenes of work in the book -- honey-taking, transportation of farm goods -- do help to suggest a closeness to production and to nature, but it is mainly in the quire's incarnation of tradition and simplicity that the already given convention is sustained. The few hints that this is a pastoral community are enough to enable a reading on those terms in which nature is equated with open communal relations and traditional continuity.

The relationships within the quire are consistently presented as open and simple. There is an easy-going simplicity in their conversations which is born of their own recognition of community and their shared attitudes and memories. Their embodiment of community values is seen most clearly in their music: simple traditional music dependent for much of its charm on association, as evidenced by the large number of stories which members of the quire are able to relate to present performances. The music has for them the value of continuity both in tunes and instruments, and it is thus for them a symbol of

community stability and harmony through time. In contrast, the new organ, the single organist, and new complex tunes represent for the quire an alien form of music without associations or relation to their specific communal past. It is this communal past which enables the openness of relations among the quire. The essence of the rural way of life is tradition in the sense of simple continuity: a harmony between past and present which allows for and is represented by harmony in the present community. It is this simple unquestioning harmony which leaves undisturbed the assumption that the quire embodies a way of life at one with nature.

However, this equation can again be seen to rely on a convention of naive pastoral. That certain aspects of the narrative invite the reader to read Under the Greenwood Tree as pastoral should now be clear, but we must recognise the assumptions upon which this initial reading relies. The reading in terms of an invasion of nature by culture depends upon certain assumptions about the community which represents nature, and about the nature with which it is equated:

1/. nature is simple harmonious continuity;

2/. the community is simple and harmonious, or in other words, the quire is an adequate embodiment of the rural community.

The details of Hardy's text make these assumptions problematic. Indeed, it is not too much to say that Hardy's novels generally deny the possibility of analysis through classification into types: details always undo schematic readings. However, the initial reading does retain importance as a starting point in that it establishes a way of reading the details. If those details invalidate the way in which they are approached, the approach nevertheless remains valid in terms of process and gives form to the final reading generated by detail.

Nature

Perhaps the most conspicuous aspect of natural description in Under the Greenwood Tree is its scarcity. In a novel which invites an equation between continuity through tradition and closeness to and dependence upon nature we would perhaps expect greater use of nature as background; but the novel focuses almost solely on human relationships. This is in keeping with Hardy's general insistence on the human as more important than the natural: on the beauty of association. Nevertheless, it is significant that this, the closest of Hardy's novels to simplistic pastoral, contains least use of nature. We could perhaps argue from this simple fact that the narrator is unable to describe nature without raising questions which undermine the assumption, necessary for naive pastoral, that nature is a simple order. This is

going too far, but it is worth noting that in at least attempting to sustain a fiction of a community in harmony with nature the narrator largely avoids the equation of natural and emotional states which is so characteristic of the later novels. Paradoxically, to create the illusion of the community representing nature the narrator must emphasise the distinction between man and nature. The community comes to represent nature through a particular use of nature. Basically the community is equated with the cultivation of nature, the making of harmonious nature through traditional ways of life.

In terms of the nature-culture opposition then, what we really have is a distinction between two forms of culture: the simple and the sophisticated. The simple rural culture seems to represent "natural" culture because of its harmonising of nature; cultivated nature takes the place of wild nature, creating the illusion of harmony with nature. But since this harmony is achieved by the exclusion of wild nature the conflict between rural and urban cultures cannot be read as having any simple relevance to the question of man's own duality: both forms of culture rely on man separating himself from nature and thus emphasise his ability to adapt through reason. This reasoning is the apprehension of conflict in nature and the creation of artificial harmony; but the initial conflict still remains in nature and also, in human culture from which traditional ways and communal values attempt to exclude it. The pastoral convention of

the novel thus relies on the exclusion of wild nature from the rural scene[6].

However, this exclusion can still be seen in parts of the novel, and the creeping in of wild nature reveals the illusion on which the pastoral reading of the novel relies. The invasion of nature by culture has already taken place, and the novel in fact offers no such account of origins as it at first appears: distance from nature, whether in terms of consciousness or cultural sophistication, is not the ultimate cause of suffering or conflict. The artificial distance remains though, and we see in the limits of Yalbury Wood the suppression of wild nature, a suppression which ultimately reduplicates the conflict of wild nature itself and identifies man with nature in his impulses.

Geoffrey Day lives in the depths of Yalbury Wood, and we might expect here at least to find man living in a natural state, but his house is consistently described in contrast to its surroundings.

> Geoffrey Day lived in the depths of Yalbury Wood, which formed portion of one of the outlying estates of the Earl of Wessex, to whom Day was head game-keeper, timber-steward, and general overlooker for this district. The wood was intersected by the highway from

---

6. Cf. Bullen (Expressive Eye), p.52: "Nature [in UGT] never threatens man's existence, and hedges and streams are employed by Hardy quite specifically to prevent the mental eye from wandering beyond the events in the literary foreground".

> Casterbridge to London at a place not far from the house, and some trees had of late years been felled between its windows and the ascent of Yalbury Hill, to give the solitary cottager a glimpse of the passers-by.
>
> It was a satisfaction to walk into the keeper's house, even as a stranger, on a fine spring morning like the present. A curl of wood-smoke came from the chimney and drooped over the roof like a blue feather in a lady's hat; and the sun shone obliquely upon the patch of grass in front, which reflected its brightness through the open doorway and up the staircase opposite, lighting up each riser with a shiny green radiance and leaving the top of each step in shade (pp.104-5).

Despite being in the depths of the wood the game-keeper has successfully excluded nature. Indeed the charm of the house arises partly from a substitution of green grass for dense tree-growth and also from the curl of smoke which emphasises human comfort within. The door may be open and welcoming, but it is welcoming precisely because it provides access to a haven from the wood. The suppression of nature is perhaps most clearly indicated by the removal of trees to allow a glimpse of humanity on the highway. The keeper's preference, like that of the villagers generally, is for human companionship rather

than harmony with nature. The contrast is made again later in terms of darkness and light:

> He reached the keeper-steward's house, where the grass-plot and the garden in front appeared light and pale against the unbroken darkness of the grove from which he had emerged (p.147).

The grove is obscure, potentially hostile, whereas the cultivated harmony of nature tamed by man is open, clear, and inviting. The pastoral existence relies on the exclusion of darkness and confusion, just as the community relies on the exclusion of individual passions in acceptance of traditional values. Contradictions are harmonised in Mellstock by suppression of individuality and its inevitable conflict: at least they appear to be. In terms of the exclusion of nature Yalbury Wood stands as a reminder of the precarious nature of the illusion of pastoral innocence. Even the space under the greenwood tree on which the story ends is "a carefully-tended grass-plot"(p.188).

Narrator and Characters

This artificiality of the rural community undermines the apparent terms of its contrast with urban culture: the two become different forms of the exclusion of conflicting aspects of natural existence. Thus the priority of one over the other is apprehended rather

through the narrator's attitudes to his characters than through simple acceptance of nature as benign. The priority thus apprehended is not free from ambivalence, as both types of culture are presented with shortcomings. Even where preferences seem most explicit the narrator's relationship between his own past and present clouds the issue. It is profitable to look at the relationship between narrator and characters in terms of his attitudes to: the quire; Fancy; and Maybold.

The Quire

The two most important factors in the narrator's relationship with the members of the quire have already been noted: his distance from the quire; and the idyllic, honest relations among the quire members. These two factors are intimately related in that the narrator shows himself as an outsider, but as a sympathetic, emotionally engaged outsider interpreting for the urban reading public a rural world which he loves. It is perhaps justifiable to relate this stance to Hardy's own position in relation to the "factual basis" of the community depicted: it is a community of which he has been a member, and his later distance from it is therefore inextricably tied up with his memory. The idyllic community can thus be seen as an idealisation of memory, a seemingly detached view of a community in which the narrator once lived almost as a previous self. In other

words the narrator is detached but involved, just as he is in the urban society for which he writes.

We can perhaps see this stance most clearly in the presentation of conversations among members of the quire. It was suggested above that these relations are open and honest, and they are; but they are presented in a definitely patronising manner. The community is a source of humour for educated urban readers. The humour may be good-natured, the rendering of characters sympathetic, but even that reveals the essential distance of the narrator from his characters: he is far enough removed from them to smile tolerantly on the absurdities of their lives. The most obvious example is the narrator's use of Leaf and the quire's feelings towards him for comic purposes. If the acceptance of Leaf is an indication of the community's openness, the narrator's ironic presentation of it suggests that the form of acceptance is an indication rather of limitations than of genuine fellow-feeling[7]. Consider Leaf's introduction to Maybold:

> 'I hope you'll excuse his looks being so very thin,' continued the tranter deprecatingly, turning to the vicar again. 'But 'tisn't his fault, poor feller. He's rather silly by nature, and could never get fat; though he's a' excellent treble, and so we keep him on.'

---

7. This is an oversimplification in that Leaf's role in the novel, and the community, is more than as the butt of humour; but this is one aspect of the narrator's relationship with the community.

> 'I never had no head, sir,' said Leaf, eagerly grasping at this opportunity for being forgiven his existence (p.94).

This comedy in the presentation of the quire suggests that the narrator does not seriously suggest the superiority of this culture over urban culture in any real sense. Simplicity is both idealised and satirised: sympathy for the quire suggests an appreciation of the community as shared values; but the comedy arising from this simplicity, or the apprehension of it as simple by educated standards, suggests an understanding of the limitations of traditional ways. If the narrator values traditions as picturesque echoes of the past, he also recognises the inadequacy of such tradition in enabling full realisation of individuality or adaptation to the present. His position outside the community enables both appreciation and criticism of it, both of which are revealed in his patronising attitude to the villagers. In this sense the community is truly a product of memory: it is remembered with affection but also with a realisation that it is irretrievable, suited only to the past.

Fancy

The narrator's attitude to Fancy Day can perhaps best be characterised as interest coloured by disapproval: she is pretty, captivating, but vain and overly self-conscious. These conflicting attitudes are

again shown by the tension between sympathy and judgement in the narrative. While the judgements are fairly obvious and conventional ones, the narrator's sympathy is revealed in the interest he takes in Fancy as an individual. The negative aspects of the characterisation of Fancy have been suggested above in relation to her courtship by Dick: she is concerned primarily with the interest she arouses in men, and considers flattery of her self desirable in itself.

The narrator's interest in Fancy is demonstrated in his first description of her:

> the blind went upward . . . revealing to thirty concentrated eyes a young girl framed as a picture by the window architrave, and unconsciously illuminating her countenance to a vivid brightness by a candle she held in her left hand, close to her face, her right hand being extended to the side of the window. She was wrapped in a white robe of some kind, whilst down her shoulders fell a twining profusion of marvellously rich hair, in a wild disorder which proclaimed it to be only during the invisible hours of the night that such a condition was discoverable. Her bright eyes were looking into the grey world outside with an uncertain expression, oscillating between courage and shyness, which, as she recognised the semicircular group of dark forms gathered

> before her, transformed itself into pleasant resolution;
>
> Her fair forehead and eyes vanished; her little mouth; her neck and shoulders; all of her (p.53).

The description clearly validates Dick's exclamation, "How pretty!". The narrator conveys the sense that Fancy is a woman who could certainly expect to be admired, and this may lessen if not remove the blame he places on her vanity. However, the terms of the final part of the description, as Fancy withdraws from sight, indicate that the type of beauty she displays depends upon her new-found refinement. Her "fair forehead" and "little mouth" represent a cultivated illusion of innocence which helps to explain her charm. In terms of the simplistic reading of Under the Greenwood Tree suggested above, this tends to break down the praise of simple or natural life over sophistication: it is at least as much Fancy's notions of how to present herself and accentuate her charms as her natural beauty which makes her so desirable to Dick. Similarly, her desirability and the praise she encourages from the quire generally rely in great part on her being an outsider: she is pretty because she is beyond compare in Mellstock; and her distance from the community, as demonstrated by her prettiness rather than simple beauty, makes her as much desirable to it as a threat to its ways. The narrator's presentation of the coincidence of

his own and the villagers' attitudes to Fancy blurs the apparently simple distinction between the honesty of the community and the vanity of the schoolmistress. The narrator's own interest in the heroine suggests that this is not simply sophistication beguiling simplicity.

Maybold

Not surprisingly, we find the same mixed response to Maybold that we have already noted in relation to the quire and Fancy. While Maybold represents change in Mellstock, the narrator himself does not seem to blame the parson personally. Indeed, several of the aspects of Maybold's coming which most upset the members of the quire are excusable in that they are more a reflection on Grinham than on the new parson. It is Maybold's earnest application of himself to his duty as parson which is his greatest fault in the eyes of the locals, and this is hardly a matter for personal blame. What blame the narrator suggests is directed at the institution of the church as being out-of-place in Mellstock: if a conscientious parson is a problem, then there is something wrong with the organisation of which he is representative, not necessarily with the individual.

Even to the extent that the parson is presented as an intruder, the criticism of him personally is offset by the narrator's sympathy for him in his feelings for Fancy. Maybold is humanised by being, along with Dick, a victim of Fancy's beauty and vanity. His mood as he leans

over Grey's Bridge after learning of Fancy's prior engagement is shared by the narrator. There is total sympathy for the vicar as victim of feminine caprice:

> Mr Maybold leant over the parapet of the bridge and looked into the river. He saw -- without heeding -- how the water came rapidly from beneath the arches, glided down a little steep, then spread itself over a pool in which dace, trout, and minnows sported at ease among the long green locks of weed that lay heaving and sinking with their roots towards the current. At the end of ten minutes spent leaning thus he drew from his pocket the letter to his friend, tore it deliberately into such minute fragments that scarcely two syllables remained in juxtaposition, and sent the whole handful of shreds fluttering into the water. Here he watched them eddy, dart, and turn, as they were carried downwards towards the ocean and gradually disappeared from his view (p.175).

In his disappointment Maybold becomes, like the other characters of the novel, merely an individual human being. The naive reading in terms of types breaks down into ambivalently presented individuals. The extent to which Fancy and Maybold remain invaders is determined by their social standing, and in this the idea of invasion

takes on new significance. We have already seen a hint of this in the recognition of Maybold's invasion depending on his position as parson, and in Reuben Dewy's recognition that parsons are a matter of fate: a new parson brings merely a new formulation of an existing social relationship.

Invasion as a Myth of Social Relations

If a new parson is merely a new incarnation of an already existing role in the society of Mellstock, then it is surely misleading to speak of Maybold as an invader of that society. To a certain extent he is an invader in that he brings about changes, but as we have seen the changes he introduces are largely implicit in the position which he fills: it is simply that parson Grinham had neglected his duty. However, to the extent that he is resented by the quire, Maybold remains an invader and is thus presented as such in as much as he is presented from the point of view of a narrator who mourns the passing of the quire. But given his position as parson he cannot be seen as a simple present invader; he is rather a repetition of an invasion occurring countless times with the coming of each new parson. This is the importance of Reuben's statement that the character of a new parson is a matter of fate: the institution of the church represents an invasion inherent in the social framework of Mellstock, and a new parson is thus merely the present incarnation of an ever-present invasion. Clearly to speak

of this as an invasion is to move away from common usage: the church is an element of a social structure which the implied author of Under the Greenwood Tree sees as inherently contradictory. The idea of an invasion without origin is a representation of this contradictoriness. Importantly in this context the function of Maybold as an obstacle to the happiness of Dick and Fancy is dependent rather on the social dimension of his position than his status as a present invader: Fancy looks higher than Dick on the social scale, and only Maybold and Farmer Shiner fill this role.

Which brings us to Shiner, who has been excluded from the discussion until now. In terms of a simplistic reading of Under the Greenwood Tree as naive pastoral, Shiner is rather out-of-place in the novel. He can perhaps be ignored initially as merely providing comic relief from the community itself; but it cannot ultimately be denied that he is in fact part of the Mellstock community. A simple reading of the novel assumes that the quire is representative of the rural community as a whole. Shiner is just one of the factors which denies such a reading.

Once we start to question the idea of the quire representing the community, it is clear that it does not. In this pastoral story there are no farm labourers, and although this may ultimately link the novel more closely with some aspects of the pastoral tradition in literature, it clearly disrupts a reading of it as naive pastoral demonstrating the superiority of life close to

nature. All the members of the quire are also members of the middle class of nineteenth century rural England: they are all artisans of one kind or another providing goods for those above and below them in the social scale[8]. Those above the members of the quire in social standing are represented by Fancy, Maybold, Shiner, and the game-keeper Geoffrey Day. Fancy and Maybold may originally be seen rather as simple outsiders -- members of the urban rather than the rural community -- but Shiner is as much part of the community as the quire itself. While the narrative largely suppresses presentation of social division, thus encouraging reading in terms of inside and outside, nature and culture, the social dimension of the rural community is vividly demonstrated by the threat which Shiner poses to Dick's courtship. His reaction to the quire's carolling suggests that he is outside their particular community, but his success in using his position to remove the quire and at the same time influence Fancy's life is representative of a power relying on social divisions.

Another member of the community who is nevertheless outside the quire is Geoffrey Day. His position in relation to the quire is particularly important as regards his daughter Fancy. Geoffrey is above the quire members in social standing through his direct employment in a position of responsibility to the Earl of Wessex. This social standing, and particularly the game-keeper's

---

8. On selection in the presentation of the community of Mellstock see: Enstice (Landscapes), p.42; and Merryn Williams (Rural England). p.115.

consciousness of it, is demonstrated in his initial refusal of Dick's suit, and his preference for Shiner. What we see here is a pronounced class-consciousness which would seem, on a simple reading, to be more characteristic of urban sophistication than of rural simplicity. However, Geoffrey Day's attitude exemplifies a class-consciousness inherent in the village as a whole: even Mrs Dewy considers herself "a person o' decent taste"(p.74). In this sense Fancy is merely a particular instance of a general class-consciousness, and an instance of the possibility of social climbing through her father's wealth. Her social status is both representative of and enabled by already existing social divisions. What makes her appear to be an outsider is her training as a schoolmistress, but this, like Maybold's position as parson, merely confirms her social superiority: the position is an integral part of the social divisions of the community and their maintainance. Like Maybold's, Fancy's invasion is the present incarnation of a constant state of affairs[9].

What then of the initial reading of Under the Greenwood Tree as naive pastoral, as a contrast between nature and culture? As we have seen, such a reading is

---

9. For the real causes of suffering in Victorian rural England as rooted in the rural society itself see Merryn Williams (Rural England), p.192. Cf. also Raymond Williams, "Thomas Hardy," Critical Quarterly 6, No.3 (1964), 341-51, p.349: "The class system is not something that comes from outside, into an otherwise unchanging rural scene. The rural scene, rather, is a class system, of a kind determined by the development of the society as a whole".

denied by various aspects of the text which reveal the rural community to be merely a different form of culture from the urban. Further, the invasion of the rural community from the outside appears on close reading to (for want of a more original phrase) have always already occurred. There is no present invasion presented as the origin of the conflicts witnessed in the novel; indeed there is a blurring of the distinction between inside and outside: the outside is already inherent in the framework of rural society. Similarly, if rural culture is always already invaded by urban culture, nature is always already invaded by culture. There is no original invasion in the sense of man taming nature or reason suppressing passion: man's relations both to man and nature are inherent in his being a part of nature and in the fact of nature being conflict.

However, the notion of invasion in Under the Greenwood Tree is not necessarily denied a function simply because the invasion is not presently occurring and has no real origin in the terms of the pastoral conventions on which the novel relies. The very fact that this is an obvious initial reading means that it remains valid in terms of the reading process. Further, because of its part in that process, the final formulation of meaning in the novel is likely to depend upon the initial naive reading for its terms. The need to read inwards in detail from an initial oppositional reading means that we can ultimately read outwards again, transforming the initial opposition from reality to metaphor.

Essentially, the idea of invasion is a means of representing an internal conflict or contradiction -- social divisions within the rural community -- in terms of external forces -- nature destroyed by culture. The form of the metaphor can be seen to be dictated by the culture on which it is commentary: the representation of conflict depends on the social structure in which the conflict inheres. Hardy takes the conventional opposition between nature and culture, simplicity and sophistication, by which elements of society define themselves in opposition to each other and uses it to undermine the naive pastoral it implies. By denying the opposition any analytic truth he demonstrates both its social nature and the contradictions and conflicts it seeks to naturalise. In this context, Dick's marriage to Fancy is a triumph not over culture, but over the forms of culture in the class-system of Mellstock. Even this limited escape from the ways of the world is one which Hardy never again allowed to his characters.

This final aspect of Under the Greenwood Tree is indicative of its relationship to the progress of Hardy's pastoral fiction. The essential lightness of the novel -- its basic praise of country life despite the undermining of any natural basis for such praise -- marks it off from Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, and The Woodlanders. Under the Greenwood Tree is rather a prologue to these novels than a part of their sequence. In this novel the interplay between conventional pastoral

and the undermining of those conventions is established. This is an interplay which is important to the three later novels, but not in the same way as it is in Under the Greenwood Tree. The pastoral fiction "proper" relies on the fact that nature and culture cannot be opposed in simplistic terms: this is a fact realised in the reading of Under the Greenwood Tree, which is thus preliminary to readings of Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, and The Woodlanders. The undermining of the rural-urban, nature-culture dichotomy is basic to all the pastoral novels, but is central only to the first.

