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The Frail and the Fallen:
Nineteenth-Century Women in Thomas Hardy's Fiction

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A Thesis
in
The Department
of English

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ABSTRACT

The Frail and the Fallen: Nineteenth-Century Women
in Thomas Hardy's Fiction

Andrea L. Rohland-Lê

In his fiction, Thomas Hardy explores the struggle of his heroines to live and love as their desires direct them, while maintaining their position within the boundaries of what society deems respectable behavior for women. However, despite their strength and determination, Hardy's heroines all eventually fail in their endeavors, and are united each in her own way as victims of society, of circumstance, and of their creator's inability to envision a future in which women would be free to form lives of their own choice--without guilt, and without suffering.

Chapter I examines the novels *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Two on a Tower*, and *The Return of the Native*, which discuss the female protagonists categorized as Hardy's temptresses or *femmes fatales*.

Chapter II includes discussion of Hardy's victimized heroines in *The Woodlanders*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, whereas Chapter III deals with Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure*, and her composition of traits belonging both to the victim and the temptress.

To Professor Belkin,
For all your help and encouragement.

"Man's fortunes rest with Heaven...
And yet they also spring from his own heart.
Yes, Heaven shapes our lives, but so do we."

--*The Tale of Kieu*

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When Hardy began writing novels in the 1870's, feminists were trying to secure greater rights and freedom for women both inside and outside the home, resulting, finally, in the Married Woman's Property Act of 1882, in opposition to traditionalists who felt that marriage and child care would be adversely affected by any change in women's legal or political status.¹ Hardy can be said to have indirectly entered the debate on the rights of women through his attempts to portray relationships between men and women with what one critic has called "sexual honesty."² Through his fiction, Hardy explores the struggle between the individual's aspirations toward personal fulfillment and the limitations society imposed to check those aspirations. That he frequently chooses female characters to convey this perception of the world stems largely, it seems, from Hardy's knowledge that it is the nineteenth-century woman who suffers most severely from the restrictions of custom and convention regarding her financial and psychological independence.

Although Hardy wrote most of his novels in the latter part of Queen Victoria's reign, between the years 1874 and 1895, his characters, with the exception of Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure*, represent a somewhat earlier time, before the rural lifestyle Hardy admired had vanished completely. His women--neither paragons of modern emancipation nor

stereotypes of the Victorian's image of the ideal woman--respond to situations in a manner associated more with the Victorians than with the beginning of the twentieth century.

This thesis, *The Frail and the Fallen: Nineteenth-Century Women in Thomas Hardy's Fiction*, will discuss in the novels, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *Two on a Tower*, *the Woodlanders*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure*, the relentless struggle of Hardy's women in their efforts to live and love as their desires direct them, while maintaining their position within the boundaries of what society deems respectable behavior for women. However, despite their strength and determination, Hardy's heroines all eventually fail in their attempts to build the kind of lives they hoped to have.

In the chapters that follow, we will examine the similarities that exist between Hardy's women in terms of the suffering they endure and the strengths and weaknesses that they share. Another common thread binding Hardy's heroines to one another is that although not all of the women in this thesis are actually "fallen," in the Victorian use of the word, each woman endangers her reputation by engaging in relationships that in some way divide her from her family and her community.

Hardy's women can generally be separated into two categories: his victimized females, and his temptresses or *femmes fatales*. The word temptress inevitably carries with

it connotations of destructive sexuality harking back to Lilith and Eve, but although there is nothing intentionally destructive in Hardy's 'dark' women, they are often depicted as leading men astray from their work, their peace of mind, and their best intentions. However, both victims and temptresses share the characteristic of being in some way a threat to men and society.

Hardy's novels suggest that the line of demarcation separating the chaste from the unchaste and the respectable from the disreputable, was far less distinct than the British public believed it to be. The gulf which was supposed to exist between the erring and the rest of society was related less to the moral inferiority or superiority of one or the other than to society's intolerance towards women who threatened a structure that was based on their unquestioning acceptance of marriage and family, and subservience to male authority.

A curious relationship exists between Thomas Hardy and his female heroines, particularly with the temptresses. At the same time that he is acting as the omniscient narrator who knows his characters intimately and presents them sympathetically, he also, on other occasions within the same novel, portrays them from an outsider's perspective, a perspective that is decidedly male. These two very different points of view are constantly shifting, especially in the early novels, and the satirical male voice tends to predominate. It must be understood that Hardy often seems

to write "by repeating stereotypical sentiments and forms and then reacting against them."³ Thus we are shown the conflict between the world's view of Hardy's women and that of the individuals themselves. Unfortunately, in some novels the stereotype is never completely dispelled.

Despite Hardy's sensitive portrayals of the nineteenth-century woman and her situation, his fiction frequently concludes by diminishing his female characters. Hardy's personal vision of a universe that is indifferent to the struggles and aspirations of humanity is sometimes at odds with evidence he provides in many of his novels that social factors such as insufficient education for women, limited opportunities for them in the workplace, and the relative difficulty of obtaining divorce are equally to blame for his heroines' misfortunes.

Society or the cosmos notwithstanding, Hardy is unable to envision a future in which women will be freed from the strictures of society and the bonds of tradition to love with joy instead of with sorrow, and to achieve some kind of sexual and psychological harmony without guilt or suffering. His men as well as his women represent the failed hope that social changes would ever occur as long as humankind is incapable of exhibiting the tolerance, compassion, and reasonableness towards one another that Hardy saw necessary for a better future. Hardy's novels reflect a steadily growing understanding of women and their concerns as few nineteenth-century male novelists have been able to exhibit,

but with a sense in the later novels that although he could not help hoping for change within society, such change seems more remote with time.

Chapter I

Hardy's Temptresses in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Two on a Tower*, and *The Return of the Native*

'To see her hair was to fancy that a whole winter
did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow:
it closed over her forehead like nightfall
extinguishing the western glow.'
(*The Return of the Native*)

From the character of Fancy Day of *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), Thomas Hardy's second novel, emerges one of the first in a series of women for whom sexuality is viewed as a means to both provoke and control male responses. One need only recall Fancy's words to her fiancé, Dick, after she has distressed him by looking particularly gay on a morning that he is to attend a funeral, to recognize the vain and foolish flirt of which her character is a portrait:

Come here sir--say you forgive me--and then you shall kiss me--...Yes, just where you want to so much,--yes, you may....Now, that's a treat for you, isn't it?' she continued.¹

Over the years, as Hardy's writing develops, stereotypical depictions like the one above evolve into more sophisticated representations reflecting an increasingly complicated response to women and their sexuality.