In the later novels it is important to note that rural culture is used as a microcosm for life because of its "simplicity" rather than for any inherent value in itself. The rural-urban contrast is used to suggest the "pastoral" status of these novels, but it is always a fiction in the way that Under the Greenwood Tree demonstrates. The importance of Under the Greenwood Tree is that it demonstrates this fictional status, and also the way in which fictions can mean in mythic terms essentially because they are recognised as fictions. The terms of the fictions of the remaining pastoral novels are, like those of Under the Greenwood Tree, dictated by cultural conventions.

In this sequence of novels, the convention of separating reason and passion (a dichotomy intimately related to that of nature-culture) is progressively undermined so that ultimately reason and passion are seen as culturally determined forms of a basic contradiction.

Under the Greenwood Tree is preliminary to such a sequence in that it establishes the cultural basis of man's terminologies, particularly those relating to his own place in nature. The distinction between nature and culture is one form of the representation of contradiction which finds its most explicit form in the apparent duality of man himself. The conflict inherent in lived contradiction is apprehended in Under the Greenwood Tree as an invasion, whereas in the later novels it is seen through concentration on choice in relation to the makeup of self.

5

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Of all Hardy's novels, Far from the Madding Crowd is perhaps that which can most easily be seen to be written in the pastoral tradition. Unlike the other three novels with which the present study is concerned, this novel actually centres on a community engaged in the raising of sheep. This fact in itself links the novel closely with the pastoral tradition, and Hardy was careful to highlight and augment this link.

In his introduction to the New Wessex edition of the novel John Bayley lists the major examples of the novel's explicit ties with pastoral literature:

> The ballad Jacob Smallbury obliges with is 'as inconclusive and interminable as that with which the worthy old toper Silenus amused on similar occasions the swains Chromis and Mnasylus, and other jolly dogs of his day'. Gabriel Oak is conveniently gifted with the ability to 'pipe with Arcadian sweetness', and when he calls the sheep which a too enthusiastic sheep-dog has driven over the quarry edge it is as if 'the sailors invoked the lost Hylas on the Mysian shore'. His title itself shows Hardy's determination to load with ore here every rift of the pastoral vein[1].

1. (London: Macmillan, 1975), 13-35, p.14. As Squires (Pastoral Novel) points out, this link with traditional

As in Under the Greenwood Tree, one of the manifestations of the pastoral impulse of Far from the Madding Crowd is a contrast between rural and urban values and ways of life. However, unlike the earlier novel, Far from the Madding Crowd is not explicitly cast as a confrontation between these modes of existence. We can read Sergeant Troy as an urban invader, but there is little in the novel to support such a view as an explicit starting-place[2]. The simplistic scheme of Under the Greenwood Tree is replaced by a set of characters who are contrasted as individuals with different approaches to the same pastoral setting: they are seen as representatives of ways of thinking rather than of the social groups which may lie behind those ways of thinking. To the extent that there is a rural-urban contrast in Far from the Madding Crowd it is apprehended through narratorial comment and a sense that the narrator's love of his setting is indicative of distance from it. Importantly this setting is used to illustrate the efficacy of the various approaches to it of the characters rather than as the originating principle of

---

pastoral is not perfectly simple: "the falsification and artificiality of traditional pastoral have been rigorously excluded from Hardy's account. In Far from the Madding Crowd (1874) there is no perpetual summer, no frolicking sheep, no piping shepherds who live without care. Instead, there are many realistic details of actual rural life"(p.125). However, this is too neat, and the real relationship is more complex: there is a piping shepherd whether he has cares or not.

2. Clearly there is an element of rural-urban conflict, but I cannot agree with Squire's assertion that "Bathsheba moves from one suitor to the next . . . on the basis of their increasing urban attraction"(Pastoral Novel, p.129).

those approaches. What is valued in the rural setting is simplicity and directness, and an understanding of the terms of this evaluation is important in relation to the novel's implied judgements of the characters who must come to terms with themselves in this environment. The peace of the rural world is, as in Under the Greenwood Tree, a tribute to ways of approaching nature and self, rather than a simplistic preference for a benign Mother Nature.

Setting and the Rural-Urban Contrast

The natural world is continually present in Far from the Madding Crowd, and it is continually significant in relation to individual characters and (somewhat less centrally) to the notion of rural-urban contrast. The pastoral existence is idealised as a harmonious, largely trouble-free one in comparison with urban life, and the terms of this idealisation are given early in the novel. The hill on which Gabriel's hut is situated in Chapter 2 is "a featureless convexity of chalk and soil -- an ordinary specimen of those smoothly-outlined protuberances of the globe which may remain undisturbed on some great day of confusion, when far grander heights and dizzy granite precipices topple down"(p.46). This contrast suggests that despite the "desolating wind" which blows over the hill, the setting of the story is to be nature in an attenuated form, at least relatively tame.

This passage also dictates the terms by which man's relationship with the world is to be defined in the novel. The narrative presents a two-fold distinction between man and nature. The description of the sensation of rolling through the universe emphasises man's minute stature in that context, and in so doing suggests that the "consciousness of such majestic speeding"(p.47) cuts man off from the world he observes: in general, consciousness distances man from nature. Linked to this is the idea of human reason exemplified in Oak's flute-playing: "[the notes] had a clearness which was to be found nowhere in the wind, and a sequence which was to be found nowhere in nature"(p.47). The ordering made possible by human intellect is out-of-place in nature, alien to it. This distinction between man and nature is crucial to an understanding of character in the novel. The presentation of character relies on the distinction being internal, an addition to nature, for a schematic presentation of man as reason and passion.

The same notion can be seen to lie behind the valuation of rural over urban culture: closeness to nature enables an understanding of man's precarious place in nature and of the necessity of reason in controlling both nature and human nature. Civilised man is "dreamwrapt and disregardful"(p.47) of the ways of nature and of man's place in nature, and is therefore disregardful of his own dual nature. The pastoral impulse of Far from the Madding Crowd is a suggestion that harmony with nature relies on and enables harmony of

self. The method of the novel is schematic, the variety of characters representing a variety of approaches to nature and man's duality[3]. Only Gabriel Oak demonstrates the necessary control and self-control to harmonise both nature and self.

The harmony of rural life is exemplified by the scene of "The Great Barn and the Sheep-Shearers"(Chapter 22): "[s]o the barn was natural to the shearers, and the shearers were in harmony with the barn"(p.169). Importantly, this harmony is the result of continuity in the rural community, in contrast with change in urban culture exemplified by change in function of churches and castles. However, the harmony of shearers and barn depends on no natural harmony between man and nature, but on the narrator's realisation, prompted by simple observation of nature and its indifference to man, that "[t]he defence and salvation of the body by daily bread is still a study, a religion, and a desire"(p.168). Again the virtue of rural society is that its closeness to nature, its immediate dependence on nature, allows a correct perspective on life: a constantly renewed realisation of the precariousness of life and of the potential hostility of nature, and a consequent rejection of change for change's sake since the demands of working within nature's "laws" are constant.

Although the novel, by being written in the pastoral tradition, idealises rural life, there is constantly

---

3. For a similar representation of the schematic principle of Far from the Madding Crowd see Kramer (Forms), p.25.

underlying that idealisation the recognition that the values of rural life must be maintained by continuous human effort and control: the pastoral world of the novel is man-made and must be sustained by man[4]. The character who demonstrates the necessity for human control, and exemplifies the understanding involved in life "close to nature" is Gabriel Oak whose relationship with nature also indicates his approach to life in general, and particularly his own self.

Oak's Relationship to Nature

Oak's relationship to nature, his skillful use of nature through understanding, is exemplified in his action in a number of crises. Characteristically, Hardy's narrative focuses on these crises as episodes in a life which best reveal character. There is no suggestion of this focus representing a world-view: an idea that life is one tragedy after another. That the novelist values the unusual in events is one indication that he is not attempting a realistic portrayal of a "slice of life". Whatever approach Hardy makes to realism in his plots is through a conjunction of possible events, the probability of the given conjunction being of importance only in terms of the author's inclination to favour improbability in events. Hardy is concerned to examine human conduct

---

4. See Southerington (Vision), p.64 for a similar recognition of the necessity of understanding and control in relation to nature, and p.67 for an extension of the same principle to "control of the emotions by reason or by the will".

under possible, not necessarily normal, circumstances. We should also recognise the narrative's concern with how improbabilities are brought about at least partly by human conduct itself.

The first natural crisis in Gabriel's life is the loss of his flock through the over-enthusiasm of the young sheep-dog. Oak's reaction to this "pastoral tragedy" reveals much about his character in confronting misfortune. "Oak was an intensely humane man"(p.70), and this is demonstrated in his feeling of "pity for the untimely fate of these gentle ewes and their unborn lambs"(p.71). However, the main element of character displayed by this crisis is Oak's practicality and ability to learn through misfortune by a full look at all aspects of his situation: he immediately recognises that the loss of his sheep destroys "his hopes of being an independent farmer"(p.71); he is thankful for the fact that he is a single man and therefore has only his own life to reconstruct; and he soon begins "wondering what he could do"(p.71). Admittedly, the scene which Oak "listlessly" surveys while wondering is suggestive of intentions of suicide -- "over it hung the attenuated skeleton of a chrome-yellow moon" and "The pool glittered like a dead man's eye" -- but Oak banishes such thoughts -- "All this Oak saw and remembered"(p.71). The ultimate outcome of this misfortune is positive, and this is eloquent of Oak's ability to learn from misfortune, and also of the strength of his understanding of his world. A less clear-sighted man might well have taken such a blow

as a final defeat, but Oak's resilience suggests that he recognises the possibility of regeneration through making the most of what offers itself: "there was left to him a dignified calm he had never before known, and that indifference to fate which, though it often makes a villain of a man, is the basis of his sublimity when it does not"(p.73). Oak's "indifference to fate" implies a realisation that it is up to him to make what he can of his own life.

The nature of Gabriel's understanding as the basis of his ability to cope with crisis is seen in his actions in controlling the fire in Bathsheba's ricks. Oak is stirred from passive spectator to active fire-fighter by his ability to judge consequences: "instead of the straw-stack standing, as he had imagined, comparatively isolated, there was a regular connection between it and the remaining stacks of the group"(p.78). Once the attempts to control the fire begin, we can see through comparison with the villagers how much Oak's effectiveness depends not only on superior knowledge, but also on superior ability to take stock of a situation before acting. Unlike the farm-labourers, Gabriel is able to suppress instinctual panic and frantic, haphazard action: his superiority in crisis is a function of mental powers in terms of both understanding of nature and control of illogical elements of self. The labourers "set to work with a remarkable confusion of purpose"(p.79), whereas Oak plans his actions with care and a view to the worst possible effects of the fire:

> 'Stop the draught under the wheat-rick!' cried Gabriel to those nearest to him. The corn stood on stone staddles, and between these, tongues of yellow hue from the burning straw licked and darted playfully. If the fire once got under this stack, all would be lost (p.79).

With careful planning and analysis of consequences in terms of what Hardy elsewhere calls "a full look at the Worst"[5], the fire is quickly extinguished. Gabriel's self-control enables him to examine and control this vivid example of the destructive forces of nature by cutting off possible ways in which the fire may worsen or sustain itself.

Gabriel's success through careful skill and knowledge of the natural world is again seen in his saving of the blasted sheep. This example clearly indicates that the pastoral world of peace and prosperity relies on man's knowledge and understanding exercised as control of natural processes: without appropriate human intervention the sheep would have died. The good shepherd Gabriel Oak represents the possibility of man's harmonising of nature through controlling elements of it. This same control is seen in a negative way in the scene of the storm which threatens Bathsheba's ricks. In this case the effects of nature must be forecast and rendered

---

5. "In Tenebris II" (CP, no.136), and also "Apology" for Late Lyrics (CP, p.557).

harmless in advance, since they cannot be controlled in any direct manner.

Oak's ability to predict the coming storm and rain is based on his detailed knowledge of nature. By reading the various signs as messages from the "Great Mother"(p.257) Gabriel is able to accurately predict the two stages of the coming weather. Importantly, the Great Mother is not a benevolent mother: it is all too easy for a man such as Troy to ignore the signs which mean so much to Oak. Yet neither is she a malevolent mother, but rather a neutral personification of nature. What enables Oak to act appropriately is his realism in responding to nature: he neither assumes that all will be well, nor simply hides in the face of disaster. Gabriel recognises a certain logic in nature which indicates an imminent storm, and assumes the worst so that if it eventuates the ricks will be safe. The possible damage which he thus averts is given concrete form in the fate of Boldwood's unattended ricks: "Much of his wheat and all his barley of that season had been spoilt by the rain. It sprouted, grew into intricate mats, and was ultimately thrown to the pigs in armfuls"(p.337). It is because of his recognition of such a possibility, and his responsiveness to natural phenomena, that Oak is able to save Bathsheba's grain from this fate.

Again, Oak's vigilance is presented as the essential stance for man in the face of potentially hostile nature. The harmonious pastoral world is given precarious existence by man's controlling influence on wild nature,

and its maintainance relies on continued control. Further, the neglect of responsibility shown by Boldwood and Troy suggests that man's harmonising of nature is dependent upon appropriate control being exercised over his own self to render him capable of responsible action. The emphasis in Oak's relationship with nature is upon recognition of consequences, and this is also the emphasis in connection with character in the novel as a whole. The relationships among the major characters show the novel to centre on the notion of choice and consequence and its relation to individual relations to self. Essentially, Far from the Madding Crowd can be seen as a schematic examination of various relationships to self, and in particular to the natural in self, or the passions. Each of the major characters represents a type, a particular method of control of the passions. Just as the pastoral setting requires control of natural forces, so does the pastoral community: control in the form of suppression of passion with a view to avoiding possible undesirable consequences[6]. It is thus in keeping with the form of the novel itself to examine each of the four main characters individually, beginning with Boldwood as an instance of reasons for controlling passion, and ending with Oak as an instance of total control. Finally, it will be suggested how some aspects of the text undermine the apparent emphasis on control as desirable, and so both point toward a shifted emphasis in The Return of the Native and The Woodlanders and place Far from the Madding

---

6. See note 4 above.

Crowd within the framework of the pastoral fiction as a developing body.

Boldwood

The first description of Boldwood, apart from Liddy's characterisation of him, is in Chapter 12, where Bathsheba notices him as the single farmer in the Corn Exchange who does not look at her:

> He was a gentlemanly man, with full and distinctly outlined Roman features, the prominences of which glowed in the sun with a bronze-like richness of tone. He was erect in attitude, and quiet in demeanour. One characteristic pre-eminently marked him -- dignity (p.120).

Even from this pre-Valentine description we see hints of the character which will later emerge. Boldwood's dignity is presented as a somewhat artificial stance arrived at by strict self-control. In retrospect we can see it rather as self-suppression in that it involves a forced repression of potentially volatile elements of character. That Boldwood is an extreme personality attempting to maintain a peaceful equilibrium by repression is hinted at even here.

A similar hint is given in describing Boldwood's fascination with Bathsheba's Valentine:

> Since the receipt of the missive in the morning, Boldwood had felt the symmetry of his existence to be slowly getting distorted in the direction of an ideal passion (p.127).

Again the idea of "symmetry" suggests a forced balance: it is not a word usually applied to character, and its overtones of exactness suggest artificial means of achieving that exactness[7].

This idea of an extreme personality being repressed is made explicit in Chapter 18. Boldwood's normal way of life is described in terms which suggest withdrawal from life: his stable is "his almonry and cloister in one"(p.146). The extremity from which Boldwood has withdrawn is then described:

> The phases of Boldwood's life were ordinary enough, but his was not an ordinary nature. That stillness, which struck casual observers more that anything else in his character and habit, and seemed so precisely like the rest of inanition, may have been the perfect balance of enormous antagonistic forces -- positives and

---

7. It is interesting to note here Kramer's suggestion that Hardy does not value equilibrium. His comments apply directly to Bathsheba, but are relevant to the whole novel: "Hardy suggests that the ideal state is not one of perfect balance, as for instance, it is implicitly in Jane Austen" (Forms, p.34). The present chapter aims to demonstrate that Hardy sees both equilibrium and total control of one element of character by the other equally impossible and undesirable.

> negatives in fine adjustment. His equilibrium disturbed, he was in extremity at once. If an emotion possessed him at all, it ruled him; a feeling not mastering him was entirely latent. Stagnant or rapid, it was never slow. He was always hit mortally, or he was missed (p.147).

Importantly, Boldwood's nature is not ordinary, and he thus stands somewhat outside the major concern of the novel with choice and consequence. However, as an example of an extreme character, he is important in that he comes to stand for the elements of ordinary natures which must be controlled. Given his extra-ordinary nature, the only form of control available to Boldwood is repression, but the inability of this repression to enable him to cope with life suggests that the novel does not espouse withdrawal from life as an appropriate way of dealing with passion. Boldwood cannot avoid life, since his repression is ultimately ineffective in keeping him safe from the arousal of his passions by outside forces. Such severe repression of passion is self-defeating in that Boldwood's emotions affect him more greatly when released. His is an unusually volatile nature to begin with, but the extremity of his loss of control after receiving the Valentine suggests that his repression has made his passion even harder to control once it is released.

The effects of this release are readily apparent: Boldwood loses control of all ordinary emotions and

thoughts, and is able to think of nothing but his desire to possess Bathsheba. Again, in this context the emphasis is less on Boldwood's particular strategy for controlling his passions than on his character as an exaggerated representation of the antagonistic and potentially self-destructive tendencies in all human character. In this sense he is an auxiliary character, serving to demonstrate the necessity for responsibility in relation not only to one's own emotions , but also to those of others. Boldwood's unnatural character heightens the sense of Bathsheba's lack of responsibility by representing the worst possible consequences of an apparently trivial choice. It is because of this function of Boldwood that we must ultimately accept Oak's judgement that the farmer has not become mad and is therefore guilty of murder. Boldwood's nature is obsessive, and his shooting of Troy is rather the result of an inability to suppress his nature than a change in his basic character. Boldwood is always a potential murderer in that he represents the violent possibilities of uncontrolled human nature. That he represents these possibilities by being an extraordinary character suggests that these elements of character can and should be controlled by more ordinary persons.

The remaining major characters, Bathsheba, Troy, and Oak, are seen as more ordinary characters, and much of the novel centres on their particular strategies in relation to the harmonising of their selves: in particular their relation to their own passions, their

ways of coping with the possibilities Boldwood represents. If Boldwood cannot control his emotions even by total withdrawal from life, it is suggested that adequate exercise of reason by these characters can enable a personal balance to be achieved without such withdrawal. That the form of this balance may ultimately deny important aspects of life is a further point which will be considered after examination of the apparent balance itself.

Bathsheba

The development of the character of Bathsheba Everdene provides an instance of development towards balance in life through recognition that a previous mode of existence has brought great pain to herself and others. Nevertheless, the chief interest of Bathsheba is as an example of that other, ineffective, mode of existence and approach to self. The way in which this approach to life is examined is through emphasis on the choices which lead to pain, and particularly on motive in such choices: Bathsheba's apparent disregard for consequences and her easy denial of her own better reason.

The basis of the character which brings to Bathsheba so much trouble is seen in our first sight of her, perched on top of a wagon-load of furniture. The scene is narrated as seen from Oak's position, and this clearly reinforces the contrast between the two which is a major

element of the novel. However, the narrator remains distanced from Oak to the extent that the characterisation of Bathsheba is as much his as the farmer's. The important scene is the young lady looking into her mirror:

> a small swing looking-glass was disclosed, in which she proceeded to survey herself attentively. She parted her lips and smiled. . . . whether the smile began as a factitious one, to test her capacity in that art , . . . nobody knows; it ended certainly in a real smile. She blushed at herself, and seeing her reflection blush, blushed the more. ...
>
> A cynical inference was irresistible by Gabriel Oak as he regarded the scene, generous though he fain would have been. There was no necessity whatever for her looking in the glass. She did not adjust her hat, or pat her hair, or press a dimple into shape, or do one thing to suggest that any such intention had been her motive in taking up the glass. She simply observed herself as a fair product of Nature in the feminine kind, her thoughts seeming to glide into far-off though likely dramas in which men would play a part -- vistas of probable triumphs -- the smiles being of a phase suggesting that hearts were imagined as lost

> and won. Still, this was but conjecture, and the whole series of actions was so idly put forth as to make it rash to assert that intention had any part in them at all (pp.43-44).