Some things about the novels following *Under the Greenwood Tree* do not change, one of them being Hardy's

criticism of feminine vanity and coquetry. Bathsheba Everdene in *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), perched high upon a wagon on moving day, surrounded by caged pets and potted house plants and smiling at herself in a looking-glass, not surprisingly calls forth Farmer Oak's solemn judgement of "Vanity" to fall on the young woman's head; but only after she fails to thank him for the first of many services he is to render her. Up to that point one understands very well that it is not disapprobation which compells Oak to remain in his hidden place behind the hedge, regarding an action on Bathsheba's part usually confined to "the dressing hour in a bedroom."² Oak as an unintentional voyeur is nevertheless astonished by Bathsheba's doings, particularly by her unusual gymnastics on horseback and her willingness to abandon the side-saddle position as soon as she thinks she 's alone. Both incidents reveal a woman who is comfortable with her sexuality. Bathsheba, with neither a riding habit nor a proper side-saddle, lying flat on the back of her pony, "her head over its tail, her feet against its shoulders, and her eyes to the sky" (65), demonstrates by her masculine riding posture and her disregard, at least privately, for rigid convention when it is inconvenient, a natural, spontaneous sexuality of the type often shared by Hardy's heroines; the only real difference being that Bathsheba's sexual self-assuredness extends to other aspects of her life, imbuing her with a confidence that most of Hardy's other heroines lack.

It is not long before Gabriel Oak believes himself to be in love with Bathsheba, and finds his peace of mind disturbed as a consequence. He resolves that "'I'll make her my wife, or upon my soul I shall be good for nothing,'" thus hoping to "transform a distraction into a support" (74). However, the clownish Gabriel of the early chapters fails to take into account his insufficient appeal for a girl more refined and better educated than he. Indeed, the question of how Bathsheba feels about him hardly seems to enter his mind, and his attempts to win her with a catalogue of his possessions--after she has just informed him: "'I hate to be thought men's property in that way, though possibly I shall be someday'" (78)--are clumsy and inadequate to the situation of discovering another's feeling.

Bathsheba has more romantic notions than Gabriel of what she would like marriage to be, and her distaste at the thought of having to endure the same man day after day ("'whenever I looked up, there he'd be'") is reminiscent of a later heroine, Eustacia Vye, about whom we're told, "Fidelity in love for fidelity's sake had less attraction for her than for most women: fidelity because of love's grip had much."³ Bathsheba, like Eustacia, thinks of marriage in terms of gratifying her own dreams and desires, instead of, as was commonly expected, gratifying a husband. As she informs Oak, "'I shouldn't mind being a bride at a wedding if I could be one without having a husband. But

since a woman can't show off in that way by herself, I shan't marry--at least yet'" (80).

There is always something of the romantic in Hardy's most passionate women. This is especially true of black-haired Eustacia, a combination of the classical and the romantic ("Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies, and tropical midnights; her moods recalled lotos-eaters, and the march of Athalie;...her voice, the viola.")⁴ But it is true of Viviette Constantine as well, a character described as having hair and eyes "as black as midnight," and possessing "Romance blood in her veins."⁵ Even Bathsheba, though not of the Romantic mold, and closely aligned as she is to the comic and the pastoral, is of a "beauty belonging rather to the demonian than to the angelic school" (188).

More than once, reference is made to the fleeting image of cruelty suggested by Bathsheba's lips and teeth. For example, when informing the distracted Boldwood that she is not in love with him,

She allowed a very small smile to creep for the first time over her serious face in saying this, and the white row of upper teeth, and keenly-cut lips already noticed, suggested an idea of heartlessness, which was immediately contradicted by the pleasant eyes.(179)

It is difficult to imagine why Bathsheba should smile at just such a moment, leaving us to wonder whether her compassion for Mr Boldwood is initially not without a faint

trace of triumph. Bathsheba's mouth is again described as she mingles with the men at the Corn Exchange:

Something in the exact arch of her upper unbroken row of teeth, and in the keenly pointed corners of her red mouth when, with parted lips, she somewhat defiantly turned up her face to argue a point with a tall man, suggesting that there was potentiality enough in that lithe slip of humanity for alarming exploits of sex, and daring enough to carry them out. (140)

The straight white teeth, connoting force, and the red "keenly pointed lips," reinforcing the mouth's general image of sharpness, lends to Bathsheba's visage a slightly menacing quality, at least for a moment, as if the "demonic" aspect of her nature makes its appearance through that particular part of her anatomy.

As critics have noted in the past, Hardy can sometimes be heavy-handed in his constant reiteration of Bathsheba's flaws and failings, just as he was with Fancy Day before her. However intelligent Hardy's women are meant to be, their intellect is almost always overshadowed by their propensity for being ruled by their emotions. Hence, we're informed that "Bathsheba, though she had too much understanding to be entirely governed by her womanliness, had too much womanliness to use her understanding to the best advantage" (243). Eustacia is spoken of in similar terms, though with a respect more in accordance with her status as a tragic heroine: "The fantastic nature of her passion, which lowered her as an intellect, raised her as a

soul. If she had a little more self-control she would have attenuated the emotion to nothing by sheer reasoning, and so killed it off."⁶ Reason and self-control are, of course, equated here with being a man. Though in all fairness, one must admit that Hardy's men are not without their passions and whims, yet rarely does Hardy refer to them in the same tone of tolerant condescension as he does his heroines possessing the same characteristics.

It should come as no surprise that Hardy's *femmes fatales* are often parentless and unmarried, like Bathsheba and Eustacia (Eustacia has only an unconcerned and frequently absent grandfather), or widows like Viviette Constantine and Felice Charmond. All four can credit their independence and freedom of movement and the ability to make their own decisions to the fact that they are influenced by neither husbands nor fathers. It is interesting to note that, as Sally Mitchell has observed, among many nineteenth century novelists, "the unchaste woman was perforce the independent woman, detached by that one act from her conventional role, relationships, and status."⁷ The Victorians' association of female independence with the condition of a social outcast is not accidental. Too much freedom for women was considered dangerous by many Victorians: should a woman become too independent, one could not be sure just what she might decide to do with her liberty.⁸ But no matter how liberating the independence of a fallen woman may appear theoretically, in Hardy's novels,

the woman's fear of being set adrift from the rest of her world has more of a restricting effect than an emancipating one upon her. Even Bathsheba is not untroubled by such worries for her future, as we shall later see.

There is evidence throughout the novel that Bathsheba seeks confirmation of her sexual attractiveness through men's looks; she does not believe herself to be appreciated fully unless she is being looked at. Her problems with Boldwood stem from this particular need:

Boldwood had begun to be a troublesome image--a species of Daniel in her kingdom who persisted in kneeling eastward when reason and common sense said that he might just as well follow suit with the rest, and afford her the official glance of admiration which cost nothing at all. (147)

Aside from the pleasure of being appreciated and admired Bathsheba hesitates to overtly express her feelings toward a man until she has somehow precipitated him into making the first move.

Bathsheba accordingly exercises her power over Boldwood by means of her valentine, but the pleasure of finally being noticed by a man who formerly looked at no woman is short-lived. For although

This was a triumph...had it come naturally, such a triumph would have been the sweeter to her for this piquing delay. But it had been brought about by misdirected ingenuity, and she valued it only as she valued an artificial flower or a wax fruit. (169)

Bathsheba's displeasure is due to the "ingenuity" employed, and the fact that she, as a woman, is forced to take the initiative. What we may be inclined to dismiss simply as the sin of vanity in Bathsheba is actually a more complex need for recognition. George Wotton explains:

Living in the ideology of femininity, the woman demands to be seen by men. But each of the men by whom she is surrounded demand [sic] that she should be seen only by him and treats her according to his vision of her.⁹

It is in the light of beautiful objects to be coveted and taken possession of that many of Hardy's men regard the women in their lives, but as Bathsheba discovers, the price to be paid for such attention is far greater than she ever anticipates.

Hardy repeatedly affirms that Bathsheba regrets her thoughtless action towards Boldwood, and it is clear that thoughtlessness, and not hopes of becoming Mrs Boldwood, governs her behavior. Although Bathsheba does in fact acknowledge that Boldwood would be an excellent match in terms of wealth and social status, she frankly admits to the farmer, as she did to Gabriel before him, that she has no love to offer in return. Indeed, it is not difficult to understand why both Gabriel and Boldwood fail in their efforts to win Bathsheba over with an account of their possessions, given their unconcealed desire to add her to that collection. Boldwood even goes a step further,

offering Bathsheba, if she were to become his wife, complete freedom from all worries and responsibilities:

But you will just think--in kindness and condescension think--if you cannot bear with me as a husband! I will protect and cherish you with all my strength--I will indeed! You shall have no cares--be worried by no household affairs, and live quite at ease, Miss Everdene. The dairy superintendence shall be done by a man--I can afford it well--you shall never have so much as to look out of doors at haymaking time, or to think of weather in the harvest.(179)

It is not love that Boldwood appears to require from Bathsheba, but a willingness for her to subsume her identity into his.

Only after Bathsheba has been "frightened and...agitated" (180) by Boldwood's plea does she agree not to give him an immediate refusal. She hardly seems to deserve Hardy's mocking observation immediately prior to this incident:

Bathsheba was no schemer for marriage, nor was she deliberately a trifler with the affections of men, and a censor's experience on seeing an actual flirt after observing her would have been a feeling of surprise that Bathsheba could be so different from such a one, and yet so like what a flirt is supposed to be (174).

The question that emerges from the passage above is whether Bathsheba is what she appears to be on the surface: a coquette and a destroyer of good men. Hardy himself fluctuates in his opinion of her, yet he also shows that Bathsheba is thoughtless rather than intentionally cruel,

and although she is vain, she does not enjoy making men suffer. In fact, Bathsheba's first impulse upon learning the effect her missive has on Boldwood is not without a certain nobleness, or at least an honorable sense of fair play, for "she had a strong feeling that, having been the one who began the game, she ought in honesty to accept the consequences" (181-82). However, a lifetime of self-sacrifice is an unnatural prospect for someone of Bathsheba's lively temperament, and she realizes that although "it would be ungenerous not to marry Boldwood...she couldn't do it to save her life" (182). This is essentially Bathsheba's position towards Boldwood for the remainder of the novel, and although she vacillates in her decision from a desire to redress the wrong she has done him, by no means can we accept Boldwood's argument that had Troy not intervened, he would have retained her love (259); on the contrary, he would have had her promise to marry him, but not her love. Therefore, Hardy's arch observation that Bathsheba turns so quickly from encouraging Boldwood to encouraging Troy because of the "fatal omission of Boldwood's that he had never once told her she was beautiful" (218), is apparently unjustified.

The ironic undercutting of Bathsheba's actions that Hardy diligently adheres to in this novel is constant and frequently misleading. Reading *Far from the Madding Crowd* is at times like attempting to prune all manner of twigs and debris in order to gain access to the living plant at the

center, the true character of Bathsheba Everdene. Hardy nevertheless concedes that Bathsheba "had been awestruck at her past temerity, and was struggling to make amends without thinking whether the sin quite deserves the penalty she was schooling herself to pay" (211). Hardy has not yet reached the stage in *Far from the Madding Crowd* that he does in *Jude the Obscure*, wherein the only true marriage Hardy advocates is one based on love and respect, and not simply blind obedience to a vow that has ceased to retain its meaning. He does, however, make it clear that such a marriage as Bathsheba contemplates with Boldwood is morally and humanly wrong.

When Boldwood renews his suit after Bathsheba is believed to be a widow, she is said to feel "coerced by a force stronger than her own will" (414), very much in the manner of Sue Bridehead at the point of her remarriage to Phillotson. Self-sacrifice is traditionally one of the ways in which women have been able to redeem or exalt themselves in the eyes of the world, but as Gabriel explains to Bathsheba, "'The real sin, ma'am, in my mind, lies in thinking of ever wedding wi' a man you don't love honest and true'" (416).

By the time Bathsheba meets Troy, the image of her as a supremely self-confident and bewitching figure undergoes an important change; the conqueror of men's hearts soon becomes their victim. Like Eustacia Vye, Bathsheba derives strength from the belief that she is capable of controlling the lives

around her by means of her powerful sexuality. Unfortunately, as we shall discover, women's ability to order their environment in Hardy's novels is too often based on a fragile system of self-deception. Hence, neither Eustacia nor Bathsheba recognizes the ineffectualness of her strategy to control others until it is too late.

When Bathsheba encounters Troy in a dark lane, she is nearly thrown "off her balance" (213), and remains so for the duration of her relationship with him. Like Eve, with whom Hardy associates Bathsheba, Bathsheba is highly susceptible to Troy's flattery and suggestions, in part because she enjoys the attention, and also because for Bathsheba, a country girl, Troy's manner of expressing himself is novel and exciting.¹⁰ In marked contrast to Troy, when Boldwood proposes to Bathsheba for the first time, the poignancy of his feeling for her is rendered even more meaningful by his inexperience at love-making. As he tells Bathsheba, "'I wish I could say courteous flatteries to you...and put my rugged feeling into a graceful shape'" (178). Nothing in Bathsheba's life up to the time of her meeting with Francis Troy prepares her for a man for whom deception is second nature. Like Satan himself, Troy "could in this way be one thing and seem another" (220). A skillful manipulator of language, it is through this medium that Troy makes his initial conquest of Bathsheba.

The use and misuse of language among men and women is a subject Hardy returns to repeatedly.¹¹ Rarely are Hardy's

women in complete control of their words, voices, and physical gestures when in the company of sexually attractive men. It is the spoken word that frequently captivates his women, and which leads eventually to their undoing. Bathsheba, for instance, falls into her plight with Boldwood precisely because men and women, though they use the same words, sometimes invest them with very different meanings. Bathsheba seals her valentine with the ready-made stamp, "marry me," when what she really means is "notice me." Boldwood is incapable of anything but literal interpretations of her words. Furthermore, it is Gabriel's belief in Bathsheba's capricious and insincere treatment of himself and Boldwood that prompts him to exclaim bitterly against the "woman whose heart is snares and nets" (203). In actuality, Bathsheba's continued encouragement of Boldwood results from her inability to give a definitive no; women having been taught to avoid direct language for fear of appearing too aggressively masculine.