This passage is given at length because it provides terms with which Bathsheba's character can be read in relation to later events in the novel. The vital elements of her character are: self-centredness; and a tendency to act on impulse, to be insufficiently concerned with consequences. The first element appears here in the form of vanity, as Oak recognises in his conversation with the gate-keeper (p.45). In this instance Bathsheba's vanity is merely a recognition of her own beauty, but a general self-importance and resistance to anything which threatens to deny her own desires is foreshadowed in the episode at the turnpike-gate.

We see a more important example of this in her reaction to Oak's criticism of her conduct in relation to Boldwood. Bathsheba comes to Oak to have her mind set at ease, for him to talk to her as one who loves her. She does not come to him to be criticised objectively, and this is an indication of the essential selfishness of her coming at all:

> the impetuosity of passion unrequited is bearable, even if it stings and anathematizes -- there is a triumph in the humiliation, and a

> tenderness in the strife. This was what she had been expecting, and what she had not got. To be lectured because the lecturer saw her in the cold light of open-shuttered disillusion was exasperating (p.159).

Bathsheba's vanity will not allow of relationships which do not gratify her. Whatever else she may value in Oak is dependent upon the first necessary element of his love for her: without it she can have nothing to do with him and dismisses him from her farm. Importantly, when she successfully recalls him it is through appeal to this love which she (rightly) assumes he must still have for her.

Related to Bathsheba's selfishness is the other main element of her character: impulsiveness[8]. It is this impulsiveness which, fed by her vanity, leads to the dismissal of Oak alluded to above. It is a characteristic implicitly present in the initial description of Bathsheba on the wagon. The narrator modifies rather than denies his "conjecture" relating to Bathsheba's motives in surveying herself by asserting that "the whole series of actions was so idly put forth as to make it rash to assert that intention had any part in them at all". This certainly does not deny the possibility of Bathsheba

---

8. See Kramer (Forms), p.34 for Bathsheba as impulsive, and also Peter J. Casagrande, "A New View of Bathsheba Everdene," Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy, ed. Dale Kramer (London: Macmillan, 1979), 50-73, p.52 for an association of Bathsheba's shortcomings with "defective non-human nature".

dreaming of future conquests, but rather makes such a possibility the outcome rather than cause of the young lady's examination of herself. In this way it is an indication of vanity; but more importantly, the possibility of the whole action being impulse rather than intended in any strict sense plants the seeds for characterisation which is developed more fully as the novel progresses.

The essential difference between impulse and intention is that intention implies some consideration of possible consequences, whereas impulse is merely acting upon present inclination without such consideration of the future. The suggestion that impulse lies behind Bathsheba's trivial act of self-admiration links it to self-centredness, and establishes the possibility that her actions will be dictated by momentary desires for self-gratification, and not by careful analysis of consequence. The novel provides a number of concrete instances of Bathsheba's impulsiveness, and this can be seen as the major cause of pain in the novel. Ultimately consequences are such that Bathsheba's impulsiveness is subdued and she recognises, or at least accepts, the need for control to attain balance in life.

The most obvious example of Bathsheba's lack of consideration for consequences is in relation to Boldwood. The idea of sending the reserved farmer a Valentine is itself an idle impulse, indulged in for a joke, for the momentary amusement it provides. Certainly Bathsheba would be justified in maintaining that the

actual consequences were so unlikely as to be unpredictable, but her impulsiveness does not even let her consider consequences at all: her total concentration is on the present amusement. This refusal to consider consequence constitutes an abdication of responsibility, as symbolised by the idea of tossing the Hymn Book to decide who shall receive the Valentine. The referral of the choice to chance is an indication that Bathsheba wishes not to consider this choice as a choice: by making the decision dependent on chance she is pretending to take no responsibility. In reality this is merely an example of Bathsheba's self-delusion: by tossing to decide she is choosing not to choose, but of course this is an acceptance of either outcome, and she is therefore still ultimately responsible for her actions[9].

A similar self-delusion is seen in the choice of seal for the Valentine:

> Here's one with a motto -- I remember it is some funny one, but I can't read it. We'll try this, and if it doesn't do we'll have another (p.126).

The consequences of this impulsiveness are only too clear as the novel progresses, and indeed they are worsened by Bathsheba's subsequent inability to control her responses

---

9. It is in connection with this kind of action that Roy Morrell states: "Hardy is not protesting against man's helplessness in the hands of Fate, but against his putting himself, by foolish and irresponsible actions, into such a helpless position" (Will, p.127).

to Boldwood. If her sending the Valentine is an example of her lack of consideration for consequences, then her responses to Boldwood are an example of impulsiveness in the form of misguided sympathy. In all her relations with Boldwood Bathsheba exhibits an inability to control her momentary emotions -- be they vanity or sympathy -- by a reasonable look to the future. Her self-delusions demonstrate that she has at least a subconscious recognition that she is acting impulsively and irresponsibly, but she is able to convince herself that responsibility is out of her hands. The narrator's ironic realisation of this self-delusion is nowhere more apparent than in his analysis of Bathsheba's motives in going to Bath to see Troy:

> Was Bathsheba altogether blind to the obvious fact that the support of a lover's arms is not of a kind best calculated to assist a resolve to renounce him? Or was she sophistically sensible, with a thrill of pleasure, that by adopting this course for getting rid of him she was ensuring a meeting with him, at any rate, once more? (p.232).

It is clear that the form of Bathsheba's irresponsibility is not a blindness to reason, but a wilful abandonment of reason for the self-gratification offered by momentary impulse. She is ultimately irresponsible, but not without the possibility of change.

Her lack of control of her emotions is itself rather a choice than an innate characteristic, but to achieve control she must lose some of her self-love. It is thus that her ultimate "reform" is in the form of a subduing of her previous nature, the wilfulness which the narrator fully recognises:

> 'Bathsheba's was an impulsive nature under a deliberative aspect. An Elizabeth in brain and a Mary Stuart in spirit, she often performed actions of the greatest temerity with a manner of extreme discretion. Many of her thoughts were perfect syllogisms; unluckily they always remained thoughts. Only a few were irrational assumptions; but, unfortunately, they were the ones which most frequently grew into deeds (p.156).

Troy

If Bathsheba's recklessness exhibits a failure to assert reason and control emotions when making crucial decisions, Sergeant Troy provides rather an example of simple enjoyment of life without reflection by his reason. Indeed, it could almost be said that Troy has no capacity for foreseeing consequences because he has no comprehension of a future beyond the immediate satisfaction of his own desires: he does not choose, he merely acts. He is much more totally a creature of

impulse and emotion than is Bathsheba, and if he does not reach the tragic passions of a Boldwood, it is because what capacity for reason he does possess is in the form of understanding and manipulation of others' emotions to satisfy his own desires. To the extent that Troy possesses reason it is used for this purpose rather than to control passions, and we can thus say that he exemplifies life by emotion in that his reason is subservient to his passions.

The first example of Troy's impulsiveness is in relation to his intended marriage to Fanny Robin. Troy's reaction when he meets Fanny in the square and learns of her mistake is based solely on his present annoyance at his embarrassment in the church. Certainly he is justified in such annoyance, particularly since he, like Bathsheba, is constantly conscious of his own self as a point of focus for himself and others, but his reaction also demonstrates his inability to see beyond his present passion. This reaction is entirely self-centred: "I don't go through that experience again for some time, I warrant you!"(p.142). Fanny's protest that "the mistake was not such a terrible thing" has no weight with Troy: while the reader may be inclined to agree with her, Troy's total concentration on himself and his feelings in the present makes such a statement false in relation to him. Indeed, his living solely in the present means that he is unable to recognise and express his love for Fanny until after her death, the time at which his present feelings are necessarily focused on her. It is only in this moment

that Troy can make his (essentially selfish) admission of love and guilt:

> This woman is more to me, dead as she is, than ever you were, or are, or can be. If Satan had not tempted me with that face of yours, and those cursed coquetries, I should have married her. I never had another thought till you came in my way. Would to God that I had; but it is all too late! I deserve to live in torment for this! (p.309).

This speech demonstrates Troy's self-centred impulsiveness just as much as does his refusal to attempt marriage to Fanny a second time, or his involvement with Bathsheba and their marriage.

Troy's first meeting with Bathsheba, in the fir plantation, again demonstrates his impulsiveness, but also his skill in manipulating the emotions of others to gratify his own feelings and further his desires. The following exchanges provide excellent examples of Troy's genuine feeling for Bathsheba's beauty, and his method of engaging her feelings for his own satisfaction:

> 'Thank you for the sight of such a beautiful face!' said the young sergeant without ceremony.
>
> She coloured with embarrassment.''Twas

> unwillingly shown,' she replied stiffly, and with as much dignity -- which was very little -- as she could infuse into a position of captivity.
>
> 'I like you the better for that incivility, miss,' he said (p.185);
>
> 'This trifling provokes, and -- and --'
>
> 'Not too cruel!'
>
> '-- insults me!'
>
> 'It is done in order that I may have the pleasure of apologizing to so charming a woman, which I straightway do most humbly, madam,' he said, bowing low (p.185-86).

As in the later scene in which Troy gives Bathsheba his watch and ultimately receives it back, it is unclear how deeply Troy's feelings are engaged in relation to Bathsheba. What is clear is his enjoyment in arousing feelings in Bathsheba herself, his prolonging of the momentary pleasures of flirtation. Importantly, Troy's understanding of human feelings is such that he is a very successful flirt, as witnessed in these scenes and in the famous description of the sword exercise in "The Hollow amid the Ferns"(Chapter 28). Troy's impulsive, self-centred nature enables him to take pleasure in such momentary feelings without a view to the consequences. It is unclear when in his relationship with Bathsheba Troy begins to think of her as a wife, but it is clear that he

is drawn into the relationship by his desire to prolong pleasures in the present. In rousing Bathsheba's feelings for momentary amusement he weaves for himself, and her, consequences which are not a matter of conscious choice. In making his reason subservient to his emotions, Troy is irresponsible: his choices are made unconsciously, without a view to the future. Whereas Bathsheba consciously abdicates responsibility, Troy has no consciousness of being responsible at all, he merely indulges immediate impulses.

As in the case of Bathsheba, the narrator comments on Troy's character and his lack of responsibility both ironically and explicitly. The narrator comments ironically on Troy's reaction to the gurgoyle's destruction of his flower-planting on Fanny's grave:

> He stood and meditated -- a miserable man. Whither should he go? 'He that is accursed, let him be accursed still,' was the pitiless anathema written in this spoliated effort of his new-born solicitousness. A man who has spent his primal strength in journeying in one direction has not much spirit left for reversing his course. Troy had, since yesterday, faintly reversed his; but the merest opposition had disheartened him. To turn about would have been hard enough under the greatest providential encouragement; but to find that

> Providence, far from helping him into a new course, or showing any wish that he might adopt one, actually jeered his first trembling and critical attempt in that kind, was more than nature could bear (p.325).

Troy is being mocked here for his lack of insight, and his continued tendency to shift responsibility from himself. In his impulsiveness and self-centredness Troy is quick to see the night's happenings as some kind of divine malevolence towards himself. His inability to see past himself manifests itself as blindness to the possibility of unfortunate chance, and further prevents him from taking the necessary action to rectify the elements permitting that chance. This action is readily performed by Bathsheba, who is beginning to learn to govern action by reason, but Troy remains a creature of selfish impulse. He is as self-centred at his death as he was on the narrator's first explicit characterisation of him:

> Simply feeling, considering, and caring for what was before his eyes, he was vulnerable only in the present. . . . With him the past was yesterday; the future, to-morrow; never, the day after. . . . He was moderately truthful towards men, but to women lied like a Cretan -- a system of ethics above all others calculated to win popularity at the first flush

> of admission into lively society; and the possibility of the favour gained being transitory had reference only to the future. . . . His reason and his propensities had seldom any reciprocating influence, having separated by mutual consent long ago. . . . [w]hilst he sometimes reached the brilliant in speech because that was spontaneous, he fell below the commonplace in action, from inability to guide incipient effort (pp.188-89).

Oak

If Boldwood, Bathsheba, and Troy illustrate different forms of the failure of reason to control the passions and enable balance of the self, and hence responsible action, then Oak is a positive example of responsible action through control of emotions. As suggested above, Oak's success as a shepherd and bailiff is attained by control of nature by human reason: Gabriel is able to take stock of a situation and act appropriately. Importantly, this taking stock takes the form of an analysis of possible consequences, in particular the worst possible outcome of a situation, and actions which take such possibilities into account. In this way Oak is able to prevent the worst possible consequences of a given situation precisely because he acts as though they were probable. This is also his approach in human relationships, and his action involves

the suppression of his individual emotions for the sake of responsible choice.

Oak demonstrates the control of emotion by reason most vividly in his relationship with Bathsheba while he is working on her farm. There is no suggestion that he has ceased to love Bathsheba, but he recognises the hopelessness of his suit in the circumstances, and he does not allow his feeling for his mistress to influence his analysis of the possible consequences of her actions. Essentially, Oak controls his feelings so that he can act upon them: he expresses his love for Bathsheba by suppressing his own desires so that he can offer judgement of her choices and help her to avoid undesirable consequences. It is thus mainly through his analysis of Bathsheba's predicament that we apprehend Oak's strategy of control in life.

We see Oak's control of his emotions particularly clearly in a scene already alluded to above: his conversation with Bathsheba while they are grinding the shears (Chapter 20). While it is clear that Bathsheba's part in this exchange illustrates her self-centred, impulsive nature, it is equally clear, and is indeed explicitly stated, that a contrast is evident between mistress and shepherd. Oak's control is in part a reaction to Bathsheba's lack of control, but it nevertheless serves to exemplify his approach to life:

> Bathsheba had unmistakably lost her temper, and on that account Gabriel had never in his life

> kept his own better. He said nothing. She then broke out --
>
> 'I may ask, I suppose, where in particular my unworthiness lies? In my not marrying you, perhaps!'
>
> 'Not by any means,' said Gabriel quietly. 'I have long given up thinking of that matter.'
>
> 'Or wishing it, I suppose,' she said; and it was apparent that she expected an unhesitating denial of this supposition.
>
> Whatever Gabriel felt, he cooly echoed her words --
>
> 'Or wishing it either.'(p.159).

Whatever Bathsheba may think, it is clear to the reader that Gabriel has certainly not given up "wishing it", or at least feeling for Bathsheba. Oak simply recognises that his chance of helping Bathsheba to act responsibly with regard to Boldwood depends upon his feigned indifference to his mistress in terms of his own feelings. Unlike the novel's other major characters, Oak is able to formulate and act upon a strategy whatever its effect on his own emotions. In relation to Bathsheba this is a form of expecting the worst: he fully expects never to be able to act on his feelings for her, so he gives them low priority in direct terms. He actually lets slip this opportunity to express his emotions because he knows his to be a lost cause: instead he controls his emotions and acts for the good of others. His forward looking

strategy is given explicitly when he tries to pass it on to Bathsheba in relation to Troy:

> since we don't exactly know what he is, why not behave as if he might be bad, simply for your own safety? (p.210).

Unfortunately such a strategy requires a degree of self-control which Bathsheba does not have in relation to Troy: unlike Gabriel she cannot suppress her emotions.

The other side of Oak's reserve is demonstrated in his ultimate success in winning Bathsheba through feigned indifference to her. Here he suppresses expression of his feelings for the sake of drawing her out, forcing her to admit her own feelings. This is a lesson he has learned in the course of the novel, partly from his mistake in too eager courting of Bathsheba early in the story. Again his reason has triumphed and he has learned that self-control is as important in human relationships as is control of nature in farming. Once again the strategy he has adopted is to look at consequences and act in such a way that he has the best chance of achieving the desired result. By not putting himself too much forward Oak minimises the risk of pain: he exemplifies the "sure game".

In contrast to the other major characters of the novel, Oak does not act by impulse, nor does he act with a view to himself only: his control of his emotions

involves a full look at possible consequences in relation to all those involved in a given situation. This is something Bathsheba realises in her own crisis:

> What a way Oak had, she thought, of enduring things, Boldwood . . . had not yet learnt, any more than she herself, the simple lesson which Oak showed a mastery of by every turn and look he gave -- that among the multitude of interests by which he was surrounded, those which affected his personal well-being were not the most absorbing and important in his eyes. (p.304).

This is where Oak differs from the other, self-centred characters: his selflessness enables him to look at consequences and to control his passions. This is shown to be the only successful approach to life in Weatherbury: selflessness, the novel suggests, benefits the community as a whole, and ultimately the self[10]. But is there not an undercurrent of meaning which detracts from this simple endorsement of fellow-feeling and self-control?

It may seem somewhat perverse to give at length a reading of Far from the Madding Crowd in terms of the

---

10. For the connection between personal "equilibrium" and that of the community see Southerington (Vision), p.69. Clearly the present context demands substitution of "control" for "equilibrium", but the connection of personal and community fates is important.

necessity of controlling emotions by reason and then suggest that the reading is incomplete. However, the structure of the present chapter is intended to reflect the balance of meaning in the novel itself: if there are elements which suggest a counter-reading to that given above, then they are much less explicit than the elements which give rise to the initial reading; and that initial reading remains dominant. It is simply that the narrator's emotional engagement with his characters suggests that the endorsement of control is somewhat reluctantly made. This gives a sense that a choice of approach to life has been made, but that it is not clear-cut or totally satisfactory. Indeed, we could say that the trace of reluctance in the text suggests the necessity of choice but also asserts the impossibility of choice by representing two conflicting elements of human nature as essential. The choosing becomes a representation of contradictory aspects of life rather than their reconciliation: the nature of the choice as a form of suppression or repression suggests a contradiction more essential and pervasive than the terms of its representation as reason opposed to passion. This conflict in the self is rather an instance of a general struggle for survival, a struggle in which the stability of the community depends on the sacrifice of the self. It is this suppression of self which is reluctantly accepted.

The reluctance of the narrator to accept the emphasis of his narrative on control, and his

inconsistency with his own explicit judgements, is seen primarily in his interest in and sympathy for Bathsheba. This interest can be seen to be based at least partly in a sexual attraction for Bathsheba, a fascination with the very passion which much of the narrative seems to judge as irresponsibility. This is a general charactersitic of Hardy's narratives, the narrator and male characters sharing a voyeuristic pleasure in the actions of the female characters. This is demonstrated in the scene discussed above in which Oak and the narrator share a fascinated view of Bathsheba admiring herself in her mirror.

The narrator and Oak share a similar view of Bathsheba meeting Oak when he has come to propose to her: "'Yes -- I know that,' she said, panting like a robin, her face red and moist from her exertions, like a peony petal before the sun dries off the dew"(p.63). This description is characteristic of the narrator's interest in Bathsheba's physicality, particularly during scenes of heightened emotion, such as her "panting" speech at Liddy's door after meeting Troy (p.186), and her feeling of being "aflame to the very hollows of her feet"(p.206) after Troy's first kiss. Similar fascination surrounds Troy's physicality, and we can say that the narrator, despite his contrary judgements, is attracted to the animal passion which lies just below the surface of the calm community of Weatherbury. Such interest is not exclusively "sexual", but it is so in large part, particularly in relation to Bathsheba.

Overall, the narrator is as fascinated by Bathsheba as are her suitors. While he explicitly denies the responsibility of her actions, they are nevertheless interesting in a way that Gabriel Oak's clearly formulated strategies are not. It is not too much to say that while Gabriel is the most highly praised character in the novel, he is certainly not the most interesting. Bathsheba's self-centredness is more fascinating than Oak's selflessness. This is characteristic of Hardy's novels: consider, for example, the interest in Henchard in The Mayor of Casterbridge, which is in large part dependent on his illogical, headstrong nature. If the narrator endorses selflessness, there can be little doubt that he finds the exaggerated self-realisation of selfishness more congenial to his imagination. While it is a commonplace that "good" characters are less interesting, or harder to draw, than "bad" characters, the apprehension of such a contradiction is nonetheless meaningful in each narrative to which it applies. There is a sense in which Oak's control of himself deprives him of self-assertion and will: individual will is a function of selfishness, and while it disrupts community it allows a different kind of individual self-realisation. The narrator's interest in such passionate self-realisation informs a sympathy for characters possessed of strong passions. Within the context of Far from the Madding Crowd this sympathy is a feeling that such characters cannot help themselves, and so it does not deny the value

placed on reason, but it does detract from the apparent simplicity of judgement in the novel.