Bathsheba's conversations with Troy reveal her reliance on stilted flirtation and mock-disapproval in an effort to simultaneously express and conceal her desire, and the trust she places in out-dated conventions of courtship only serves to render her ridiculously easy--and gullible--prey to the gloating Troy (226). "'Ah! she sighs, "'if you can only fight half as winningly as you can talk, you are able to make a pleasure of a bayonet wound!'" (227), and with that ill-chosen remark, Bathsheba Everdene is lost. Only much

later, after having experienced the daily reality of marriage with Troy, does Bathsheba begin to recognize the pitfalls of communication. When Boldwood later asks Bathsheba to explain her feelings for him, she responds with a wary "'I don't know--at least, I cannot tell you. It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in a language which is clearly made by men to express theirs'" (412).

It is truly remarkable to hear Hardy voicing the thoughts of feminists almost a century later. Louise Dupré, in her article "The Doubly Complicit Memory" (1984), writes that when a woman

speaks to her speaker, social rules oblige her to express herself in his language....And it is in relation to the masculine language, to its values, that she will see herself evaluated, will evaluate her own competence.¹²

Judgement is constantly being passed on Bathsheba's behavior by her three lovers to the point that she hesitates to voice her emotions for fear of being misunderstood, and one begins to understand how meaningless and inadequate an expression of a woman's individuality are the labels the male characters (and the narrator as well) impose on Bathsheba.

Troy demonstrates how much expediency is involved in such labels, as seen in the episode occurring during the haymaking, when Troy tells her how harmful a beautiful woman is to mankind:

'Why Miss Everdene, it is in this manner that your good looks may do more harm than good in the

world.' The sergeant looked down the meadow in critical abstraction. 'Probably some one man on an average falls in love with each ordinary woman. She can marry him: he is content, and leads a useful life. Such women as you a hundred men will always covet--your eyes will bewitch scores into an unavailing fancy for you--you can only marry one of that many....That's why I say that a woman so charming as yourself, Miss Everdene, is hardly a blessing to her race.' (227)

Characters like Sergeant Troy and Alec d'Urberville find it easiest to blame women for their own weaknesses, thereby absolving themselves of any responsibility and uncomfortable twinges of wrongdoing they may experience. An episode in *Tess* points up similar attitudes shared by the two men. After Alec's conversion to Methodism, Tess accidentally encounters him preaching before an audience. He subsequently pursues her down the road, and in the course of their conversation Alec blames her for having tempted him away from his duty with the beauty of her face and figure. Consequently, "there was revived in her the wretched sentiment which had often come to her before, that in inhabiting the fleshly tabernacle with which Nature had endowed her, she was somehow doing wrong."¹³ Her 'sin' is one which is clearly beyond her control but which she is made to pay the consequences of nevertheless.

Both Bathsheba and Tess are made by Troy and Alec to feel responsible for their physical attractiveness, and even the most innocent look or gesture on their part can be interpreted as an artful seduction. Despite Bathsheba's love for Troy, her face, as she informs him smartly during

their entanglement in the lane, is "unwillingly shown" (215). Her comment calls into question Troy's later claim to her, in a telling reversal of roles from Satan to wronged Adam, that "If Satan had not tempted me with that face of yours, and those cursed coqueties, I should have married [Fanny]. I never had another thought till you came in my way" (361). His words would be amusing enough were it not for the fact that, momentarily at least, Troy believes what he is saying. The notion that female beauty in Hardy's novels and short stories has a destructive effect on others is to a degree repudiated by having the statements emerge from the unreliable characters of d'Urberville and Troy. However, as can be seen in Hardy's other novels dealing with the theme of the seductive woman, one cannot help noticing how apt the prophecy turns out to be.

Following Bathsheba's marriage to the feckless Troy, Hardy begins to portray her in a new light. Characteristic of Hardy is the difficulty he has deciding whether his independent women should be chastized or sympathized with. Although it is understood early on that Bathsheba is not anxious to marry, it is only much later that we are told exactly why she feels as she does. Whereas Gabriel's goal in life is to acquire a farm of his own, and by doing so, gain his independence from employers and financial need, Bathsheba's interest in farming is described as something of a whim or pastime, and her unwillingness to marry early is lightly attributed to the idea that her "position as

absolute mistress of a farm and house was a novel one, and the novelty had not yet begun to wear off" (181). However, only after her marriage, when "Her pride was indeed brought low" and she felt herself to be "conquered" and "degraded" (333), does Hardy attempt a serious explanation of the motives behind Bathsheba's behavior.

Bathsheba's association of a loss of chastity with a loss of independence is apparently well-founded, and "Although she scarcely knew the divinity's name, Diana was the goddess Bathsheba instinctively adored" (334). The paragraph continues in this vein, stating "that she had never, by look, word, or sign, encouraged a man to approach her--that she had felt herself sufficient to herself" (334). The observation is unexpected considering the satirical tone Hardy has adopted in his treatment of Bathsheba. It is as if the narrator we have heard up to this point had momentarily stepped aside in order to allow us to see Bathsheba as she sees herself. But there is again a visible dichotomy between outward appearances and self-perception. In Bathsheba's case, once she proves herself capable of deep feeling and genuine remorse, Hardy is inclined to allow her to be treated more generously.

Almost from the moment Bathsheba loses the protection of her carefully guarded chastity she begins losing her independence and self-respect. Despite the respectability of Bathsheba's married state, Hardy does not hesitate to point out the baseness of the motives that prompted the

marriage in the first place, for Bathsheba herself admits to Gabriel that it was in a state "between jealousy and distraction" (311) that she decided to marry Troy. Appropriately, Bathsheba's return home with Troy after their clandestine wedding in Bath is tainted with an illicit quality, as is Troy's half-dressed appearance at her bedroom window following her stealthy return home. The evidence against Bathsheba is made to appear especially damning, in that this scene comes after Troy has deliberately cast doubt on Bathsheba's honor before the frustrated Boldwood as he makes a feint of arguing with Boldwood about which girl, Fanny or Bathsheba, is in the soldier's best interest to marry.

The qualities of the strong woman that Bathsheba exhibits are gradually undermined by Troy's secret until she begins to show signs of a resemblance to the novel's true victim, Fanny Robin. Different in nearly every aspect though they appear to be, Fanny and Bathsheba come to share a curious fate. The utterly self-effacing Fanny, who begs Troy to marry her from beneath his window at the garrison, and is blinded by her love as well as a fear of pregnancy, perhaps, seems remote from the proud and prosperous young farmer, Bathsheba Everdene. Shortly after the commencement of her relationship with Troy, however, Bathsheba remarks to her maid, Liddy: "'Loving is misery for women always. I shall never forgive God for making me a woman, and dearly am I beginning to pay for the honor of owning a pretty face'"

(254)--an outlook which is uncharacteristic of a girl so new to love and heartbreak as she. Odd, too, is her speculation, seemingly unrelated to the conversation which preceeds it: "'I wonder sometimes if I am doomed to die in the Union. I am friendless enough, God knows'" (254). But the occasion of Fanny's death does indeed force Bathsheba, at least for one night, into the position of a "homeless wanderer" (356), and with the discovery of Fanny's child, it is she who becomes the cast-off lover, and Fanny the legitimate wife, for as Troy explains in his customary attempt to side-step responsibility--but which is nevertheless true under the circumstances--"'A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage'" (361).

"Fanny's own spirit seemed...to animate [Bathsheba's] frame" (361), causing her to debase herself further by groveling for Troy's embrace, while "The one feat alone--that of dying--by which a mean condition can be resolved into a grand one, Fanny had achieved" (357). Ironically, her death also enables her to regain the esteem of her errant lover, as well as his public acknowledgement of their union through the tombstone Troy erects in her memory, thereby tempting one to attribute Fanny's fleeting aggrandization to what Auerbach refers to as "the fallen woman's inherent power of metamorphosis which allows her to destroy and reconstruct her world."¹⁴ Yet in Fanny's case there is no question of choice involved, and the look of "triumphant consciousness" (357) Bathsheba believes she sees

on the corpse's face is clearly the result of her own tortured imagination.

The coffin scene with Fanny and her child is important for another reason apart from its narrative function. It is through Bathsheba's exchange of roles with Fanny that Hardy expresses an idea he returns to in much of what he writes about women, this being that "all women [are] alike at heart, even those so different in their accessories as Fanny and [Bathsheba]" (360). On one level this statement can be understood as referring to the fact that, despite her money and property, Bathsheba, though fairly well-educated, also comes from a rural, working-class background, as does Fanny Robin. As is the case among Bathsheba, Grace Melbury (*The Woodlanders*), or Lucetta Templeman (*The Mayor of Casterbridge*), wealth, culture, and education function like cosmetics or new clothes which temporarily alter the familiar contours of the wearer, until incidents involving those such as Bathsheba's discovery of Fanny's child, or Grace's renewed affection for Giles, rend the disguise to reveal the natural woman concealed underneath. On another level, however, it is obvious that Hardy's observation reflects a fundamental shortsightedness in his vision of women. The link between Bathsheba and Fanny is, of course, their behavior in love and the weakness they display in the face of sexual attraction. As we will continue to discover, love frequently prompts Hardy's women to behave in ways which violate their sense of self-respect. After her

discovery of Troy's affair with Fanny, Bathsheba tells him that "'this woman is your victim; and I not less than she'" (361), revealing that it is not through a shared strength that Hardy's women are united, but in their role as victims.

Although Hardy makes it clear that, by means of Boldwood's madly determined plan to secure Bathsheba, and Troy's mercenary insistence on his "right" to share the fruits of Bathsheba's labor on the farm, their desire to possess Bathsheba is largely a selfish one, on the other hand, Gabriel's wish to marry her is meant to be the tonic Bathsheba requires to give meaning to a life that was "becoming a desolation" (455). With Troy's death, Bathsheba's dwindling interest in farming declines to the point that when Oak announces his intention of emigrating, Bathsheba protests on the grounds that she is "more helpless than ever" (453). Moreover,

She was bewildered too by the prospect of having to rely on her own resources again: it seemed to her that she never could again acquire energy sufficient to go to market, barter and sell.
(455)

Hardy apparently sees nothing unusual in Bathsheba's helpless need for a man to take over the work she had performed so well in the past. Certainly, it was never his intention that she would continue to remain independent. It is, as it were, 'natural' that she should require support, and that she will eventually relinquish the 'masculine' duties of buying and selling for the far less clearly

defined role (at least in Hardy's fiction) of the domestic woman.

Modern critics of Hardy's work have complained that the union of Gabriel and Bathsheba lacks true comic joy. Ian Gregor describes the novel as "the moral education of Bathsheba in which she learns to reject the illusory world of Troy and accept the prosaic world of Oak,"¹⁵ or, in the words of Perry Meisel, Bathsheba "remains morally infected, even with the apparent reestablishment of peace and order by marriage at the end of the novel."¹⁶ Susan Beegel does her best to challenge these assertions in her article "Male Sexuality in *Far from the Madding Crowd*," emphasizing Gabriel's worthiness as Bathsheba's lover, and his life-affirming sexuality. No one is likely to argue against Beegel's argument that "Boldwood and Troy are agents of death," and that Oak loses some of his clownish rusticity as the novel progresses, making him a less unlikely partner for Bathsheba.¹⁷ Nor can one disagree with Hardy himself when he praises the "camaraderie" Gabriel and Bathsheba share through their "similarity of pursuits"; something "unfortunately seldom superadded to love between the sexes, because men and women associate, not in their labours, but in their pleasures merely." In Hardy's words, this kind of friendship between men and women is "the only love which is strong as death--that love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam" (458-59). Yet

despite Beegel's attempt to dispel the reader's sense of regret at the end of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, even on her wedding night Bathsheba is said to smile, but not to laugh, because "she never laughed readily now" (465), and as Oak stands at her side with a proprietary air, the irrepressible Bathsheba closes the novel in silence. It is difficult not to be disappointed by a marriage, however promising the author assures us it is meant to be, that commences so solemnly on such a "damp, disagreeable morning" (463); especially for a woman whose outstanding characteristics have been her passion and her energy.

Although Hardy means us to regard Bathsheba's marriage to Gabriel as a truer, more enriching union than that offered by Boldwood and Troy, we are left to wonder why she is made to suffer so intensely before she is able to find this out, unless we remember that, no matter how deserving of their fates Boldwood and Troy happen to be, Bathsheba is the woman who unconsciously sets the events in motion. Hardy admits that Bathsheba need not give her life to the unbalanced Boldwood in order to atone for an idle jest, yet neither does he relinquish the idea that the temptress must be made to pay dearly for the damage wreaked upon the lives of those around her.

In *Two on a Tower* (1882) the heroine of the novel, Lady Viviette Constantine, is, aside from being attractive and nearly thirty years old, rendered doubly dangerous by the

fact that she is also a widow. Throughout literary history there have existed comic stories about the lustful widow in pursuit of a man. Joseph Swetnam, writing in the seventeenth century, remarked in his *Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women* that "no widow, 'framed to the conditions of another man,' could possibly 'forbear carnal act' if an opportunity came her way, since she was habitually deprived of it."¹⁸ Richard Allestree in *The Ladies Calling* (1673) refers to widowhood similarly as a "condition the most desolate and deplorable," for the reason that this is the time in a woman's life when she is "most at liberty."¹⁹ There's no doubt that Hardy flirts with the theme of the dangerous widow in his novel, infusing, as he frequently does, an old comic standby with a darker significance all its own.

When the story opens Viviette Constantine finds herself in the ambiguous position of being "'neither maid, wife, nor widow,'"²⁰ her husband having disappeared in Africa on a hunt two years earlier. She lives a quiet, secluded life without entertainment of any kind as the result of a parting vow she made to her jealous husband to avoid levity and society in his absence, and to live, as Viviette bitterly puts it, "'like a cloistered nun'" (26)--until her false widowhood becomes genuine.