Ultimately of course, Gabriel Oak's control and reserve are rewarded, but even in this ending there is a counter-logic which suggests that both he and Bathsheba have actually lost. Bathsheba has lost her passionate nature, and Gabriel has therefore won a different woman from the one who originally fascinated him. If the pair have a love based on "good-fellowship"(p.395), they do not have a passionate love. Again there is a tension here between stability and powerful momentary realisation: Oak and Bathsheba have a "love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam"(p.395); but there remains a fascination with that passion which has formed the major interest of the preceeding narrative. There is a sense of loss in the pair's acceptance of peaceful harmony which detracts from the novel's explicit endorsement of such peace[11]. In this novel stability triumphs over individualism, but as in Under the Greenwood Tree it is not a total victory, and the claims of the individual remain as a reminder that

---

11. For similar recognition of tension between sympathy and judgement in the narrator's relationship with his characters in Far from the Madding Crowd see: Lawrence Jones, "George Eliot and Pastoral Tragicomedy in Hardy's Far from the Madding Crowd," Studies in Philology 77, No.4 (Fall 1980),402-25; and esp. Kramer (Forms) p.35: "The contradiction that is inherent between Hardy's idea of man's correct posture towards nature's overbearing force and his sympathy for those who do not or cannot maintain that posture sets up in Far from the Madding Crowd a pattern of dichotomies that continue to engross Hardy in later novels".

control obscures contradictions rather than reconciling them.

While Far from the Madding Crowd is a far more dramatic novel than Under the Greenwood Tree, its relation to pastoral is much the same. Both novels rely on a fiction of the rural community as peaceful and idyllic. However, in Far from the Madding Crowd the basis of the community in a caste-system, or relational system is much more readily apparent. The stability of the community is seen to rely on the denial of certain aspects of individuality and individualism. As Under the Greenwood Tree suggests, and Far from the Madding Crowd develops, urban and rural societies both depend on shared values for stability, and the depiction of a rural community is chosen more for its relative simplicity than for any inherent value. The pastoral fiction is used as a way of apprehending basic values because of simplicity, not as a way of endorsing simplicity necessarily. In addition, a certain closeness to physical nature is used to suggest general and eternal characteristics of man's relationship with his environment, rather than necessarily to suggest the supremacy of some kind of agrarian idyll. In these two ways the pastoral communities are used as microcosm, and the social divisions inherent in all societies are neither valued nor criticised; closeness to nature is neither valued nor criticised: both are seen as representative of more basic issues.

These basic issues find expression in the idea of individual and community responsibility. Under the Greenwood Tree sets the scene for the pastoral fiction by establishing the fiction in which these terms are placed -- the pastoral ideal -- and Far from the Madding Crowd begins the series of direct questionings of responsibility in terms of reason and passion. The questioning begins in terms of how to sustain the peace of the rural community through responsibility, and hence the emphasis in this novel is on reason suppressing passion. However, the idea of passion as representing a form of self-realisation superior in individual terms to that of membership of a peaceful community detracts somewhat from this emphasis. In Far from the Madding Crowd this is a minor element of the novel, but it points towards a movement away from emphasis on sustaining peace. The suggestion latent in Far from the Madding Crowd is that the claims of individualism, which come to be equated with passion, are just as important as the claims of reason and shared emphasis on peace. This suggests that the idea of choice of action as a suppression is of limited validity, and that the claims of passion cannot be ignored.

In his next pastoral novel, The Return of the Native, Hardy explicitly examines the ways in which passion continually frustrates reason. The novel thus serves as a kind of foil to Far from the Madding Crowd and suggests that choice as suppression is an inappropriate form of responsibility, and that

unconscious desires cannot be denied. The later novel retains a notion of responsibility, but moves away from the simplistic terms of Far from the Madding Crowd where responsibility is control, and simple acceptance of one's position sustains the harmony of Weatherbury.

6

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

The Return of the Native may initially seem somewhat out-of-place in a discussion of Hardy's "pastoral" novels. Certainly Michael Squires excludes it from his account of the pastoral novels of George Eliot, Hardy, and Lawrence[1]. However, there are good reasons for including the novel in the present discussion, despite its setting on inhospitable Egdon Heath. Important factors in this consideration are: the heath supports a local community isolated from urban culture and directly dependent on the heath itself; and there is presented in the novel an explicit rural-urban contrast, both in Eustacia's longing for society and in Clym's rejection of Parisian culture. The community itself is not presented in the same idealistic terms as in Under the Greenwood Tree, but is rather seen from the first to be a group of individuals whose relations are determined by social distinctions. Nevertheless, the small size of the community, and the rigid clearness of these social distinctions makes for a sense of community in which individuals have specific places and are collectively active in sustaining traditional values and ways of life. These elements justify classification of the novel in general terms as "pastoral", despite the harshness of the environment which sustains the community in its precarious existence. This setting clearly contradicts

1. Squires (Pastoral Novel), p.20: "the malignancy of the heath denies the possibility of a pastoral world".

the conventional picture of pastoral communities as peaceful harmony within peaceful natural settings, but when considered in conjunction with the above-mentioned elements, results rather in a modification of Hardy's particular version of pastoral than in a contradiction of it.

It is useful to consider The Return of the Native as arising from the conjunction of two contradictory impulses: the pastoral and the anti-pastoral. The central meaning of these two terms in the present context is that pastoral idealises whereas anti-pastoral undermines the idealisation inherent in conventional, particularly naive, pastoral. In the final analysis there is a sense in which Hardy's anti-pastoral becomes more of an idealisation than his pastoral; but for the present it is important to note that by totally abandoning conventional peaceful nature in favour of a deliberately harsh setting, the author of The Return of the Native rejects the limited idealisation of Under the Greenwood Tree and Far from the Madding Crowd. Whatever other factors may emerge from these novels, there is a clear suggestion of peace and harmony in their settings, however it may be achieved. In contrast, whatever beauty may ultimately be found in Egdon is seen precisely because the heath is not harmonious and beautiful in this same way. The pastoral impulse which offers the reader a picture of an isolated community "far from the madding crowd" is balanced by an anti-pastoral impulse which locates that community in a hostile environment. It is as though Yalbury Wood has

invaded Mellstock, or the Hollow amid the Ferns has overgrown the pastures of Weatherbury. It is in this sense that The Return of the Native is a modification rather than a rejection of Hardy's version of pastoral: those elements which are seen in attenuated form in the earlier novels are the whole setting of The Return of the Native. Or rather, the idealising imposition of control on nature is denied in the later novel. To the extent that cultivation is possible on Egdon it is as an exception to the general rule, just as wild nature is the exception in Under the Greenwood Tree and Far from the Madding Crowd. Clearly this has important implications in terms of the depiction of character as reason and passion, and suggests that the terms of an initial schematic reading of the novel will also be reversed from those of the earlier novels. In turn, this influences the form of a final reading in terms of the conflicting details of the text. Both of these readings may be most easily demonstrated by considering character in relation to setting.

I: Schematic Reading

The method of arriving at an initial reading of The Return of the Native is perhaps best exemplified by the influential approach of D.H. Lawrence in his "Study of Thomas Hardy". As has frequently been noted, this essay is more about Lawrence than about Hardy, but that part of it devoted to The Return of the Native is particularly

interesting in that it exemplifies an analogical reading of the novel. Lawrence takes up the invitation of the narrative to read the relationship between character and setting as one of reflection. In this he is reading the novel on its own terms, and the limitations of such a reading are set rather by the overdetermined text itself than by any inherent failing in the approach.

One particularly important form of this overdetermined nature of the text is a dual function of setting: the heath is explicitly symbolic; but it is also literal and realistic. The heath reflects states of mind, but it is also a real heath with a real relationship to specific characters and their states of mind. The readings generated by these two functions are at odds with each other: a symbolic reading of the heath leads to a schematic reading of the novel; but this is undercut by the real relationship of character to heath as it is perceived by the narrator's "imaginative reason"[2]. A schematic reading emphasises man's distance from nature in the form of a duality in man himself: hence the possibility of analogy. On the other hand, a reading in terms of imaginative perception of real relationships with the heath emphasises man's place in nature as part of an overall relational system: man's apparent separation from nature is part of the form of nature, and the possibility of his being is inherent in nature. In this second reading man is both of and not of nature at the same time and as a whole; but in the schematic

---

2. For Hardy's use of Arnold's term see Life, p.147.

reading he is dual: part nature, part not-nature. Given his own symbolic approach to "external" nature, and his own dualistic conception of man, it is not surprising to find Lawrence giving expression to the basis of a schematic reading of The Return of the Native.

For Lawrence the heath is "the real stuff of tragedy in the book":

> It is the primitive, primal earth, where the instinctive life heaves up. There, in the deep, rude stirring of the instincts, there was the reality that worked the tragedy. Close to the body of things, there can be heard the stir that makes us and destroys us. The [earth] heaved with raw instinct, Egdon whose dark soil was strong and crude and organic as the body of a beast. Out of the body of this crude earth are born Eustacia, Wildeve, Mistress Yeobright, Clym, and all the others. They are one year's accidental crop[3].

The heath is clearly seen as a symbolic rather than real force behind the characters, and in this sense the reading is analogical. The basis of the analogy in a dualism is suggested by the characterisation of Egdon as "instinctive": the heath represents the passions. This is made clear in a later paragraph:

---

3. D.H. Lawrence, Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays, ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 7-128, p.25.

> Not Egdon is futile, sending forth life on the powerful heave of passion. It cannot be futile, for it is eternal. What is futile is the purpose of man (p.25).

This suggests that reason or thought, man's "purpose", is an aspect of his being at odds with his instinctive self as represented by the heath. Indeed, this is immediately clarified:

> Man has a purpose which he has divorced from the passionate purpose that issued him out of the earth, into being (p.25).

For Lawrence, as for Hardy, man is a duality of thinking and being. Clearly there are important and major differences in the dualisms of the two authors, particularly since Hardy's dualism is subsumed by a larger perspective on life; but it is important to note that the reading of the heath as symbolic, expressive, is very much a reading in Hardy's own terms, whatever Lawrence may ultimately do with those terms for his own ends. A schematic reading drawing on the heath as underlying symbol is very much in keeping with at least some of the cues of the text and with Hardy's overall approach to character. It is in this sense that The Return of the Native appears initially as an anti-pastoral novel: wild nature represents the instinctive,

passionate side of human nature, just as tame, cultivated nature represents in Under the Greenwood Tree and Far from the Madding Crowd the possible naturalising of conflict through reason.

In this context it is important to note that the heath, unlike all Hardy's other landscapes, is almost exclusively natural, rather than the product of centuries of more or less developed cultivation:

> The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained. Those surfaces were neither so steep as to be destructible by weather, nor so flat as to be the victims of floods and deposits. With the exception of an aged highway, and a still more aged barrow presently to be referred to -- themselves almost crystallized to natural products by long continuance -- even the trifling irregularities were not caused by pickaxe, plough, or spade, but remained as the very finger-touches of the last geological change (p.36).

It is in this sense that the scene represents elements of human nature: it is constant, inexplicable and dark (p.33-34). Perry Meisel calls the heath "a metaphor for the human mind; within it, or against it, Hardy's characters play out their lives"[4], but it is rather a

---

4. Meisel (Repressed), p.76.

metaphor for the human passions, as Lawrence recognised: the heath is "singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony"(RN,p.35).

It is important to recognise this justification for a Lawrentian reading of the novel, but also to recognise that this is an initial reading which tends to ignore much of the detail of narration in the novel. However, the present concern is to examine the terms of that initial reading, terms which are dictated by the heath's presence as a reminder of the persistence of passionate, instinctive life. It is therefore important to begin by examining character relationships in terms of the effects of passion on action.

The terms of character portrayal in The Return of the Native are familiar from a reading of Far from the Madding Crowd, but the emphasis in the later novel is more upon the failure of reason to control passion than in the earlier novel. As the presence of the brooding heath suggests, The Return of the Native is concerned to present the workings of the more elemental, darker side of human nature: elements which were present in Far from the Madding Crowd in the form of Boldwood and Troy, but which were ultimately largely controlled by Oak's common sense. The deaths of two major characters in The Return of the Native is an indication of this shift of emphasis. The passions which fascinate the narrator in Far from the Madding Crowd despite his expressed disapproval are allowed to fascinate in this later novel far more on

their own terms and for their own sake. Indeed, the embodiment of constancy and reason in this novel, Diggory Venn, is himself almost a reductio ad absurdum of the faithful lover represented by Gabriel Oak. This is a point which will be discussed further, but Venn's relevance to a schematic reading of The Return of the Native is simply to remind the reader that common-sense is possible. He serves as an indication that the heath in its symbolic sense can be resisted: on the level of a causal reading of character relations, the final tragedy of the novel is not inevitable, but depends on characters acting by instinct. In terms of man's duality, The Return of the Native is a demonstration of the power of passion unrestrained by rational will in the sense of control.

The form of this demonstration of the self-destructiveness of passion is a clear indication that the tragedy of the story is the direct result of choices in relationships being made on the basis of gratification of passion. This is not to say that the narrator offers clear judgement on the actions of the characters. The novel simply demonstrates an antagonism between passion and reason which results in the self-destructiveness of passion in the context of "reasonable" social relations. This has been well stated by Lawrence:

> This is the theme of novel after novel: remain quite within the convention, and you are good, safe, and happy in the long run, though you never have the vivid pang of sympathy on your

> side: or, on the other hand, be passionate, individual, wilful, you will find the security of the convention a walled prison, you will escape, and you will die . . . This is the tragedy, and only this: . . . the division of a man against himself (p.21).

However, this gives no grounds for judgement, and indeed where Lawrence sees Clym's excessive thought as the cause of tragedy in the novel, F.R. Southerington sees passion as the bringer of suffering[5]. Importantly they both stay within the terms of the initial schematic reading of character and its reliance on dualism. The thrust of the current discussion is that Hardy's texts undermine this very dualism through a contradictory presentation of it which is a tacit recognition of its inability to account for the origin of conflicting needs, values, and so on. One of the indications of growing dissatisfaction with the implications of the schematic mode is the increasing difficulty from Far from the Madding Crowd to The Return of the Native of weighing fascination against approval of characters. However, it remains true that, in the given social context, a schematic reading of The Return of the Native is possible which sees the final catastrophe as the result of passion uncontrolled by reason[6].

---

5. See Southerington (Vision), p.87; and for an explicit disagreement with Lawrence see Morrell (Will), p.88. In keeping with his general argument, Morrell sees the tragedy of The Return of the Native as arising from neglected chances.
6. For readings in these terms see: George Woodcock's Introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 11-36, p.27 where,

We see the inability to control passion in all the major characters and their relationships. We see it for example in Wildeve's return to Eustacia after his abortive attempt to marry Thomasin:

> 'Do you know the consequence of this recall to me, my old darling? I shall come to see you again as before, at Rainbarrow.'
>
> 'Of course you will.'
>
> 'And yet I declare that until I got here to-night I intended, after this one good-bye, never to meet you again.' (p.86-87).

We may compare this with the actions of Bathsheba in returning to Troy with the avowed intention of giving him up. Both characters know what the more reasonable course would be, but it is doubtful that either has enough self-control even to believe in their avowed motive: it is a symptom of guilt which they feel on account of the gap between real motive and reasonable action. Certainly they have no will to resist their passions once in the position to indulge them. Wildeve rationalises his weakness of will by attributing it to strong passion --

---

referring to a note of Hardy's in Life p.120, he sees the plot as arising from the failure to ward off "passions, prejudices and ambitions"; Butler (Thomas Hardy), p.49 where the tension of the novel is located in Eustacia who is "possessed by the elemental passions of the heath"; and Howe (Thomas Hardy), p.62 where the characters of the novel are seen as "embodiments of a ruling passion".

> the curse of inflammability is upon me, and I must live under it, and take any snub from a woman. It has brought me down from engineering to innkeeping: what lower stage it has in store for me I have yet to learn (pp.86)

-- but he has reason enough to see his dangerous action even as he performs it, hence his rationalisation, and it is therefore a weakness to go against reason.

Similarly, Eustacia's submission to the sensuousness of her dance with Wildeve, after her marriage to Clym, is an example of the same weakness of will; although it is not so simple, since she is trying to release herself from the consequences of another obstacle to reasonable action: dreaming. Perhaps more pertinent is the giving in of Wildeve and (though less wholly) Eustacia to their old passions when Charley inadvertently repeats the signal of summons from Eustacia to her old lover, and they tentatively plan their flight together. Eustacia's reluctance to resume her relationship with Wildeve is the result of pride, another manifestation of passion, not reason. Wildeve has no such overriding passions, and it is not important that the fire is a mistake but that Wildeve responds to it: he should not, by reason, do so whether it is a deliberate signal or not. His dismissive attitude to the mistake shows that he has already succumbed to his passions:

> 'I did not send for you -- don't forget it,

> Damon; I am in pain, but I did not send for you! As a wife, at least, I've been straight.'
>
> 'Never mind -- I came.' (p.345).

If the repeated submission of Wildeve and Eustacia to their old sexual passions is the final catalyst for disaster, then the situation in which this fatal repetition occurs, and which effectively renders passion ungovernable, is the result of the submission of reason to other forms of passion: notably dreaming and pride. Dreaming is dangerous because it creates illusion, and in trying to grasp this illusion in the real world man comes undone. This is an idea played out in the romance of Eustacia and Clym: to Eustacia, Clym conjures up dreams of Paris and escape from the heath. Ironically, she sees him as anything but a native, and it is at least partly because of her illusory dreams that she desires him as a personification of, and means to, those dreams[7]. Clym on the other hand has dreams of his own, and rationalises his desire for Eustacia by making her fit into his ideal future in a way which is impossible for the real Eustacia. It is the misguided basis of this marriage which makes it so unstable, particularly when acted upon by another form of passion: pride.

It is the unmoving pride of both Eustacia and Mrs Yeobright which makes a catastrophe out of a

---

7. As Boumelha points out -- (Hardy and Women), p.60 -- there is also a sexual element to the dissatisfaction of Eustacia in her marriage and therefore to her initial desire for Clym: she certainly does not desire him only as a means to social advancement.

misunderstanding. The confusion over the coins entrusted to Christian becomes disastrous because, without either woman having a clear view of the real state of affairs, they become involved in an argument which leads to injured pride and indignation on either side. The mistake could have been cleared up if the women had not immediately assumed each other hostile and jumped to the defensive conclusion that insult was intended. Thus, the seeds are sown for the death of Mrs Yeobright, although the clash of pride between herself and Clym has already contributed to these circumstances through their estrangement over the marriage of Clym and Eustacia. Further, it is through pride that the breach is not healed sooner, and it is pride which finally shapes the disaster: Eustacia's failure to open the door because of a fear of being compromised and, more importantly, through simple pride; and Mrs Yeobright's immediate assumption that she has been snubbed by her son.

In terms of this schematic reading of the novel, it is not circumstances which create disaster, but characters' reactions to them, their actions against reason because of various manifestations of their passions. In this context, the characters provide a composite picture of the nature of passion and its potential self-destructiveness. Far more detail could be given to illustrate that Eustacia in particular is a study in the possible extent of passion in individuals. However, as suggested above, this schematic reading is

given much of its justification through a symbolic reading of the heath itself. But even the above sketch of such a reading of character demonstrates the partial nature of such an assumption: Eustacia in particular is defined by her relation to the heath as a real setting. It is in the narrator's perception of the heath and its relation to character that we find a reading both symbolic and literal, and it is this reading which undermines a schematic view of the novel as a whole. Such a reading again alters the status of the apparent duality of man as an informing element of the novel, and also redefines the status of the novel itself as pastoral.

II: "Alternative" Reading

I noted above Meisel's suggestion that the heath is "a metaphor for the human mind; within it, or against it, Hardy's characters play out their lives", and while there is truth in the statement, it is not the whole truth: the metaphoric function of description in the novel is shaped by the relation of characters to the heath itself, and the description itself does not ignore this but points to these relations. The extent to which the heath can be read as a metaphor is limited by the fact that it is a real heath with real effects on characters: effects which depend on their relation to the heath. The heath is "symbolic", but not simply symbolic: it symbolises the natural element in man's nature, but it is also one of

the real factors influencing it. The landscape reflects and influences[8].

In this connection we need to be sensitive to the tone of the opening description of the heath. Consider the following example:

> It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature -- neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly: neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony (p.35).

An analogy is offered: as the heath, so human nature; but the whole opening description is presented from the point of view of a self-conscious observer examining the heath's effects on himself, effects which are dependent on his kinship with nature, but which render reflection of the mind indirect. It is through examination of relationship that the heath can be said to be reflective of human nature. And it is clearly not a simple matter of the observer's living closeness to the heath. Indeed, the heath is described as fitting "the moods of the more

---

8. For apprehension of a dual nature to the narration, and particularly description, of The Return of the Native see: Butler (Thomas Hardy), p.34; and Eagleton ("Nature as Language"), p.155. These characterisations of narrative duality are not necessarily equivalent to the present suggestion. See also Bullen (Expressive Eye), p.90: "In his account of Egdon Heath," Hardy "managed to unite his talent for the picturesque with his tendency to interpret form as symbol -- to bring together the literal and the abstract".

thinking among mankind"(p.34), not the less thinking or passionate.

Self-consciousness as an effect of the heath is perhaps the most important feature of description in the novel as a whole: the heath reflects states of mind through the self-consciousness of both characters and the narrator. It is thus crucial to an understanding of the way in which the heath reflects the characters of the novel that we be sensitive to their various relationships to the heath and its effects on them. It is important to note in this connection that the self-conscious observer of the opening chapter is conscious of man's intimate relationship with even this most natural of places. Man and his particular relationship to the heath are introduced early in the description:

> Looking upwards, a furze-cutter would have been inclined to continue work; looking down, he would have decided to finish his faggot and go home (p.33).