It can only be a matter of speculation as to what extent the widowed Queen Victoria, devoted to her children and choosing never to remarry, inspired English society with

the model of the chaste, retiring widow spending her life in the care of her home and family and the employment of good works for charity. Viviette, however, derives no joy from the role of the model widow. She rather takes after her predecessor, Eustacia Vye, in her boredom and idleness. Such is Viviette's state of mind at the beginning of the novel: "She was in a mood to welcome anything that would in some measure disperse an almost killing ennui. She would have welcomed even a misfortune" (3). It is in this desperately bored and depressed spirit that Viviette welcomes the discovery of an abandoned tower on her husband's estate. The tower, which proves to be occupied by a handsome, aspiring young astronomer named Swithin St. Cleeve, is described like a kind of monument to Priapus: "a bright and cheerful thing, unimpeded, clean, and flushed with the sunlight" (4). The column is also a reflection of Swithin's ambition and idealism, yet we are never permitted to forget its physical association with the love trysts that later take place there, and the awakening sexuality of the young man housed within.

"It was little beyond the sheer desire for something to do--the chronic desire of her curiously lonely life--that had brought her here [to the tower] now" (3); it is an immediate attraction towards the astronomer ten years her junior that prompts Viviette to return again and again. However Hardy pities anyone who suffers as much from a lack of purpose as Viviette, Eustacia, and Felice Charmond, the

initial description of Viviette as being "eaten out with listlessness" (17), lying late in bed, neither sleeping nor reading, is mocking in tone. Both Hardy and his predominantly working-class characters express puzzlement and displeasure with the follies of the idle rich. Consequently, love among Hardy's restless women is depicted as something of an obsession. Although Hardy usually disapproves of the single-mindedness of these bored females, even those who possess the means of providing themselves with more useful and rewarding occupations are never given the opportunity. Love and courtship among most of Hardy's women are all-consuming concerns.

Social reality and literary tradition merge here as they often do in Hardy's work, in that the subjects of love and marriage were of great importance to the average nineteenth-century woman. This was because she was educated to think of love as leading to marriage, the primary goal in her life, and also because she dreaded the prospect of remaining single at a time when marriage (at least in theory) offered a woman food, clothing, a home of her own, and a recognizable status in society, whereas spinsterhood often meant an uncertain future financially and the knowledge that she had somehow failed in her duties as a woman.²¹ For Hardy's idle women, their fear is not that of being penniless, but the fear of being unloved, and subsequently alone with themselves. Hence we discover that

for Viviette, "Swithin had, in fact, arisen as an attractive little intervention between herself and despair" (54).

The intense need to find an outlet for their pent-up emotions leads Viviette, Eustacia, and Felice Charmond to choose unsuitable mates among men whose chief recommending feature is the accident of their happening to reside in the same neighborhood. Hardy is critical of lovers who attempt to fashion their beloved into someone he or she is not; and it is this destructive idealism that assists Bathsheba in falling in love with Troy, a well-known rake, and Viviette for seeing in Swithin something more than a self-centered, immature young man not yet capable of either deep or abiding love for a woman.

Viviette is the aggressor in her relationship with Swithin. Unfortunately for Viviette, it requires a great deal of veiled speech and sidelong glances on her part, along with a judicious remark by one of the villagers, before Swithin realizes her intentions. Rather than being made to seem like a scheming widow out to catch her prey, Viviette's efforts to attract are transparent and pathetic, and are not attributed to any other motives except an unwise choice of husbands (let us not forget Sir Blount), and a recklessly passionate nature that resists her efforts to repress it (94). Even her interest in astronomy ("I lack a hobby, and I shall choose astronomy" (56) is hardly more than a blind to conceal her interest in the astronomer, and no one but Swithin actually believes her.

Once Viviette does manage to gain Swithin's attention, she criticizes herself constantly for her 'weakness' in loving a man so young and inferior in social position, and at a point when he is just embarking on his career. She firmly believes the world would brand their alliance as shameful, but at least from the villagers' perspective there is nothing morally wrong in it. Aside from her brother Louis, one must wonder what Viviette has to fear from society's scorn when apparently the only visitor invited to her house since Sir Blount's departure to Africa is the Bishop. Such solitary lives do Viviette and Swithin lead that it hardly appears to matter whether a society with which they have so little contact scorns them or not. Nevertheless, Viviette refuses Swithin's suggestion that they make their union public. Aside from being afraid that she will appear ridiculous to others ("and anything rather than that!" 214),

she was tormented by a fear lest Swithin should some day accuse her of having hampered his deliberately-shaped plan of life by her intrusive romanticism. This was often the trick of men who had sealed by marriage, in their inexperienced youth, a love for those whom their maturer judgement would have rejected as too obviously disproportionate in years.(233)

Viviette expresses repeated concern for their difference in age as a probable source of future disharmony between them. As the story eventually proves, Viviette was not entirely

wrong. St. Cleeve's uncle's prohibitory letter to his nephew confirms Viviette's worst fears:

I don't think well of any woman who dotes upon a man so much younger than herself [writes the uncle]. To care to be the first fancy of a young fellow like you shows no great common sense in herShe is old enough to know that a liaison with her may, and almost certainly would, be your ruin.(137)

Misogynous though Hardy obviously means the letter to be, even Viviette's final action of relinquishing her claim on St. Cleeve cannot fully erase the unfavorable impression inflicted on her as a character by the uncle's missive. At the same time, the text suggests that there is indeed something inappropriate in an older woman's relationship with a younger man. On the day of Swithin's confirmation Viviette's appearance is described, and the conclusion is made that

Handsome woman in the church she decidedly was; and yet a disinterested spectator who had known all the circumstances would probably have felt that, the future considered, Swithin's more natural mate would have been one of the muslin-clad maidens who were to be presented to the Bishop with him that day.(175)

Though Viviette is "still young...and good-looking" (125) by most standards, Hardy lugubriously returns to thoughts on the evanescence of a thirty-year-old woman's beauty.

Hardy's emphasis on Viviette's appearance concerns itself not with the fact of her growing older, but with her

looking old. Hardy appears to acknowledge the injustice of Western culture's attitude toward older women, yet Viviette herself, consumed with love for Swithin, lacks the substance to refute the notion that there is anything else to value in her beyond her good looks. Nor can Viviette see anything to Swithin's benefit in loving her; she constantly speaks belittlingly of herself as someone who is only "wasting his time" (250); a mere burden or "yoke" (242) destined to "wreck" his future (250). Real or imagined, Viviette's belief in the damaging nature of her love is never refuted by any "disinterested spectator" such as Hardy mentions, and only feebly by Swithin himself.