How characters relate to the heath determines its effect upon them, and shows their nature just as much as does the use of direct analogy. That is not to say that Hardy's narrator's descriptions do not function by analogy, merely that they do not function by simple analogy: there is always the complicating factor of direct relationship. In this context it is especially important to examine the narrator's depiction of

Eustacia, Clym, and Venn, and their relationships with the heath.

Eustacia

We first see Eustacia as an anonymous figure on the top of Rainbarrows, and it is important that she seems an integral part of the scene:

> Such a perfect, delicate, and necessary finish did the figure give to the dark pile of hills that it seemed to be the only obvious justification of their outline (p.41);

> The form was so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure . . . (p.41).

This relates to Hardy's belief that the marks of man, and man himself, are more important than nature, particularly to art; but there is more to the description than this. Eustacia is displaced from her position, and the narrator comments:

> The only intelligible meaning in this sky-backed pantomime of silhouettes was that the woman had no relation to the forms who had taken her place, was sedulously avoiding these, and had come thither for another object than theirs. The imagination of the observer clung

> by preference to that vanished, solitary figure, as to something more interesting, more important, more likely to have a history worth knowing than these new-comers, and unconsciously regarded them as intruders (p.42).

This is especially interesting when we consider that these "intruders" are the permanent inhabitants of the heath, justified in their relationship with it by their reliance on it.

This makes Eustacia's identification with the heath one of the most interesting aspects of the novel: in what sense is she, rather than the community which she avoids, the perfect justification for the scene? The answer lies in the association of her consciousness with that of the self-conscious observer, who is also an outsider and finds the outside view more easily understandable. To the narrator who sees solitude in natural association with the heath, Eustacia as "queen of the solitude"(p.42) is a particularly interesting figure. Yet the development of this identification relies paradoxically on Eustacia's self-image of her utter incompatibility with the heath and the community which it supports (and the second consideration is perhaps more important in the end: it is the limited nature of the community which the heath supports which most alienates Eustacia). Finally it is her passionate and self-conscious character which makes her both compatible and incompatible with the heath.

Each of these aspects of Eustacia's relationship with the heath is fairly clear, and is easily demonstrated. When we meet her again on Rainbarrows after the departure of the rustics the point which is again emphasised is her compatibility with the heath. This time it is specifically her mood which links her to the heath, and the depth of her passions is hinted at as the reason for the likeness. Eustacia and the heath are both mysterious:

> Suddenly, on the barrow, there mingled with all this wild rhetoric of night a sound which modulated so naturally into the rest that its beginning and ending were hardly to be distinguished. The bluffs, and the bushes, and the heather-bells had broken silence; at last, so did the woman; and her articulation was but as another phrase of the same discourse as theirs. Thrown out on the winds it became twined with them, and with them it flew away.
>
> What she uttered was a lengthened sighing, apparently at something in her mind which had led to her presence here. There was a spasmodic abandonment about it as if, in allowing herself to utter the sound, the woman's brain had authorized what it could not regulate (pp.78-79).

The analogy between Eustacia and the heath is clear. It relies again upon the reflection of the observer in that the comparison is between two objects which seem, to the narrator, to be equally mysterious. Importantly, at this stage Eustacia remains totally mysterious to the reader: she is anonymous still, and the only hint of her emotional state is Wildeve's murmured comment at the end of the preceeding chapter, "Still waiting, are you, my lady?"(p.76), and its relevance is as yet unclear. This emphasis on mystery in Eustacia continues throughout the whole novel. Even once we are aware of her character to a certain extent, the villagers' frequent linking of her to witchcraft reiterates her mystery. The most important aspects of this mystery are that it is linked to the darkness and inhospitability of the heath in the observer's eyes, and that it is linked to a sense of the depth of her passions: "She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman"(p.89). Thus, the passions are linked to the mysterious quality of Egdon, and again we see the use of the conception of duality. The analogy between the passions and the heath relies on and demonstrates this conception; but Eustacia is a model example of this conception and its use in the novels because she embodies both aspects of it: her passions link her to the heath in description, but her own self-conscious attitude to the heath suggests a dual nature because her consciousness is totally distanced from and antagonistic towards the heath.

However, Eustacia's apparent duality is rather the result of a dual perspective in the narrative: the overlaying of symbolic and literal elements of narration. Eustacia is passionate and self-centred and her melancholy air accords with the observer's apprehension of the heath: thus she is likened to the heath, and it stands metaphorically for her nature. But in reality she hates the heath because of this very passion which it represents on one level. What may appear as an inner conflict in Eustacia, a duality which lies behind the metaphoric use of the heath, is undermined by a recognition that the real source of conflict is her relationship with the heath. This relationship demonstrates the transcendence of a dualistic conception of character: Eustacia as an individual is in conflict with the heath because it denies her opportunities for instinctive action. In other words, Eustacia is in conflict with nature because she is part of nature, not because she is separate from nature or is herself divided.

This second aspect of Eustacia's relationship with the heath is clear throughout the novel, and nowhere more so than in her reasons for dreaming of love with first Wildeve and then Clym. Her idealisation of Wildeve is simply a way of "filling up the spare hours of her existence", and he is chosen simply "for want of a better object"(p.94). When she thinks she has found in Clym a better object, it is clear to the reader that one aspect of her choice is merely that Clym is a potential means of

escape from the heath. It is this image of Clym as a gateway to Paris, of which she dreams and from which he has returned, which allows Eustacia to indulge whatever other feelings she has for him: he is not only her passport to society, but this is a necessary condition of her marrying him. Such is Eustacia's hatred of the heath which she ultimately blames for her ruin (p.345) that marriage is only acceptable which will take her away from it[9]. The basis of this hatred is, as the narrator continually makes clear, the lack of society: the swarthy heath may reflect her passions, but Eustacia's self-consciousness demands that they be indulged in a manner which allows of advance of position and entrance to a gay life. Eustacia's self-image necessarily involves movement and adoration in a wider circle of society than Egdon allows. Paradoxically, this very feeling of being out-of-place emphasises those characteristics of Eustacia which identify her with the heath. Her alienation from the heath because it limits social intercourse, and because she has no working connection with it, accentuates, through her self-consciousness, her brooding, passionate nature:

> Her power was limited, and the consciousness of this limitation had biased her development. Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled

9. This is only one factor influencing Eustacia's decision to marry Clym: see above note 7.

thereto (p.90).

What we must not lose sight of in examining Eustacia's relationship to Egdon is that her identification with the heath relies on the perspective of narration. Her unconscious passions naturally relate to the heath as part of nature, but what makes her such an interesting example of the narrator's use of nature is the way in which her own consciousness of distance from the heath actually associates her more closely with it. The narration undermines the duality on which it appears to rely by linking apparently contradictory aspects of character to the one setting: the initial apprehension of Eustacia's relationship to the heath as revealing a split in her own nature is shown to be an effect of the narration. It is nevertheless an effect which makes clear the antagonism in the real relation of character to heath in this instance through conflict in the narrative itself. The narrative dramatises a real contradiction as a conflict which is initially read as internal. Again the apparent conflict of principles in man is undermined to show man as subject to a principle of conflict in nature[10].

---

10. Two readings of Eustacia which suggest her being part of nature, without necessarily recognising this implication in themselves, are: George Woodcock's Introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel, p.30 -- Eustacia attempts to overcome "time and space (symbolized by the hour-glass and the telescope she carries with her on the Heath)"; and Kramer (Forms), p.56 -- "The heath may in a large sense serve as a symbol of the circumstances of life which destroy the rebel; but it is simultaneously a manifestation of universal nature with which Eustacia is capable of being in full accord".

Clym

If in a schematic reading of The Return of the Native Eustacia Vye appears as a personification of passion, then Clym Yeobright is the would-be bringer of reason to Egdon who must resist the temptations of the passions. He fails to achieve this: he is captivated by Eustacia, and drawn to proud defiance of his mother by his refusal to accept her judgement of his future wife. His ideal of bringing reason to Egdon is never realised, but instead he becomes a travelling preacher. In an initial reading we may see these failures as stemming from the one mistake of succumbing to his passion for Eustacia[11]. However, a closer reading suggests that this submission is rather a symptom than a cause: the fault is not that Clym admits his passion for Eustacia so much as that his ideal for Egdon has such a hold over him that he thinks he can accommodate Eustacia in it. It is in this ideal that we can begin to see Clym's real blindness: in his relation to the heath and its community.

First we should note that there are two characters in The Return of the Native who profess to love the heath: Clym and his cousin Thomasin. Importantly, both grew up on the heath, but not working on the heath. They have thus been able to walk the heath on their own terms, not of necessity accepting it as it presents itself. The

---

11. See, for example, Millgate (Career), p.125: "Its story . . . is that of a man diverted from his high purposes by an infatuation with an unusual woman living in a lonely place".

heath-workers who must take the heath on its own terms to survive from its meagre offerings have respect for the heath, have no inherent fear of it, but they do not profess to love it. Clym and Thomasin therefore have something of an ideal relationship with the heath in their past. The connection of this relationship with the past causes Clym to idealise the heath itself: for a young man in Paris and becoming disenchanted with social life the obvious object of idealisation is the Golden-Age of innocent youth in a simple environment.

There is, however, another, conflicting aspect of Clym's return to the heath. It is partly a search for lost innocence, but it is also a form of self-assertion in the shape of a new ideal. There is a suggestion of this aspect of Clym's character in his general relationship to the heath:

> when he looked from the heights on his way he could not help indulging in a barbarous satisfaction at observing that, in some of the attempts at reclamation from the waste, tillage, after holding on for a year or two, had receded again in despair, the ferns and furze-tufts stubbornly reasserting themselves (p.192).

This particular observer identifies with the heath through his love for it, and the satisfaction he derives from seeing the heath's reassertion is thus a form of his

own self-assertion. We see the same aspect of his character in a negative form later in the novel:

> There was something in its oppressive horizontality which too much reminded him of the arena of life; it gave him a sense of bare equality with, and no superiority to, a single living thing under the sun (p.222).

Clym wants to be superior, as Derwent May notes in his introduction to the New Wessex edition of the novel[12], and this casts completely different light on the failure of what appears, in the context of a schematic reading of the novel, to be a selfless ideal undermined by the self in the form of passion. In reality, the ideal itself is an indication of Clym's involvement in the general struggle for supremacy: he is as selfish in the fight for survival as any other creature of nature, and the idea of him representing reason stems mainly from his own self-image and Eustacia's idealisation of him. His true blindness lies not only in interpreting his emotions in the light of an ideal, but also in not recognising the nature of the motivation behind that ideal. It is important to note that Clym's ideal leads him to misinterpret the real: he does not admit Eustacia's real nature; he thinks he understands the heath and its inhabitants and can improve them. It is, however, more important to see that the picture of Clym as bringer of

---

12. (London: Macmillan, 1975), 15-26, p.20.

reason to Egdon is his own illusion: rather he is a bringer of passion -- his own self -- in the form of reason -- his apparently selfless ideal for the education of others.

The form of selfishness in Clym's ideal is twofold. First there is his reason for leaving Paris. It is not simply that he recognises the vanity of Paris and desires none of it, but rather that he sees the forms of vanity as beneath him:

> my business was the idlest, vainest, most effeminate business that ever a man could be put to. That decided me: I would give it up and try to follow some rational occupation among the people I knew best, and to whom I could be of most use (p.188).

For Clym, leaving Paris is rising above the way of life there. The second form of self-assertion is his assumption that he can help to better the inhabitants of Egdon: he unconsciously desires to bring them under his dominance, and at the same time derives satisfaction through apparent self-sacrifice. In the context of Clym's return to Egdon, his sacrifice is self-assertion, a promotion of moral self-satisfaction, and his blindness is to fail to see this.

However, we must guard against taking this recognition of self-centredness in Clym to extremes. It is clear that the narrator is ambivalent in regard to his

hero, and there is an element of tragedy in Clym's failure to achieve his ends. Likewise, there is an element of success in his ultimate vocation of itinerant preacher, in that he is offering advice in the light of his own failings; but there is even here a suggestion of narratorial irony, of Clym still as a would-be martyr. What we must note is that there is no clear judgement on Clym by the narrator, and this is one aspect of the undermining of a schematic reading. Whereas a schematic reading sees Clym fighting against the force of passion to enlighten the heath, a concentration on his relationship with the heath reveals the selfishness in his selflessness and the blindness of his ideal. This places him firmly as an individual engaged in the conflicts and contradictions of existence rather than a divided being fighting himself. The apparent inner struggle becomes a struggle to realise self in a conflicting world, and importantly the clear-cut judgement of the initial dualism becomes an awareness of the impossibility of judgement: Clym is neither a failure nor a success. The dualism itself and the impossibility of judging in terms of it become representations of Clym's attempts to realise himself. In this sense, rather than being a true reading of Clym's character, the exaggerated concentration on self-assertion given above is a necessary counter-reading to a view of him as the bringer of reason. Both readings are validated by elements of the text, but neither is valid in terms of the whole text. The important point is the conjunction of

conflicting readings as a way of revealing essential characteristics of the world and our ways of reading it.

Venn

It was suggested above that Diggory Venn represents in schematic terms the possibility of resisting the heath and the excess of passion which it embodies. This is certainly the case: Venn is the one character who analyses a situation and takes steps to prevent harmful results. In this sense his ingenuity is indicative of the possible role of reason in controlling nature, much as Oak is able to control his environment and himself. However, as also suggested above, there are elements of Venn's character and its portrayal which undercut this reading of him as the one stable character of the novel. There are three main elements to consider: Venn's motives; the form of his ingenuity; and the effects of his portrayal as a reddleman.

In terms of Venn's motives we should first note that he is an outsider: he is not a native of the heath, and he is outside the main group of characters and their relationships which make up the story. He has at one time desired to be part of this group by marrying Thomasin, but when we meet him he has given up this hope and become a reddleman. This places him further outside the community of Egdon, and the form of his involvement in the region is now a selfless involvement because of this extreme distance from the community. Much like Oak when

he realises he has no hope of winning Bathsheba, Venn expresses his love for Thomasin in the form of disinterested concern for her welfare. We see this perhaps most clearly in his selfless attempt to enlist Eustacia's help in making sure that Wildeve does indeed go through with his intention to marry Thomasin. It is only after the apparent failure of this attempt that Venn even considers "that one other channel remained untried"(p.117) and offers himself in marriage to Thomasin. Venn's love is so selfless that he cannot fight for Thomasin against his opinion of her wishes, and she marries Wildeve. The reddleman's selflessness is again demonstrated after this marriage by his attempts to keep Wildeve at home in the evenings because Thomasin wishes her husband to be home. Throughout the whole novel Venn's motive for his ingenious actions is his obsessive and selfless love for Thomasin[13]. Eustacia recognises this, and forms an opinion of Venn's love which accords well with that of the reader: "The reddleman's disinterestedness was so well deserving of respect that it overshot respect by being barely comprehended; and she almost thought it absurd"(p.169). There is a very clear sense in which this love of Venn's is unnatural, and the character himself becomes a <u>reductio</u> of the faithful lover. This is important in relation to the forms of his ingenuity.

---

13. Derwent May, in his Introduction to the New Wessex edition of the novel, reads this love as allegory: Venn "sets himself up . . . as the champion of virtue, personified in the figure of Thomasin"(p.24).

In Venn's methods of achieving his ends, basically promoting Thomasin's happiness, he again exhibits an unnatural character. His solicitousness leads him to spy on other characters, and even to employ physical means of persuasion in the case of Wildeve. Most important is his spying on the conversations of Eustacia and Wildeve. This strategy is based on sound reasoning: if he is to influence events in Thomasin's favour, he must have an understanding of the actual state of affairs on the heath. His method of observing characters is also important: it relies on his knowledge of the heath, and in the most obvious case on his use of the heath itself to cover himself from sight (Book I, Chapter 9). This knowledge and use of the heath is important in establishing Venn as the character in the novel who acts most nearly according to his reason. However, the cool way in which the reddleman follows through his plans is as unnatural as the exaggerated selflessness which motivates them. There is a pronounced element of voyeurism in both the love and the spying which it necessitates, and the essential good-sense of Venn's strategies comes itself to seem unnatural because of this[14].

The "rough coercion"(Book IV, Chapter 4) which the reddleman employs to keep Wildeve at home in the evenings provides a good example of this. In terms of desired effect and logically appropriate cause the strategy is

---

14. For Venn as voyeur see Derwent May's introduction to the New Wessex edition of the novel, p.24.

sound, but the narrative provides a clear indication of the implications for Venn's character:

> The doubtful legitimacy of such rough coercion did not disturb the mind of Venn. It troubles few such minds in such cases, and sometimes this is not to be regretted. From the impeachment of Strafford to Farmer Lynch's short way with the scamps of Virginia there have been many triumphs of justice which are mockeries of law (p.280).

Triumph of justice or not, there is something very unnatural about the mind of a man who acts solely by abstract principles of justice as Venn does[15]. There is a very strong sense in which the reddleman plays God on the heath: whereas Oak's use of reason is to control wild elements of nature, Venn's extreme application of the same principle is an attempt to impose on events a strict logic totally alien to them. Importantly, this attempt is seen as clearly unnatural.

Venn's unnaturalness constitutes a demonstration that total selflessness is absurd in that it involves a distance from life which comes to be seen as a denial of life. The reddleman is unnatural because his selflessness draws him out of the struggle for self. This clearly suggests that the struggle for self and self-realisation

---

15. Bayley (Essay), p.114 comments: "however chivalrous his motives Venn has behaved in a manner for which neurosis would seem too mild a term"

in which the rest of Egdon is involved is an essential aspect of life, and that an attempt to rigidly exclude conflict and contradiction from life is itself a contradiction in terms. Venn's unnaturalness suggests that natural life is conflict and struggle for self. It is in this sense that the endings of both The Return of the Native and Far from the Madding Crowd are unsatisfactory or unconvincing: Venn achieves his hoped for realisation in marriage to Thomasin without being engaged in the struggle for realisation on his own behalf. His unnatural actions achieve natural ends, and this does not satisfy the reader's desire for consistency[16]. Importantly, Venn's naturalisation is brought about by his relinquishing his occupation as reddleman, and this points to the link between his weird character and his portrayal as a reddleman. However, it is important first to consider the implications of Egdon selfishness as more natural than selflessness.

If Venn's exaggerated selflessness and reason are out-of-place on the heath, then the heath and the community it supports are indeed in harmony. The characters are part of the world in which they move, and their relations to the heath and to each other reduplicate the general relationships in nature of individual to individual. In this sense The Return of the Native is actually a form of the naive pastoral which it

---

16. Of course, the nature of Hardy's art as expressive and disparate may mean that any ending to his novels is unsatisfactory in some sense, and his own suggestion about the ending of The Return of the Native (RN, p.396) may thus be misleading.

seems explicitly set against. The emphasis of the narrative links man to nature. This may initially appear as a dualism, but the undermining of the terms of that dualism suggests a more absolute harmony of man and nature in that man is part of nature, his consciousness merely reduplicating and making clear the form of nature as conflict. However, the "moral" implications of naive pastoral are reversed in this reading: nature is not harmony but conflict, and the form of man's harmony with nature is to be also a part of that principle of conflict. The convention of naive pastoral -- a simple linking of man and nature -- is therefore used to undermine the idealism of naive pastoral. In this way The Return of the Native is true pastoral by being anti-pastoral.

This emphasis on conflict and involvement is further heightened by the essential paganism of the novel. The superstition of the community is seen in the stories concerning reddlemen, the reaction of Johnny to Venn, and the story of the red ghost in the heath. Venn's mystery and unnaturalness are linked to his being a reddleman, and this aspect of his character actually links him to the heath, from which he appears inexplicably, despite his exaggerated selflessness and reason. There is further the suspicion that Eustacia is a witch, and Susan Nunsuch enacts pagan rites to counteract her supposed spells. The importance of these pagan elements is that they suggest a counter-logic for the novel.

Interestingly, Eustacia dies on the night that Susan roasts her effigy, and the superstitions of the community are never disproved. The narrator presents them as superstition, and therefore partially discredits them, but there is a very real sense in which we can construct a reading of the novel in which reason has no place. This would remain a counter-reading, the causal reading being primary, but the pagan elements of the novel reinforce the sense of life on Egdon as a representation of life as contradictory and illogical. There is a sense in which the whole of The Return of the Native is a sensuous dance around the fire of life, each selfish individual being part of a chaotic dance of conflict. This dance is played out in reading from conflicting elements to elements in conflict: the apparent division of character is again seen as a reading in human terms, with the specific terms being Christian rather than pagan, of a much more pervasive struggle into which it is subsumed.