When the presumably-widowed Bathsheba performs the self-sacrificial gesture of agreeing to marry Boldwood, we're made to understand that her motives, however honorable, are wrong. In *Two on a Tower*, Viviette's sacrifice is praised as an uncharacteristically generous gesture for one of her sex. After discovering that her first marriage to St. Cleeve is rendered legally null and void as a result of an error on the supposition of Sir Blount's date of death, Viviette is left with an acute sense of shame at having compromised her honor. Naturally, she is in a fever of impatience to clear her conscience by marrying him again as soon as possible. That is until Viviette happens upon the letter Swithin's uncle has sent him, after which she is seized by the noble desire to set her young lover free. She reasons with herself: "Why should she, to

save her narrow honour, waste the wide promise of his ability?" (257). With a truly utilitarian view of releasing Swithin in order that the world should not be deprived of his genius for the benefit of one woman alone, "she laboured, with a generosity more worthy even than its object" (258). But instead of lamenting the sorry state of a world that requires these kinds of sacrifices from women, Hardy writes unkindly that "To love St. Cleeve so far better than herself as this was to surpass the love of women as conventionally understood, and as mostly existing" (258).

Despite the depth of her feeling for Swithin, regardless of how irrational or short-sighted her choice, Viviette's decision is indeed a generous one, but as Margaret Fuller has pointed out, and Hardy himself reveals, all too typically the nineteenth-century male's approbation for a woman who has "nobly shone forth in any form of excellence" is tempered by a degree of surprise, seeming as if to say, "Can this be you? he cries...; well, I should never have thought it but I am very glad. We will tell everyone that you have 'surpassed your sex.'"²² Such is Hardy's attitude towards the chastened Bathsheba, as well as towards Viviette, whom he has twitted repeatedly for her passion and her foolishness.

George Wing observes, "Not alone among Hardy's heroines Lady Constantine often induces objective pity rather than compassionate affection."²³ This problem, or flaw, in some of Hardy's work, results from a need to lace the chronicle

of his heroines' misfortunes with frequent doses of irony at the women's expense, particularly in what he calls his "romances." Commiserate with them he will, but the need to judge or correct his female characters is equally strong. The unfortunate result in novels like *Two on a Tower*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, or the short story collection *A Group of Noble Dames*, is that the heroines become largely indistinguishable from one another, and must finally be relegated to their creator's category of fond and foolish females: those women who love unwisely and suffer the consequences of giving too much of themselves to men who are capable of giving little in return.

Throughout the novel, Viviette is preoccupied with maintaining her respectability. For instance, instead of making her own decision about the vow she has made to Sir Blount, Viviette relies on the local parson to tell her what to do. Moreover, despite her rather daring marriage to St. Cleeve, her guilty, furtive actions regarding its concealment lend the union an illicit quality that shames her almost as much as if she had truly "fallen" by having an affair with St. Cleeve, instead of having erred in an ill-considered marriage. This, no doubt, is the reason why Hardy felt it necessary to emphasize in his preface that "there is hardly a single caress in the book outside legal matrimony, or what was intended so to be."²⁴

Regardless of Viviette's disappointingly conventional behavior, it must be remembered that she was never expected

to attain the grandeur and complexity of a Tess Durbeyfield or a Sue Bridehead. She is, instead, one of the many women in life and literature who fail to gain the emotional and intellectual gratification they crave from within social confines. Either to remain a widow and "enter upon a virgin life for the rest of her days" (96), or, since she is now poor, to catch a rich squire "with more weight than wit, more reality than weight, and more personality than reality" (125-26), are the two acceptable choices society permitted women in Viviette's position.

From the beginning, Viviette's relationship with Swithin is destined to fail. Aside from the characters' personality flaws, Hardy, as we have seen, also suggests that nature's opposition to their union is further reason why they will never find happiness together, theirs being an unlikely marriage so far as the novel is concerned. Beneath the stars under which they come together, Swithin remarks, "'For all the wonder of these everlasting stars, eternal spheres, and what not, they are not everlasting; they burn out like candles'" (34), not unlike his passion for Viviette. That Swithin also agrees to a separation of several years without insisting on some degree of correspondence, that he apparently wastes little time thinking about either Viviette or his child once he learns of her pregnancy, coupled with Hardy's hints about his immaturity, plainly reveals that he lacks both the substance and the devotion needed to equal Viviette's.

Swithin's return to England after a four or five year's absence eventually brings him face to face with Viviette, the Bishop's widow, and her son by Swithin. Unfortunately, the "worn and faded" woman who greets him is no longer beautiful enough to rekindle his nearly quiescent passion. Sensing Swithin's disappointment, Viviette sends him away, and he obeys promptly. Moments later, however, he is reminded of his moral obligation to Viviette, and despite disappointment, Swithin returns to tell her he will marry her after all: "Hence he did not flinch from a wish to deal with loving-kindness towards her--a sentiment perhaps in the long run more to be praised than lover's love" (312). As in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy shows himself in favor of a love base more on simple "loving-kindness" than on romance and passion, yet Swithin's sense of duty to Viviette seems like small compensation for the sorrow he has caused her and the love she continues to bestow on him. In an excess of "amazed joy" (313), Viviette utters a piercing scream at Swithin's news and collapses in his arms--dead. Looking over the head of the dead woman Swithin suddenly notices bouncing Tabitha Lark in the distance, and it is immediately apparent that she, and not Viviette, is the true mate of the still-youthful Swithin St. Cleeve.

Where Viviette and women like her in Hardy's novels are concerned, their ability to attract men is far more of a danger to themselves than to the men they pursue. Viviette's death is therefore something of a double irony:

first, in light of the Bishop's 'revenge' upon Viviette for having married him when she was already two months pregnant with Swithin's child; and second, the irony of Viviette's youthful replacement coming into view before her own prematurely aged body is even cold. While it does not seem that Viviette's death is a direct punishment for her transgressions (Hardy sees to it that she is duly chastened in her unhappy marriage with the Bishop), the pleasure that is allowed to take Viviette's life is a cruel stroke indeed.

From time to time Hardy introduces into *Two on a Tower* the notion of a fate that exists beyond the characters' control through mention of the planets--or "plannards," as the villagers call them--which appear destined to bring Swithin and Viviette together. However, in this novel at least, there is more of character at work than destiny or fate, and the force that compels Viviette to gain Swithin's attention at all costs is one which seeks to fill a void in the soul and finds nothing else available to suit the purpose but a backward young man.

The quest for personal fulfillment is given a slightly different turn by Eustacia Vye of *The Return of the Native* (1878). Perhaps one of Hardy's most dramatic female characters, Eustacia, like Viviette, lives a purposeless existence, both physically and emotionally isolated from others. Out of all Hardy's heroines, Eustacia is the one linked closest to the demonic through images of darkness and

fire. Also black-haired and romantic, Eustacia has "Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries" (82), suggesting powers of seduction and allure quite unknown to any of Hardy's other *femmes fatales*.²⁵ Whereas Hardy playfully alludes to the "demonic" quality of Bathsheba's beauty, or that which is reminiscent of it in Viviette, these descriptions are only meant to suggest a particular type of sexual attractiveness; in relation to Eustacia, Hardy's references imply that hers is a more dangerous and complex character. In one of the early chapters, we learn that Eustacia is scheming for Wildeve's rupture with his fiancée, Thomasin; and her plans, Hardy informs us, "showed rather the comprehensive strategy of a general than the small arts called womanish" (86). Moreover, Eustacia's trysts with Wildeve and her later seduction of Clym Yeobright reflect none of Viviette's simple, hesitant wiles. Eustacia has also the reputation among the heathfolk of being a witch, but aside from serving to intensify the mystery about her, the charge is understood as a reflection of her dubious morality. As Mrs Yeobright explains to her son, "'Good girls don't get treated as witches even on Egdon'" (176).