It is through its emphasis on "pagan" individualism that The Return of the Native extends the exploration of responsibility begun in Far from the Madding Crowd. The Return of the Native effectively suggests the inadequacy of a schematic reading of Far from the Madding Crowd through a more thorough undermining of a similar reading of itself: the later novel emphasises the claims of the individual which were latent in the earlier novel. One aspect of this emphasis is the way in which The Return of the Native concentrates less on the inhabitants of Egdon

as a "community", and more on their individual attempts to find personal satisfaction, attempts which deny the possibility of Weatherbury-like harmony. This shifted emphasis serves to incorporate man more fully into a general struggle for existence, and undermines the hierarchical nature of man's apparent duality: there is a suggestion, in the inadequacies of all approaches to the heath, that there is a necessary conflict between reason and passion[17]. Reason as a necessary suppressing or controlling factor in the psyche is counter-balanced in this novel by a recognition that natural impulses are a persistent oppositional factor. This finds particular expression in the way that characters act on impulse under the delusion of acting by reason.

This (partial) devaluing of the notion of choice given in Far from the Madding Crowd makes The Return of the Native a more explicit indication of Hardy's recognition of the affective role of categories, but it is important to see the three major pastoral novels as a sequence. All three novels contain elements which undermine the analytic value of the categories they seem to put forward for analysis; but the growing explicitness of the sequence is important in apprehending both the importance of such questions to Hardy as an artist and the full extent of the undermining of apparent analytic tools. The Return of the Native is important in that it modifies the terms of choice given in Far from the

---

17. We should note that Venn is the only major character whose approach is wholly successful, and this involves a sudden change of role to claim his success.

Madding Crowd and allows for the explicit rejection of such terms in The Woodlanders. This in turn allows for explicit emphasis on man's part in nature, with the suggestion of consciousness as awareness giving form or appearance to the inherent contradictions of reality. The Return of the Native also points to the growing abstraction of the terms of reference of the sequence, as illustrated by the diminishing importance of specifically "local" detail in favour of more generally expressive setting. In his final pastoral novel Hardy's art becomes fully expressive of his apprehension of the essence of reality, and man's inability to perceive other than through giving form.

7

THE WOODLANDERS

The Woodlanders, Hardy's final pastoral novel[1], lies, in its relation to "pastoral", somewhere between Under the Greenwood Tree and Far from the Madding Crowd, and The Return of the Native. There are elements of the woods which suggest the setting around Little Hintock as Arcadian and idealised; but on the other hand there are elements of wild nature to a far greater extent than in Mellstock or Weatherbury, and much more like those of Egdon. However, in common with all three earlier novels, The Woodlanders presents a community isolated from outside influences, and largely self-sufficient in its dependence on the woods. Also like those of the earlier novels this particular community, despite being rural and "simple", is structured according to rigidly perceived social divisions: the class consciousness and ambition of the inhabitants of Little Hintock is never in doubt, and is an important factor in the story of the novel.

The first aspect of Little Hintock of which we are made aware is its isolation from the rest of the world

---

1. In this relation it should be noted that Tess is not a pastoral novel. There are elements of pastoral in Tess, but the novel rather represents the final breakdown of the possibility of pastoral in the breakdown of the rural community as an isolated unit: Tess is a series of different "pastoral" sections rather than a pastoral novel in a narrower sense. In these ways Tess can be seen either as a final denial of pastoral or as the culmination of Hardy's version of pastoral through the final undermining of the terms of "pastoral". Either way, the novel lies outside the main lines of development of Hardy's pastoral fiction.

around it. As so often in Hardy the first person we meet is a solitary wanderer on a deserted highway, and in this respect Barber Percomb is analogous to the village itself. But if the barber's solitude is suggestive it is so through function: his solitude is a necessary aspect of his journey to Little Hintock because no-one goes there from the towns. It is in this way that his errand is a kind of "descent" into Little Hintock and emphasises its total isolation. Indeed this is further emphasised by the arrival of Mrs Dollery's van laden with passengers. Far from establishing a connection between Little Hintock and the surrounding towns, their presence on the road denies any such connection: they are all passing the village, but none are entering it, and their road does not even pass directly through it. All we learn of the village from Mrs Dollery is that she wouldn't live there if she was paid to (p.38), and that a young doctor lives there who is said to be in league with the devil (p.40). The whole episode with the van merely strengthens the impression that Percomb is leaving the known world in his quest. With him we are plunged into a self-contained world in which natural imagery is of universal significance as well as immediate relevance. Like Egdon Heath, Little Hintock is real and symbolic: a place in which people lead individual lives; and a series of impressions of place which evoke mood.

Essentially, these two aspects of the landscape around Little Hintock are reflections of differing narrative perspectives. When the narrator is concerned

with individual characters and their part in the story as such, the landscape has a real relationship to the particular character: the character is involved in a way of seeing and both interprets and is illuminated by the surrounding woodlands[2]. When the narrator is more directly concerned with man's general relationship with "nature", we are presented much more explicitly with his own personal mode of perception: he highlights certain aspects of the scene, and the scene evokes certain generalisations or comparison in his description[3]. These two aspects of description are demonstrated quite clearly at the beginning of chapter seven, when Giles follows Grace and Melbury into the woods.

> Although the time of bare boughs had now set in there were sheltered hollows amid the Hintock plantations and copses in which a more tardy leave-taking than on windy summits was the rule with the foliage. This caused here and there an apparent mixture of the seasons; so that in some of the dells they passed by holly-berries in full red growing beside oak and hazel whose leaves were as yet not far removed from green, and brambles whose verdure was rich and deep as in the month of August. To Grace these well-

---

2. On the narrator's emphasis on the consciousness of his characters as perceiving subjects see Jacobus ("Tree and Machine"), pp.121-22, and Bullen (Expressive Eye), pp. 170, 179-80.
3. On the "consciousness of the narrator himself" as permeating "each observation and event" of The Woodlanders, see Bullen (Expressive Eye), p.171.

> known peculiarities were as an old painting restored (p.81).

Clearly this description is characterised by the elaborate noticing of detail which is characteristic of Hardy's narrator, but importantly this noticing is in general terms. It is thus presented as the making explicit of what Grace (more or less consciously) is herself noticing. Indeed it is not going too far to suggest that most of this description could be put explicitly into Grace's mind without incongruity. Certainly, the metaphor of the "old painting" is the narrator's, but the attitudes and feelings it presents in general terms are Grace's. It is as an indication of her specific relation to the woodlands that this particular paragraph is presented: she knows the woods and their peculiarities, but she knows them as memory. This influences her relation to the woods: she consciously notices (perhaps for the first time) aspects of the woods which she has often seen before, but she now notices as an outsider, as an observer looking at a painting. The effect of her education is thus seen in the fact that she is both native and foreigner, much as Clym Yeobright consciously values in the heath what its inhabitants take for granted. This indicates an alienation which can have various effects: it is in itself neither good nor bad, but unchangeable, and the problem for Grace is that she is changed whether she likes it or not.

The second aspect of the woods, as a set of associations in the narrator's "mind" can be seen in the way the painting metaphor constitutes a shift in narrative perspective: the woods become what they are at various important stages of the novel, a landscape transformed by the narrator's perception into a symbolic landscape which is suggestive of both "world-view" and emotional response to scene[4]. The particular descriptions are indicative of both the effect on the narrator of a particular scene (personal observation) and of the desire to render this personal observation intelligible by using known elements of description. The painting metaphor is clearly an attempt to render a personal observation in general terms, but importantly the narrator shifts away from Grace:

> Angles were taking the place of curves, and reticulations of surfaces -- a change constituting a sudden lapse from the ornate to the primitive on Nature's canvas, and comparable to a retrogressive step from the art of an advanced school of painting to that of a Pacific Islander (pp.81-82).

It is now clearly only the narrator who speaks here; but it is the narrator attempting to render impersonal a personal observation, and hence the emotional

---

4. Clearly both these functions of landscape rely on the subjectivity of narration and an idealist view of perception.

suggestiveness of direct observation is absent. Yet it is when the narrator allows himself personal expression that the true emotional significance of the setting is revealed, and this as much through the narrator's philosophical musings as through his descriptions themselves. Here again we see a tension between narrative modes: personal and impersonal. The tension is between two aspects of observation, emotional involvement and impersonal interpretation, and both are essential characteristics of the narration; but emotional involvement in both characterisation and description is the more basic, and the narrator's attempts at impersonal interpretation involve a repression which is somewhat unwillingly accepted[5].

This narrative tension reflects the experience of reading Hardy's novels: there is a tension between reading in terms of causal explication of a novel's happenings, and reading significance from the various "seemings" or associations of the discourse.(These readings also clearly relate to the two aspects of the function of setting, but this relationship is not necessarily one to one or consistent throughout the various discursive elements of each novel, and certainly the relationship varies from novel to novel.) As has been suggested, one of the most obvious causal readings of Hardy's novels, and particularly the pastoral novels, is a schematic reading in terms of an apparent duality of

---

5. Cf. Bayley (Essay), pp.1, 31 and see Chapter 2 above.

man as reason and passion, consciousness and unconsciousness.

Analysis of the characters of The Woodlanders in terms of the duality reason-passion may be aided by comparison with the characters of Far from the Madding Crowd. The parallel reading of these novels is justifiable in two ways: both are pastoral novels in which a relatively isolated community can be seen as representative of the social world as a whole, and in which characters' relations to the natural world are crucial; and The Woodlanders was originally conceived, at least in outline, as the immediate successor to Far from the Madding Crowd (see Life, p.102). Importantly, the characters of the earlier novel are somewhat more easily explicable in terms of the duality which is the present concern, and I give merely a summary of the above reading of them in these terms before turning to the characters of The Woodlanders.

1. Gabriel Oak: learns from experience of nature to be patient and thoughtful in making decisions; plays life according to the observed "rules" of nature; represses passion by reason.
2. Bathsheba Everdene: impulsive; allows "nature" in the form of passion to overcome her reason in regard to Troy; is thoughtless in her dealings with Boldwood.
3. Farmer Boldwood: repressed passions given full vent after Bathsheba's ill-conceived "joke" with the

Valentine; self-destructive through unnatural extremity of passions.

4. Sergeant Troy: impulsive; passions rule consciousness in the way he refuses to take responsibility for the effects of his inclinations.

Clearly in Far from the Madding Crowd consciousness in the form of fore-thought and repression of passion is endorsed over "nature" in the form of impulsive self-assertion: Oak learns this lesson early, Bathsheba late. It is suggested in Chapter 5 above that this victory is even at this stage not wholly convincing, but in the present context it is important to note that this attitude is not repeated with this kind of (apparent) simplicity in The Woodlanders. A schematic reading of character in The Woodlanders is at least in part self-defeating in that it undermines its own terms through contradictory emphases.

Giles Winterborne.

It is as well to plunge directly into the heart of the problem at issue by turning our attention first of all to Giles Winterborne. In some ways Winterborne is a clear counter-part of Oak, particularly in his harnessing of nature for his own benefit through intimate knowledge of his environment; but whereas Oak is divorced from nature in his use of it, and is therefore an example of the virtues of human consciousness, Giles' relationship

with the woods is much more problematic in that he is apparently identified explicitly with them. There is thus a tension between knowledge of nature as a form of kinship and as conscious knowledge. This tension blurs the basis of judgement of proper behaviour in respect to man's duality: it makes problematic the attribution of Giles' strengths and weaknesses to the different elements of his dual nature?

The most important aspect of Giles' character in this context is that his virtues are presented by identification with nature, just as Tess's "innocence" is in the later novel. This suggests nature as essentially good. Consider a particularly explicit instance of Giles' identification with nature:

> He looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as corn-flowers, his sleeves and leggings dyed with fruit-stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, his hat sprinkled with pips, and everywhere about him that atmosphere of cider which at its first return each season has such an indescribable fascination for those who have been born and bred among the orchards. Her heart rose from its late sadness like a released bough; her senses revelled in the sudden lapse back to Nature unadorned. 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.
>
> Nature was bountiful, she thought. No sooner had she been cast aside by Edred Fitzpiers than another being, impersonating chivalrous and undiluted manliness, had arisen out of the earth ready to her hand. This, however, was an excursion of the imagination which she did not wish to encourage, and she said suddenly, to disguise the confused regard which had followed her thoughts, 'Did you meet my husband?' (p.225).

Clearly we should be mindful of the fact that this description of Giles (to the extent that it is such) is seen from Grace's point of view and explicitly presents itself as at least partly the result of her perception. This explains a certain amount of what may seem exaggeration in the identification of Giles with nature; but it seems impossible to deny that the identification has its root also in the narrator's view. This is supported by the sense of an eye external to both Giles and Grace which recognises both Grace's imaginative exaggeration of Giles' closeness to nature, and also its basis in the scene itself. The implications for Grace's character will be discussed below, but what of Giles?

Clearly this description of Giles, even allowing for Grace's exaggeration, suggests an identification of Giles with "nature": an identification explicitly opposed to the "veneer of artificiality" which Grace herself has "acquired at the fashionable schools". The terms of the contrast suggest an appeal to a basic innocence in man which is corrupted by life, and especially by those aspects of life -- self-consciousness, mental cultivation -- directly connected with man's consciousness. This might suggest an opposition of nature (good) to consciousness (evil), except that we must note that consciousness is as inherent in man as is the supposedly good element of "nature". If consciousness is outside "nature", Giles cannot represent "nature" or be wholly identified with it because he is, inescapably, a conscious being himself. Or rather, he cannot <u>only</u> represent nature if he is to be at all realistic as a character: he must also embody an approach to nature. Indeed, this is inherent in the terms of the narrator's identification of him with nature.

While Giles represents nature (in his natural innocence), he also embodies a certain conscious approach to nature. This approach is very much like that of Gabriel Oak, and is demonstrated both by his work in the woods and by the images of nature with which he is identified: it is cultivated nature. While Giles appears to be simply nature, he is in reality a somewhat unhealthy blend of nature and consciousness: his consciousness gives him knowledge of nature but not will-

power; his nature is passively innocent, but he lacks energy or passion. As this formulation suggests, the lack in this case is of positive power: Giles is able to make himself fit in with nature by his passive approach, but he has not the natural positive power which might have made him more successful with Grace. Unlike Far from the Madding Crowd, The Woodlanders offers no promise that fitting in with natural laws and faithful embodiment of "natural" innocence will bring success. The narrator's faith in the possibility of achieving any sort of balance to man's duality seems to have gone. Giles may fill the demands for success in nature -- hence his identification with it -- but his subjugation of natural positive power (passion) by a consciousness which lacks resolution to replace it prevents him from succeeding in the social world.

It is precisely because Giles is not pure nature but a man whose "reconciliation" of his own self makes him a good cultivator of nature that he can be identified with it in a positive way; Grace's exaggeration of the identification is reductive in a way which obscures the basis of that identification. Thus the apparent praise of nature in man is undone by the very passage which seems to suggest it; but neither is consciousness given unqualified praise, as it is as much responsible for Giles' failure as is "nature". The narrator does not seem to believe that there is any possible balance of nature and consciousness which allows for success in both nature and society. At least, in schematic terms, his characters

embody various approaches, none of which is successful; but let us first look at some examples of Giles' success with nature and failure with society. It may also be profitable to consider Marty South as a female equivalent of the same character type.

The final paragraph of The Woodlanders is particularly indicative of both Giles' and Marty's strengths and weaknessess.

> 'Now, my own, own love,' she whispered, 'you are mine, and only mine; for she has forgot 'ee at last, although for her you died! But I -- whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee, and whenever I lie down I'll think of 'ee again. Whenever I plant the young larches I'll think that none can plant as you planted; and whenever I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider wring, I'll say none could do it like you. If I ever forget your name let me forget home and heaven!...But no, no, my love, I never can forget 'ee; for you was a good man, and did good things!' (p.375).

Again we have the emphasis on identification with nature of both Giles and Marty: identification through a harmony with nature which is the result of observation and thought: "The casual glimpses which the ordinary population bestowed upon that wondrous world of sap and leaves called the Hintock woods had been with these two,

Giles and Marty, a clear gaze"(p.340). Despite a certain amount of sentimentality in Grace's and Marty's idealisation of this intercourse with nature, it clearly rests on a realistic view of the potentialities of nature (Giles' recognition that trees must struggle to survive) as well as love for it: sufficient comfort among the woods to enable love for them relies on realism in practical dealings with them. Giles and Marty are above all conscious of the necessity of knowing nature's laws and fitting in with them: this is an apparent triumph of consciousness over mean struggle to enable realisation of potential. But as has been suggested, it is the element of passivity in this approach which renders the characters liable to destruction from within: they recognise the harm of nature's positive powers, whether of the elements or the passions, but they have no corresponding will to action to prevent the dangers of passivity itself[6]. Giles can take precautions against known possibilities, but seems unable to assert himself unless against external "attack": he cannot stir himself to make things happen. This is inherent in his love, as in Marty's, and is made clear in this speech of Marty's if we consider it as exemplifying the attitude of both characters. Marty will "never forget" Giles, just as Giles never forgot Grace, but the faithful adoration which each feels is, though praised as an ideal, necessarily doomed in the real world. It is a passive love, so selfless that the self necessarily suffers

---

6. For a complementary, but socially based, view of Giles' "contradiction" see Kramer (Forms), p.98.

through it: there is a lack of natural passion and self-assertion.

In terms of positive capabilities both Giles and Marty represent the denial of nature by consciousness -- hence their successful taming of the woods -- but because this involves a denial of passion, and hence will-power (the will may be there through consciousness, but the power of self-assertion must be natural), they paradoxically embody the "Unfulfilled Intention" of the natural world by denying their own nature. The individualism of self-assertion is an element of the natural world -- a part of the struggle for life -- but its suppression by an ideally valued selflessness is even more certain to bring failure.

Thus, while the emphasis on struggle in the woods suggests that unfulfilled potential is a necessary part of nature, the examples of Giles and Marty suggest that suppression of nature by consciousness is equally doomed to failure through lack of self-assertion to fulfill intentions: consciousness merely changes the form of the struggle for existence in man's case in that it allows various approaches to life which nevertheless cannot overcome the essential contradiction of necessary waste. Pure consciousness results in the hollowness which was also inherent in Gabriel Oak but which is made much clearer in the forlorn faithfulness of Giles and Marty. Giles may be a "good man", but the selflessness of his goodness is his undoing. Hardy recognises the basic selfishness of passion which is as necessary to

individuality as it is potentially destructive. That destructiveness may be seen in Fitzpiers.

Edred Fitzpiers.

In many ways Fitzpiers is a rewriting of Sergeant Troy in the degree to which he embodies the full force of unrestrained passion. This may not actually be saying much, as there is a long line of such male characters in Hardy's novels, and they all clearly owe much to the standard Victorian villain of melodrama: Manston in Desperate Remedies; Wildeve in The Return of the Native; Festus Derriman in The Trumpet Major; Dare in A Laodicean; and Alec in Tess. There is a certain point in comparing these two in particular simply because of the similarities in general characterisation in The Woodlanders and Far from the Madding Crowd, but we should remember that all these villains are alike in: their ambiguous relation to the aristocracy (though there is always some relation); their degree of passion; and their self-conscious indulgence of their passions. Again, the absolute rule of passion at the expense of reason is actually a conscious stance, and paradoxically this rule of natural passion is connected not with nature but with society: it is seen as a social evil, just as Giles' repression of nature links him to nature. It would seem that Hardy has his lines crossed, but this uncertain representation of the sources of good and evil in the conscious-unconscious dichotomy is simply an admission of

the impossibility of resolving the problem while at the same time wishing to explore the difficulties themselves.

In the case of the villains the paradox has its partial justification in the fact that it is because of their place in society that they are able to cultivate their particular natural vices. It is also perhaps fitting that they are seen as social evils since their destructiveness is seen only within society: they are destructive because they consciously bring natural desires into society and so break social rules in their expression of natural individuality. Conversely Giles, by repressing his natural individuality, breaks no social laws. Neither can be said to be fully conscious or fully natural, there are simply different ways of approaching the world. Yet it is clear that the narrator values reason, even if it has become more problematic than in Far from the Madding Crowd: the "favoured" approach to life is Giles' because it is not socially destructive, and is to this extent an example of the greater "good" of consciousness ruling passion. It is equally clear though that however melodramatic, static, and stereotyped the villains may be, they have greater individuality than Gabriel or Giles simply because they do not restrain their passions.

There is some truth in Dale Kramer's assertion that "[t]he contradiction that is inherent between Hardy's idea of man's correct posture towards nature's overbearing force and his sympathy for those who do not or cannot maintain that posture sets up in Far from the

Madding Crowd a pattern of dichotomies that continue to engross Hardy in later novels"[7]. The present argument is that the narrative actually undermines its own categories in the process of showing that their relationship is irresolvably problematic, but that Hardy's thought necessarily relies on those categories for expression, just as his novelistic technique relies on the conflicting emphases on plot and perception. The important point at present is that the narrator is in favour of Gabriel and Giles, but succeeds in making his villains more engaging than his heroes. This is not to suggest that he is more interested in the villains than in the heroes, and he certainly expresses more sympathy for the heroes, but his full sympathy is reserved for his concentration on the women who represent the fiercest battle for supremacy between nature and consciousness: in these two novels, Bathsheba and Grace.

Grace Melbury.

It is Grace who perhaps best reveals that Hardy does not see the problem of man's duality as resolvable: certainly not in terms of the victory of one element of it over the other. There is the suggestion in The Woodlanders that society, as a product of conscious man, could well limit the problem rather than aggravate it as it seems to. Indeed, this attitude is apparent in most of Hardy's work, though most explicitly in The Woodlanders,

---

7. Kramer (Forms), p.35, and see Chapter 5 above.

Tess, and *Jude*; but Hardy's overall ambivalence concerning the problem at issue is such that consideration of social factors is necessarily secondary: society could perhaps limit the individual's problems, but not eliminate them. For Hardy man must sacrifice either individuality or peace: to avoid conflict as Giles does is in some sense to be weak; to be self-centred as Fitzpiers is to be destructive to the community. Grace is caught in this duality in such a way that she is particularly illustrative of the centrality of sexuality in relation to Hardy, and of the possible sexual basis of the preoccupation with the past in the novels. Her problem is the loss of pre-sexual innocence, and in this sense she demonstrates that it is as much the coming of unconsciousness (that is, passion) into a conscious world as *vice versa* which is responsible for human suffering: sexuality makes the passive approach to life impossible. This reversal of categories suggests their limited validity as ways of representing rather than accounting for suffering.

Grace is caught between her past and her present: Giles and the woods; and Fitzpiers and fashionable society. If we consider again the passage quoted above comparing Giles to nature, we can see that the full identification of Giles with his surroundings is an expression of Grace's own point of view. She sees him as "arisen out of the earth", and as "undiluted manliness", but her view is not necessarily accurate except as an indication of her own mind. It was pointed out above that

Giles is identified with cultivated nature, and it is important also that this is nature as Grace grew up with it. Both Giles and the woods are Grace's past: a past in which the woods have been a source of life and Giles an innocent sweetheart. The suppression of the harsh realities of the woods as the narrator paints them elsewhere is an indication of the memories they have for Grace as the scene of her childhood. Similarly, Giles can be "chivalrous and undiluted manliness" because Grace's ideal ignores the sexual element of manliness: her relationship with Giles is also part of her innocent youth. The idealism apparent in this scene is an expression of Grace's longing for the simple pre-sexual world from which she has passed into the problems of the sexual world in which there is necessarily conflict. At least in Grace's eyes, Giles personifies the simplicity of natural innocence: it is because he is this through the repression of passion in a passionate, conflict-ridden world that he is destroyed: consciousness cannot change the fact that the world is not perfect[8]. That the appeal of Giles is his "innocence" is indicated by his explicit difference from Fitzpiers. Fitzpiers is a threat to Grace through her own sexuality, both in his attraction, and in the possibility of rejection: she had "been cast aside by Edred Fitzpiers"(p.225).

One of the further reasons that Grace sees Giles and nature as ideal is that it is directly through her

---

8. For a suggestion of "sexual blankness" in the relationship of Giles and Grace see Ian Gregor's Introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 11-29, p.25.

consciousness that she has lost them: they are part of her past which has been denied her by education, and they thus seem simple and innocent because they are not part of fashionable society. Actually fashionable society emphasises one of the essential aspects of nature, conflict, in its inherent emphasis on comparison and the desire to be better than others, and sexuality is implicated in this desire. The difference between this society and Giles' repression of such an instinct is clear, and Grace's desire to return to a pre-sexual simplicity is suggested again in her desire not to be part of educated society. Indeed, it would be difficult to say whether the narrator's attitude to education is positive, negative or ambivalent, as the effects on Grace are what matters: she has moved from one state to another, she is educated; but she is also now a woman, and it is hard to say which change is the more responsible for her problems. The central point is that she is caught between past and present, non-sexual and sexual, and her explicit desire for the former is an indication of her uneasiness in the latter:

> I wish you had never, never thought of educating me. I wish I worked in the woods like Marty South! I hate genteel life, and I want to be no better than she! . . . Because cultivation has only brought me inconveniences and troubles (p.240).

That the state to which she aspires is as problematic as the one in which she finds herself is an indication of Hardy's refusal to give simple answers. In any case, Grace's responsiveness to Fitzpiers' passion excludes her from her past state just as much as her education does.

This responsiveness to Fitzpiers, which contrasts with the kind of relationship between Giles and Grace, is seen in her inexplicable emotions when Fitzpiers helps her into the carriage in the woods --

> 'What were you almost in tears about just now?' he asked softly.
>
> 'I don't know,' she said; and the words were strictly true (p.162)

-- and in her thoughts after he has visited her:

> The intoxication that Fitzpiers had, as usual, produced in Grace's brain during the visit passed off somewhat with his withdrawal. She felt like a woman who did not know what she had been doing for the previous hour; but supposed with trepidation that the afternoon's proceedings, though vague, had amounted to an engagement between herself and the handsome, coercive, irresistable Fitzpiers (p.186).

Grace's own rising passions are most explicit in this second example, and whatever she tells herself she

does not marry Fitzpiers for "the possibilities of a refined and cultivated inner life"(p.187). Clearly the relationship between Grace and the doctor is more of a sexual nature than that between her and Giles. This is partly because for Grace the relationship with Giles is a part of her past, but also because of the essential difference between Giles and Fitzpiers. I may be exaggerating Giles' lack of passion, but it is certainly different from Fitzpiers' "coercive" influence. While it is not a simple matter, it seems clear that Grace's desire to return to her old love is as much an escape from passion as an indulgence of it. This is even true of her call to Giles in the woods. To escape the strictures of society -- "Come to me, dearest! I don't mind what they say or what they think of us any more"(p.321) -- is to escape a morality based on a recognition of sexuality; if Grace's call is a sexual invitation, it is also a desire to escape from the problems of sexuality in a social context. Grace's desire to be "natural" is at least partly a desire to escape her own (sexual) nature; or to escape her involvement in the struggle for individual existence. The desire demonstrates Hardy's apprehension of the problem; the difficulties of clear presentation of the problem and the impossibility of Grace's desire indicate a refusal to give simple answers where there are none. The use of a dualistic conception of human nature thus becomes once again a representation rather than analysis of suffering and contradictions. These contradictions are inherent in the world because of

the essential oneness of all nature (the Universal Will), and the centrality of conflict and excess in nature as a whole. This notion is particularly clear in The Woodlanders in the use of natural description and emphasis on the "Unfulfilled Intention".

A good place to begin looking at the narrator's descriptions of the woods around Little Hintock is with that first journey into the woods proper to which reference was made above. This is the reader's first look at the woods as such rather than the town itself or the relatively undifferentiated darkness through which Barber Percomb penetrates to it. Following the narrator's shift to his own perspective through the painting analogy, this narrative viewpoint is maintained through a description of the woods through which the three characters move. Some identification with Giles is evident at the beginning of these paragraphs (pp.81-82) in the view of Melbury from behind (that is, from Giles' position), but again the voice is external, explaining how Giles follows. This externality to the characters is further emphasised with a description of the woods through which "[t]hey went" (p.82). The fact that the characters are also seeing this scene is granted, but the scene is an entity through which they pass: not one which their perception realises, but rather which the narrator's perception creates. At the end of this description the narrator again adopts Giles' point of view -- "Some flecks of white in Grace's drapery had enabled Giles . .

."(p.82) -- but for a particularly important moment it is unmistakably the narrator who sees with his own eyes and speaks with his own voice. This relatively autonomous description, and the generalisation it induces, is important in that it establishes a background in various ways: a physical background; a background of mood; and an insight into the character of the narrator who observes all the action of the novel. It is important to see this scene and other similar ones in the novel both individually and collectively as background.

This particular scene reveals the idiosyncratic perception of the narrator in three main ways: by the details chosen to be in some way representative of the woods ("in some way" because Hardy's "impressionism" entails a denial of the possibility of objective representation and a refusal to attempt an approximation of this); by the use of imagery; and by the generalisation induced by the scene, and the imagery associated with that generalisation.

> They went noiselessly over mats of starry moss, rustled through interspersed tracts of leaves, skirted trunks with spreading roots whose mossed rinds made them like hands wearing green gloves; elbowed old elms and ashes with great forks, in which stood pools of water that overflowed on rainy days and ran down their stems in green cascades. On older trees still than these huge lobes of fungi grew like lungs.

> Here, as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling.
>
> They dived amid beeches under which nothing grew, the younger boughs still retaining their hectic leaves, that rustled in the breeze with a sound almost metallic, like the sheet-iron foliage of the fabled Jarnvid wood. Some flecks of white . . . (p.82).

There are clear indications here of the foregrounding of perception in the terms suggested above. Selection of detail is clear in the description of the more deformed or parasitic growths to the exclusion of almost all fulfilled promise, and this will be discussed below in connection with the "Unfulfilled Intention". The choice of metaphors is also instructive -- nearly all are analogies with human form: "hands wearing green gloves"; "huge lobes of fungi . . . like lungs"; "the curve was crippled"; and "the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling". Clearly the last two examples are not necessarily exclusively human, but "crippled" and "strangled" are more commonly used of humanity than of nature. The picture with which we are thus presented is one of the woods as a collection of human deformities, of

various pieces of human anatomy surrounding the characters like some surrealist painting: the woods become a mutated animal struggling with itself, and even the overflowing pools of water with their "green cascades" become spewing mouths or festering wounds. The picture is clearly dependent on the imagination of the observer (both narrator and subsequently reader), and it is important to be receptive to this exaggerated emphasis on a particular aspect of the woods because it is here that the generalisation of the Unfulfilled Intention has its origin. It is the emphasis on death and decay which both exemplifies and gives rise to the Darwinian emphasis on struggle. For the narrator struggle means waste: it is not that he is blind to success, but it is failure through struggle which captures his imagination most profoundly.

What the narrator's view of the woods of Little Hintock leads to is a similar view of nature as a whole. It is important to note here that nature includes man, so that human failings are tied up with natural ones, a point reinforced by the anthropomorphic imagery noted above. Indeed, the comparison made between the woods and the depravity of "a city slum" makes explicit the inherent applicability of the observation to humanity. The Darwinian nature of this observation has been noted[9], and it is clear that the notion of the Unfulfilled Intention centres on the fact that life is a struggle,

---

9. See: David Lodge's introduction to the New Wessex edition of the novel (London: Macmillan, 1975), 13-32, p.25; and Jacobus ("Tree and Machine"), p.118 for the transformation of "pastoral" in a scientific age.

and a competitive struggle such that life forms are unable to achieve their full growth potential because of the presence of potentials which are in direct conflict. The Unfulfilled Intention is thus an ideal which is never fully achieved, and the application of this notion to man as well as "external" nature suggests that struggle and conflict are necessary features of human life no less than any other.

This emphasis on struggle is again highlighted by the comparison of the Hintock woods with the "Jarnvid wood" of Norse mythology. The comparison may take the rustling leaves of the Hintock woods as its natural justification, but it should be noted in regard to the narrator's choice of comparisons in this passage as illustrating his own mode of perception and thought that Jarnvid is connected with the notion of struggle for existence. Jarnvid is associated in the mythology with both trolls (or giants) and wolves: the traditional enemies of the gods and ultimately responsible for undoing the work of the gods. These are the inherent forces of destruction in Norse cosmology, responsible for keeping unfulfilled the intention of the gods[10]. Jarnvid is thus not used simply as a learned comparison for the rustling leaves of the Hintock woods, but continues the emphasis on struggle and the Unfulfilled Intention which dominates this brief but powerful descriptive passage.

It is further important to note that this emphasis offers the reader a possible reading of the novel as the

---

10. See Snorri Sturluson's Edda.

result of unfulfilled intentions on the part of man: Melbury's intention to give Grace to Giles; Giles' intention to extend his lease; Fitzpiers' many unfulfilled interests; and so on. This is only one aspect of the novel -- one possible reading -- but it is important to recognise that it is one which echoes throughout the novel in descriptions. It is further important to note, though, that the passages concerned with the Unfulfilled Intention give rise to directly contradictory readings: they suggest that fallings of reason are responsible for the sufferings of the novel; but the actual notion of the Unfulfilled Intention suggests rather the necessity of waste and hence human suffering, or in other words that fallings of reason shape the forms of suffering but do not cause the suffering itself. One reading links with a schematic reading of character, the other with the status of that reading as myth[11].

Some of the clearer echoes of the type of description referred to above, with its emphasis on conflict and unfulfilled intention, are found towards the end of the novel. One less extreme but nonetheless illustrative example occurs in Grace's flight from her returning husband, a flight which is of necessity through "the depths of the woods"(p.310):

---

11. Butler (Thomas Hardy), p.77 gives a reading of the novel in terms of unfulfilled human intentions. Drake ("Traditional Pastoral"), p.252 suggests that man and nature are grounded in the same basic duality, a suggestion which may ultimately amount to much the same as a recognition of essential conflict and contradiction.

> The leaves overhead were now in their latter green -- so opaque, that it was darker at some of the densest spots than in winter time, scarce a crevice existing by which a ray could get down to the ground. But in open places she could see well enough. Summer was ending: in the daytime singing insects hung in every sunbeam: vegetation was heavy nightly with globes of dew; and after showers creeping damps and twilight chills came up from the hollows.
>
> The plantations were always weird at this hour of eve -- more spectral far than in the leafless season, when there were fewer masses and more minute lineality. The smooth surfaces of glossy plants came out like weak, lidless eyes: there were strange faces and figures from expiring lights that had somehow wandered into the canopied obscurity; while now and then low peeps of the sky between the trunks were like sheeted shapes, and on the tips of boughs sat faint cloven tongues (pp.310-11).

We should note first of all the shifting viewpoint of the narrator in this passage. To begin with we are given a view of the woods from Grace's perspective. This is not to say that the described features are specifically noticed by Grace, but rather that the

narrator points to those features of the woods which could be seen from Grace's physical position in relation to her surroundings, that is, on the forest floor, beneath the canopy. We thus have an implicit adoption of Grace's perspective, which is made explicit in the next sentence: "she could see well enough"; but there is also maintenance of the narrator's mode of perception. Indeed, we observe that immediately after the explicit identification of the point of view as coinciding with Grace's, this point of view is abandoned for a generalised description of the scene through which she moves. This perhaps needs clarifying: the scene is described in general terms in the sense that it is described through the presentation of certain aspects which are temporally disparate; the description cannot be seen as a record of a particular moment of observation. This does not mean that the description is objective, and indeed it is clear in the very limited number of aspects of the woods described and the images used to describe them that we have again the musings of a narrator well-acquainted with the woods. Importantly, the narrator is a self-conscious observer, alive to the emotional effect of the scene upon his own mind and carefully presenting it in terms which emphasise both this and his intellectual response to the woods. These responses are highlighted by, and to a certain extent rely upon, the fact that this description is a repetition of the one discussed above. Finally, as a last piece of evidence that this description entails a move away from Grace's point of

view to a view of the scene as apprehended by the narrator's own particular mode of regard, we should note that the return to Grace in the next paragraph is in terms of contrast: "But Grace's fear just now was not imaginative or spiritual; and she heeded these impressions but little"(p.311). There is a hint that she was once open to such impressions, but it can hardly be doubted that as they stand they are the product of the narrator's mind in relation to the woods.

Of particular interest is the repetition of anthropomorphic imagery in the response to the woods. The damps are "creeping", and they, together with "twilight chills", "came up from the hollows". The lights likewise have "wandered" into the darkness: everything is a positive agency. Admittedly, this in itself does not mean that they are anthropomorphic, but when we consider the "lidless eyes" and "faces and figures" the suggestion of human form is almost unavoidable. Certainly, when we remember the similar images from earlier in the novel the conjunction makes human likenesses more persistent.

Yet the human element of these images is less important in itself than the fact that the particular forms mentioned are deformed. The eyes are "weak, lidless"; the faces and figures are "strange"; and the tongues are "cloven". Again we are reminded of the struggle for survival and the element of conflict in all life. On their own these images might not have such force, but we are already conditioned by that first description of the depths of the woods to see deformity

as the result of conflict. Because of the way it repeats that earlier passage, echoes it, this passage is already determined without explicit comment from the narrator: it refers us again to the Unfulfilled Intention, and to man as subject to that, and therefore illustrative of it.

Yet this passage is only a part of the background surrounding Grace's flight and Giles' eventual death: this is her movement into the woods, but it is also the beginning of a series of descriptions through which the character of nature is evoked. It is in the account of Grace's stay in Giles' hut, and the storm during that stay, that the sequence of descriptions reaches its most explicit in the sense that the repeated images of conflict are now used in the description of conflict itself. That is not to say that the conflict is not always there, seen in the resulting deformities and in the examples of the first passage referred to above. Indeed, because subsequent passages are repetitions of the imagery of that first passage, it would be just as true to say that the first passage is the culmination of the sequence: the passages which follow serve to exemplify and reiterate the already given notion of the Unfulfilled Intention.

These passages exemplify the role of description in Hardy's novels in that they generate their own meaning almost independently of the narrative in which they are situated. As suggested in Chapter 3 above, various descriptive recurrences can be used to form "texts" which can be read alongside the narrative as part-commentary on

it, the constant repetition of certain meanings through description undermining unity of meaning in just the way that the static nature of the descriptions undermines the primacy of plot on which Hardy's novels seem to rely. The necessary waste of the Unfulfilled Intention contributes to the undermining of the closely causal reading of the novel in terms of instinct and reason (that is unconsciousness and consciousness) and acts, along with the contradictory use of the dualism itself, to discredit the idea of the causal reading as an analysis: emphasis on forms of conflict, and on conflict in the form of the novel itself, suggests that the novel is a "series of seemings" or representations. The logic of the novel is more affective than rational [12].

Returning to the descriptions themselves, let us first consider the woods during the storm, as seen from Grace's position in Giles' hut. The woods are seen by the narrator rather than Grace, although with explicit comments revealing that Grace's consciousness of the storm is at least similar to that of the narrator:

> No sooner had she retired to rest that night than the wind began to rise, and after a few prefatory blasts to be accompanied by rain. The wind grew more violent, and as the storm went on it was difficult to believe that no opaque body, but only an invisible colourless

12. See Lennart A. Bjork, "Hardy's Reading," Thomas Hardy: The Writer and his Background, ed. Norman Page (London: Bell and Hyman, 1980), 102-127, p.107 for Hardy's interest in affective psychology.

> thing, was trampling and climbing over the roof, making branches creak, springing out of the trees upon the chimney, popping its head into the flue, and shrieking and blaspheming at every corner of the walls. As in the grisly story, the assailant was a spectre which could be felt but not seen. She had never before been so struck with the deviIry of a gusty night in a wood, because she had never been so entirely alone in spirit as she was now. She seemed almost to be apart from herself -- a vacuous duplicate only. The recent self of physical animation and clear intentions was not there.
>
> Sometimes a bough from an adjoining tree was swayed so low as to smite the roof in the manner of a gigantic hand smiting the mouth of an adversary, to be followed by a trickle of rain, as blood from the wound. To all this weather Giles must be more or less exposed; how much, she did not know (pp.319-20).

The perspective here is somewhat unclear: it almost reads as though this is Grace's own experience of the storm, and in a sense it is. It is a description of the storm incorporating indications of Grace's consciousness, but it is not a storm seen through Grace's eyes: as usual, the narrator is standing back from his character even when indicating her thoughts. What we have here is an observer's view of the storm and of Grace's response to

it: the observer has access to Grace's thoughts, but does not identify with the mind that thinks them. The tone remains throughout that of the self-conscious narrator observing and enjoying his own observations: including observation of Grace and recognition of her emotions. This again illustrates that the narrator moves towards identification with his characters, particularly through adopting their visual perspectives, but never reaches it in that the narrator's perception is always in evidence as well as an indication of the characters'.

Importantly, the images used to describe the storm are consistent with those used elsewhere by the narrator to describe the woods. These images are again anthropomorphic. This personalising of the elements begins with a denial of the validity of the comparisons which nonetheless follow, and this serves to remind us that all human ways of seeing are but partially valid representations. It is explicitly "no opaque body" which causes the sounds and movements, but the verbs which follow suggest precisely an opaque body, even a human one: "trampling and climbing over the roof"; "springing out of the trees"; "popping its head into the flue"; and "shrieking and blaspheming". The same image is continued in the notion of the boughs as "gigantic hand[s]" and the rain as blood. This latter instance connects more closely with the passages discussed above in that it is through identification of limbs of trees with limbs of man that the anthropomorphism is emphasised.

Yet it is important to see that this passage functions somewhat differently from those earlier ones in that the trees are seen as actual human actors: they are described as though they have consciousness. In this sense they are all the more closely united with man as elements in the universal conflict of the Unfulfilled Intention. It is interesting to note that Grace has lost her "clear intentions": the dichotomy between man and nature has been reversed in these images. Yet the effect of the reversal is to emphasise the initial distinction through relying on it: the images work simply because nature is unconscious. On the other hand their force is due to the notion of man's duality -- the trees are unconscious, but in their struggle and deformities they reflect one aspect of the human character: man's existence within the elemental struggle. This is for Hardy a more basic fact of man's existence than is the notion of a consciousness out-of-place in the natural world: consciousness is inherent in the Universal Will, and allows man to recognise and represent in various forms the conflict in which he is involved, one of those forms being in terms of an inner conflict of conscious and unconscious elements.

This emphasis on struggle is again repeated in the description of the woods after the storm. The passage recalls those previously discussed, and is perhaps the most direct echo of the initial movement into the woods:

> She continually peeped out through the

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

From the other window all she could see were more trees, in jackets of lichen and stockings of moss. At their roots were stemless yellow fungi like lemons and apricots, and tall fungi with more stem than stool. Next were more trees close together, wrestling for existence, their branches disfigured with wounds resulting from their mutual rubbings and blows. It was the struggle between these neighbours that she had heard in the night. Beneath them were the rotting stumps of those of the group that had been vanquished long ago, rising from their mossy setting like black teeth from green gums. Further on were other tufts of moss in islands divided by the shed leaves -- variety upon variety, dark green and pale green; moss like little fir-trees, like plush, like malachite

stars; like nothing on earth except moss (pp.322-23).

The images used here are by now familiar: anthropomorphism -- "arm-pits", "jackets of lichen", "stockings of moss", and "black teeth from green gums"; deformity and decay -- the slug, the fungi and the "wounds"; and, central to all these other images, struggle and conflict, here expressed as the explicit origin of all these deformities. There are also two important new images: new in that they are modifications of what we have seen before. The "brown leaves of last year" underly the prematurely loosened ones of this year: an indication of season which has parallels in the passages discussed above; but the inclusion of a "last year" in its signs among the detritus of the woods is an image of continuity and therefore universality. This is not an isolated scene, the leaves lying below are a record of similar scenes in the past, and an indication of the future. Secondly, the mention of "icthyosauri" is a particularly vivid image of struggle: struggle evoked characteristically through failure, but this time not failure resulting in the decay of the individual alone, but in the extinction of the species. There can be no clearer image of the Unfulfilled Intention than this. Likewise, the anthropomorphism of the passage discussed is at least as powerful in indicating the implication of man in this "wrestling for existence" as is the explicit

inclusion of man in the notion of the Unfulfilled Intention in the first passage. The fact that this imagery relies for much of its force on a dualistic conception of man makes clear the importance of the notion of dualism as a starting-point for analysis of Hardy's overall representation of life, but does not define the place of that dualism in the final analysis. Man's apparent duality ultimately becomes a way of representing conflict as the basic principle of all existence through the conflict of the terms of the duality, and in the contradictions of a reading in these terms. The duality is thus important in leading to an apprehension of the Unfulfilled Intention and representing its form in simple terms, rather than as an analysis of the origin of the forms of human existence.

Looking from this perspective over the sequence of Hardy's pastoral fiction, we can see The Woodlanders as the final denial of the idea of responsibility put forward in Far from the Madding Crowd. That is not to say it denies the validity of Oak's strategy of control as a means of sustaining harmony within the rural community, but rather that it gives final expression to the limits of that strategy as an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. Indeed, from the perspective of The Woodlanders, Oak's strategy and the harmony it sustains are fictions, and it is rather that these fictions obscure reality than that Oak creates harmony.

In Far from the Madding Crowd, as in Under the Greenwood Tree, these fictions are validated by much of the text, despite the presence of contrary elements, but the development of the pastoral novels is a development away from their sustaining fiction. The inherently flawed community of Under the Greenwood Tree is ultimately seen to be but one example of more pervasive contradictions: contradictions which are more readily apprehended in reading because of the growing explicitness of concern with them.

Far from the Madding Crowd deals with suppression of nature, The Return of the Native with the persistence of natural impulse, and The Woodlanders finally suggests that the ability to control is itself an illusion, and further that the apparent terms of control are illusory. This sequence has its corollary in the increasing formal disparateness of the novels, as form becomes more and more expressive of the apprehended essence of reality. This essence corresponds to the notion of the Unfulfilled Intention, and this conjunction demonstrates the expressive nature of Hardy's thought in general. The way in which his art questions both existence and our ways of perceiving it ultimately sets it free from analytic categories through reliance on them.

CONCLUSION

> We don't always remember as we should that in getting at the truth, we get only at the true nature of the impression that an object, etc., produces on us, the true thing in itself being still, as Kant shows, beyond our knowledge (*Life*, pp.247-48).

Reality, according to Hardy, is beyond human knowledge, but the forms of reality as perceived can guide man to a true impression of the essence of reality. The development both of Hardy's general thought, and more specifically of the pastoral novels is a demonstration of this, of meaning as myth. The development to this point involves both a suggestion of the nature of the essence of reality, and also an undermining of apparent meanings. Indeed, the denial of analytic value to such meanings is the means for revealing essence: this same essence underlies the forms taken by human perceptions of reality in such a way that they mean despite themselves, but as representations -- myths -- rather than as analysis.

It is the logic of this mythical meaning which necessitates an attempted analysis of the pastoral novels in causal terms, as real attempts to define relationships among categories, or by categorising. Only by reading appearances and their contradictions can we reach an apprehension of the reality which human categories and conventions both represent and obscure in their attempts

to order. This is basic to an understanding of Hardy's use of pastoral: human perception is an ordering of elements which are themselves without order, just as Oak's creation of harmonious nature is an imposition of control.

The form of ordering inherent in both the conventions of pastoral literature and also in traditional notions of flesh-spirit or conscious-unconscious dichotomies is an attempt to explain conflict or contradiction in causal terms. However, Hardy's texts undermine such attempts by an apparent reliance on them which ultimately breaks down. This undermining reveals in the form of conventional ordering systems a representation in simple terms of the very contradictions they seek to naturalise: essentially, various instances of a principle of necessary waste underlying all forms of existence. This element of necessity in the Unfulfilled Intention links with Hardy's notion of the Immanent Will: both deny the control which man attempts to establish in terms of both knowledge and action.

Similarly, the idea of the Immanent Will and the evolution of consciousness as transcending an intuitive distinction between flesh and spirit is in terms of the limits of understanding. The dualism on which much of Hardy's thought seems to rely can be seen as a use of conventional terms to express an individual personal response. Hardy's perception of, and sensitivity to, pain in human (and animal) existence finds expression in a

simple opposition. The essence of this opposition is also the essence of reality as Hardy views it, particularly the essential cause of pain: the contradiction of necessary conflict.

In his later thought Hardy recognises the limits to the validity of this dualistic conception of life, and places it within a larger frame which sees the Immanent Will lying behind all such forms of conflict. From the human perspective flesh and spirit, or passion and reason, are indeed in conflict, but this is ultimately seen as a function of man's limited knowledge and the nature of his perception rather than as an essential truth. This conflict is one aspect of the impression which life makes on us, and the true nature of that impression is as a representation of an underlying principle which cannot be grasped in itself.

The value of this connection between Hardy's thought and the breakdown of schematic terms of analysis for the pastoral novels is that the different perspectives of the thought can be seen as giving outlines for ways of reading the novels. Just as Hardy moves from a dualistic conception of human character to the notion of the Immanent Will, so the reader of the pastoral novels moves from apprehension of character and setting in schematic terms to a recognition of the limits of such reading, and a concentration on individual rather than type. This is not a full description of possibilities of the process of

reading Hardy, but it is an important aspect of reading because of its link with an abstract "philosophy".

As suggested in the introduction to this study, the relationship here is not necessarily causal, but the general path of the "philosophy" is of value in demonstrating how the similar path of reading the pastoral novels functions. In each case, the initial reading (of nature or novel) is shown to be limited, but in neither case is it discarded completely. As the idea of the Immanent Will places the initial duality, so the undermining of that same duality in the novels places a schematic reading of the novels. The undermining expresses both the limits of understanding and the way in which limited understanding can itself express meaning through the breakdown of meaning. Importantly, the form of meaning with which we are left is representational rather than analytic, just as Hardy's notes on perception suggest it was for him.

Importantly, the representation of the pastoral novels is an expression of the emotional texture of life. This strengthens the sense of presence which is responsible for those aspects of the novels which undermine analysis, and also confirms the affective logic of the novels. The narrator is affected by what he sees, and the inconsistencies of the texts reveal this to the reader, and are also responsible for an effect on the reader which gives the novels validity despite, or because of, their evasion of logical terms; or more strictly their subversion of logical terms.

This sense of an affective logic operating in the novels through the breakdown of causal logic (in terms of analysis of origins) forges a link between Hardy's concern for suffering humanity and his idealism. The idealistic view of human reason as creating illusory harmony by concealing contradictions reveals the contradictions themselves, and in so doing provides an emotional rationale for the initial attempt at obscuration. Man attempts to form a harmony that is "to be found nowhere in nature"(FMC, p.47) precisely because he apprehends underlying contradictions, and it is thus fitting that Hardy should use conventional forms to reveal both their illusory nature and the emotional necessity for that illusion.

Contrary to other elements of his texts which value a "full look at the worst", the logic of Hardy's use of pastoral forms and the conscious-unconscious dichotomy seems to emphasise the necessary blindness of mankind. Without such blindness people become like Little Father Time:

> They seem to see all [life's] terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them . . . . it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live (Jude, p.346).

In a characteristically paradoxical way, the final undermining of the pastoral impulse -- the fiction of man-made harmony -- reveals in its true impression of life the necessity for some kind of pastoral fiction. The reality which pastoral myths represent cannot be apprehended in itself, and Little Father Time is symbolic of the value to human life of that inaccessibility. Consciousness does not divorce man from nature, but is rather (in the form of awareness) a final reduplication of the contradictions underlying all nature: the necessity of waste. In their progressive revelation of this, the pastoral novels prepare the way for the tragic views of life in Tess and Jude, novels which can be seen as resulting from the death of the pastoral impulse, the denial of the artificially cultivated community. The tension between community and individual, illusion and reality, is ultimately irresolvable: because nature is conflict, man can live in comfort without self-realisation, or in conflict through self-realisation. The necessity of waste remains, only the forms are different.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

1: Works by Thomas Hardy.

(a): Novels.

The New Wessex Edition of the Novels of Thomas Hardy. Ed. P.N. Furbank et al. 14 vols. 1974-5. London: Macmillan, 1975. (Originally published in paperback, subsequently in hardback).

Original (book) publication dates for Hardy's novels are as follows:

Desperate Remedies (1871)

Under the Greenwood Tree (1872)

A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873)

Far from the Madding Crowd (1874)

The Hand of Ethelberta (1876)

The Return of the Native (1878)

The Trumpet Major (1880)

A Laodicean (1881)

Two on a Tower (1882)

The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886)

The Woodlanders (1887)

Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891)

Jude the Obscure (1896 ['95])

The Well-Beloved (1897)

(b): Poetry.

The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy. Ed. James Gibson. London: Macmillan, 1976.

(c): Other.

The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy. Ed. Richard Little Purdy, and Michael Millgate. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978- .

Hardy, Florence Emily. The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928. London: Macmillan, 1962.

The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy. Ed. Lennart A. Bjork. 2 vols. London: Macmillan, 1985.

The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: With an Appendix including the Unpublished Passages in the Original Typescripts of "The Life of Thomas Hardy". Ed. Richard H. Taylor. London: Macmillan, 1978.

Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings: Prefaces; Literary Opinions; Reminiscences. Ed. Harold Orel. Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1966.

2: Biographical.

Gittings, Robert. Young Thomas Hardy. London: Heinemann, 1975.

Gittings, Robert. The Older Hardy. London: Heinemann, 1978.

Millgate, Michael. Thomas Hardy: A Biography. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982.

3: Book Length Studies.

Bailey, J.O. The Poetry of Thomas Hardy: A Handbook and Commentary. Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1970.

Bayley, John. An Essay on Hardy. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978.

Beer, Gillian. Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

Boumelha, Penny. Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form. London: Harvester Press, 1982.

Brennecke, Ernest, Jr. Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind. London: Unwin, 1924.

Bullen, J.B. The Expressive Eye: Fiction and Perception in the Work of Thomas Hardy. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

Butler, Lance St. John. Thomas Hardy. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978.

Casagrande, Peter J. Unity in Hardy's Novels: °Repetitive Symmetries'. London: Macmillan, 1982.

Eliot, T.S. After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy. The Page-Barbour Lectures at the University of Virginia 1933. London: Faber, 1934.

Enstice, Andrew. Thomas Hardy: Landscapes of the Mind. London: Macmillan, 1979.

Frior, Ruth A. Folkways in Thomas Hardy. 1931. New York: Russell & Russell, 1968.

Giordano, Frank R., Jr. "I'd Have my Life Unbe": Thomas Hardy's Self-Destructive Characters. Univ. of Alabama: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1984.

Gregor, Ian. The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction. London: Faber, 1974.

Guerard, Albert J. Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949.

Hasan, Noorul. Thomas Hardy: The Sociological Imagination. London: Macmillan, 1982.

Holloway, John. The Victorian Sage. London: Macmillan, 1953.

Howe, Irving. Thomas Hardy. 1967. New York: Collier Books, 1973.

Kettle, Arnold. Introduction to the English Novel. Vol 2. London: Hutchinson, 1953.

Kramer, Dale. Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy. London: Macmillan, 1975.

Lawrence, D.H. Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays. Ed. Bruce Steele. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985.

Lodge, David. Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

Meisel, Perry. Thomas Hardy: The Return of the Repressed: A Study of the Major Fiction. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972.

Miller, J. Hillis. Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels. Oxford: Blackwell, 1982.

Miller, J. Hillis. The Form of Victorian Fiction. Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

Miller, J. Hillis. Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970.

Millgate, Michael. Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist. London: Bodley Head, 1971.

Morrell, Roy. Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way. Kuala Lumpur: Univ. of Malaya Press, 1965.

Southerington, F.R. Hardy's Vision of Man. London: Chatto & Windus, 1971.

Squires, Michael. The Pastoral Novel: Studies in George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and D.H. Lawrence. Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974.

Van Ghent, Dorothy. The English Novel: Form and Function. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1953.

Vigar, Penelope. The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality. London: Athlone Press, 1974.

Williams, Merryn. Thomas Hardy and Rural England. London: Macmillan, 1972.

Williams, Raymond. The Country and the City. London: Chatto & Windus, 1973.

Williams, Raymond. The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence. London: Chatto & Windus, 1970.

Wotton, George. Thomas Hardy: Towards a Materialist Criticism. Ireland: Gill & Macmillan, 1985.

4: Collections of Essays.

Knoepflmacher, U.C., and G.B. Tennyson, eds. Nature and the Victorian Imagination. Berkely: Univ. of California Press, 1977.

Kramer, Dale, ed. Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan, 1979.

Page, Norman, ed. Thomas Hardy: The Writer and his Background. London: Bell & Hyman, 1980.

Smith, Anne, ed. The Novels of Thomas Hardy. London: Vision, 1979.

5: Individual Essays.

Atkinson, F.G. "The Inevitable Movement Onward -- Some Aspects of The Return of the Native." Thomas Hardy Year Book, 3 (1972-3): 10-17.

Bayley, John. Introduction. Far from the Madding Crowd. New Wessex Edition. London: Macmillan, 1975. 13-35.

Bjork, Lennart. "Thomas Hardy's 'Hellenism'." Papers on Language and Literature Presented to Alvar Ellegard and Erik Frykman. Ed. Sven Backmann and Goran Kjellmer. Gothenburg Studies in English 60. Goteborg: Acta Univ. Gothoburgensis, 1985. 46-58.

Bjork, Lennart. "Visible Essences as Thematic Structure in Hardy's The Return of the Native." English Studies 53 (1972): 52-63.

Blythe, Ronald. Introduction. Far from the Madding Crowd. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978. 11-35.

Buckler, William E. "Thomas Hardy's Illusion of Letters: Narrative Consciousness as Imaginative Style in The Dynasts, Tess, and Jude." Dickens Studies Annual 8 (1980): 273-98.

Buckler, William E. "Towards a Poetics of Hardy's Novels: The Woodlanders." Dickens Studies Annual 14 (1985): 327-36.

Casagrande, Peter J. "The Shifted 'Centre of Altruism' in The Woodlanders: Thomas Hardy's Third 'Return of a Native'." ELH 38 (1971): 104-25.

Cohen, Sandy. "Blind Clym, Unchristian Christian, and the Redness of the Reddleman: Character Correspondence in Hardy's The Return of the Native." Thomas Hardy Year Book 11 (1984): 49-55.

Collister, Peter. "Past Things Retold: A Study of Thomas Hardy's Under the Greenwood Tree and The Trumpet Major." Durham University Journal ns 36, No.2 (June 1975): 147-56.

Cramer, Jeffrey S. "The Grotesque in Thomas Hardy's The Woodlanders." Thomas Hardy Year Book 8 (1978): 25-29.

Crompton, Louis. "The Sunburnt God: Ritual and Tragic Myth in The Return of the Native." Boston University Studies in English 4 (1960): 229-40.

Davidson, Donald. "The Traditional Basis of Thomas Hardy's Fiction." Southern Review 7 (1940-41): 162-78.

Drake, Robert Y., Jr. "The Woodlanders as Traditional Pastoral." Modern Fiction Studies 6, No.3 (1960): 251-57.

Eagleton, Terry. "Thomas Hardy: Nature as Language." Critical Quarterly 13, No.2 (1971): 155-62.

Edwards, Duane. "The Ending of Under the Greenwood Tree." Thomas Hardy Year Book 8 (1978): 21-22.

Fayen, George S., Jr. "Hardy's The Woodlanders: Inwardness and Memory." Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 1, No.4 (1961): 81-100.

Fontane, Marilyn Stall. "Hardy's Best Story." Thomas Hardy Year Book 11 (1984): 37-41.

Gregor, Ian. Introduction. The Woodlanders. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981. 11-29.

Grigson, Geoffrey. Introduction. Under the Greenwood Tree. New Wessex Edition. London: Macmillan, 1975. 13-24.

Hannaford, Richard. "A Forlorn Hope? Grace Melbury and the Woodlanders." Thomas Hardy Year Book 10 (1980): 72-76.

Hannaford, Richard. "Ragnarok in Little Hintock: Norse Allusions in The Woodlanders." Thomas Hardy Year Book 6 (1976): 30-33.

Herbert, Lucille. "Hardy's Views in Tess of the d'Urbervilles." ELH 37, No.1 (1970): 77-94.

Humm, Maggie. "Gender and Narrative in Thomas Hardy." Thomas Hardy Year Book 11 (1984): 41-48.

Jones, Lawrence. "George Eliot and Pastoral Tragicomedy in Hardy's Far from the Madding Crowd." Studies in Philology 77, No.4 (Fall 1980): 402-25.

Lodge, David. Introduction. The Woodlanders. New Wessex Edition. London: Macmillan, 1975. 13-32.

Lothe, Jakob. "Hardy's Authorial Narrative Method in Tess of the d'Urbervilles." The Nineteenth-Century British Novel. Ed. Jeremy Hawthorn. Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 2nd Series. London: Edward Arnold, 1986. 156-70.

May, Derwent. Introduction. The Return of the Native. New Wessex Edition. London: Macmillan, 1975. 15-26.

Page, Norman. "Hardy's Dutch Painting: Under the Greenwood Tree." Thomas Hardy Year Book 5 (1975): 39-42.

Peck, John. "Hardy's The Woodlanders: The Too Transparent Web." English Literature in Transition (1880-1920) 24, No.3 (1981): 147-54.

Schwarz, Daniel R. "The Narrator as Character in Hardy's Major Fiction." Modern Fiction Studies 18, No.2 (Summer 1972): 155-72.

Shelston, Alan. "The Particular Pleasure of Far from the Madding Crowd." Thomas Hardy Year Book 7 (1977): 31-39.

Steig, Michael. "Art Versus Philosophy in Hardy: The Woodlanders." Mosaic 4, No.3 (1971): 103-10.

Williams, Raymond. "Thomas Hardy." Critical Quarterly 6, No.3 (1964): 341-51.

Woodcock, George. Introduction. The Return of the Native. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978. 11-36.

Wright, David. Introduction. Under the Greenwood Tree. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978. 11-22.

Wyatt, Bryant N. "Poetic Justice in The Return of the Native." Mark Twain Journal 21, No.4 (Fall 1983): 56-57.

Zabel, Morton Dauwen. "Hardy in Defense of his Art: The Aesthetic of Incongruity." Southern Review 6, No.1 (1940): 125-49.

6: Other Works Cited.

Chatman, Seymour. Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978.

Culler, Jonathan. The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics. London: Methuen, 1983.