Contrary to Mrs Yeobright's belief, good girls are sometimes misjudged, even if they aren't suspected of practicing witchcraft. Thomasin, Mrs Yeobright's niece, would appear to be everything that Eustacia is not: shy, modest, uncomplicated and unromantic. The fact is that she and Eustacia are both, for a time at least, criticized for

behaving with Wildeve as no girl who valued her reputation would think of doing. In Hardy's original conception of *The Return of the Native* Thomasin was to have spent a week away from home with Wildeve, only to discover later that the marriage was invalid.²⁶ The Thomasin of Hardy's final draft retains the deep sense of shame her predecessor was imbued with, without having been physically intimate with Wildeve. Thomasin's consciousness of proprieties and her anxiousness to do whatever is required--pleading included--to convince Wildeve to marry her, determines Thomasin's character as a conventional woman. The scene is also reminiscent of the one in which Fanny Robin implores Troy to marry her, all the while regretting the need for such boldness on her part when she says, "'Don't speak like that...It makes me say what ought to be said first by you'" (137). The distraught Thomasin is forced to talk to Wildeve as women are not supposed to talk when she exclaims: "'O Damon, what you make me say!'" (63). Hardy's weaker women are always hesitant about making their desires known, finding it demeaning to put themselves in men's power, because Hardy's women are not able to derive strength from their demands. Instead, they expose their weaknesses, showing how much they need from their men, and therefore make themselves vulnerable to future manipulation and injury.

Aside from Thomasin's conventionality, her dismay at being misunderstood and having her reputation ruined is based on her awareness of disappointing Mrs Yeobright and

Clym. Returning after her aborted attempt to marry Wildeve, Thomasin is greeted by an angry and indignant Mrs Yeobright who calls her behavior "disgraceful" (60), and later justifies Thomasin's making a potentially disastrous marriage with Wildeve because it is the only "means [by which] to appear before the world without a slur upon her name" (106). Thomasin's loyalty to her family is too great not to be stung first by Mrs Yeobright's reaction, and then by her cousin Clym's accusing letter which selfishly concludes: "It is too ridiculous that such a girl as Thomasin could so mortify us as to get jilted on her wedding day. What has she done?" (157).

"What has she done?" Invariably the question of blame and its consequent burden of guilt falls squarely on the Victorian woman's shoulders, regardless of her innocence or wrongdoing. Hardy is well aware of the attitude expressed in Clym's letter with its fussy bourgeois fear of what the neighbors might think. The closeness of the Yeobright family quickly gives way under pressure, as so many families do, when one member threatens its equilibrium; and Thomasin, already an adopted member and not one of the immediate family, finds her place threatened by her unfortunate choice of a husband.

Even Thomasin, seemingly of a character beyond reproach, with a secure place in the community, unexpectedly finds herself the subject of rumors, her security and her entire future threatened:

Thomasin lowered her face to the apples again. 'I am a warning to others, just as thieves and drunkards are,' she said in a low voice. 'What a class to belong to! Do I really belong to them? 'Tis absurd! Yet why, aunt, does everybody keep on making me think I do, by the way they behave towards me? Why don't people judge me by my acts? Now, look at me as I kneel here, picking up these apples--do I look like a lost woman...I wish all good women were as good as I!' she added vehemently. (119)

Juxtaposed in Thomasin is both an ingrained slavishness to propriety and to that which taught her that a woman who forfeits her good name no longer deserves society's respect and protection.²⁷ She is now reduced to the status of a warning to other women, though she recognizes the absurdity of this notion and manages to draw strength from her self-knowledge. Nevertheless, although Thomasin's courage enables her to withstand the waiting period prior to her marriage to Wildeve, marriage is always her goal, even when she comes to realize that he is no longer the man she thought he was. While Thomasin is not a particularly admirable or heroic character--self-preservation being her primary reason for marrying Damon--she, at least, never loses her self-respect; certainly no easy achievement under the circumstances.

Once again, love is made to act as a diversion for one of Hardy's women. Eustacia shares Viviette and Felice's need for something to do and to think about, and she turns to love for that purpose. But although Eustacia tries to convince herself that it is love she is seeking, in

actuality, her decision to fall in love with Clym before she has even met him is largely based on her perception of him as a "visitant from a gay world to which she rightly belonged" (194) and a means by which to escape from Egdon Heath. Scheme though she does for Clym's affection, Eustacia is not a Becky Sharp or an Arabella Donne looking out for whatever can be got from a man. The problem with Eustacia is that, whereas she seeks to be consumed by a great love affair, she also wishes to consume another with the intensity of her passion. Nothing, Eustacia believes, should be of greater importance to her lover than she is. Like the divinities Hardy associates her with, Eustacia demands no less than complete devotion from her subject. At a later point in the novel, Eustacia asks Clym if it has seemed long since their last meeting. He replies that "'It has seemed sad!'" "'And not long?'" Eustacia persists. "'That's because you occupy yourself, and so blind yourself to my absence. To me, who can do nothing, it has been like living under stagnant water'" (190). Realistically, a man who must divide his time between business and love can be no match for the woman who makes love her sole occupation. It is no surprise that difficulties finally arise between them.

Both for Swithin and for Clym, their relationships with women are only one aspect of their lives. The women's romantic view of love is constantly being contrasted with the more prosaic love of the male characters. As we saw in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Gabriel is anxious to marry

Bathsheba so that he can direct his concentration back to his work (74), and the same is true of Swithin St. Cleeve and Clym Yeobright--one concerned with his astronomy, and the other with plans to start a school. Both see marriage as something which will aid them in the concentration directed toward their respective endeavors. Viviette and Eustacia, on the other hand, feel envious and, to a degree, excluded by occupations they do not share in.

Sally Mitchell sees a definite social cause for the behavior Hardy's characters exhibit, attributing it to the fact that Victorian boys and girls were educated apart and did not mix in their pastimes. As they grew older, "Men's business life was supposed to be incomprehensible to women and hers--of needlework, drawing and dressing--beneath his notice. By the time they made a conventionally late marriage their habits and thoughts were formed along totally different lines," and communication, especially on a topic as sensitive as love, became more difficult.²⁸

While it is true that Eustacia's calculated exertions at the Christmas mumming are largely responsible for attracting Clym's attention, Eustacia cannot be charged with dishonesty. Instead of trying to trap Clym into marriage through lies or deception, she openly admits her doubts to him about her ability to maintain a constant love, finally culminating in her alarming prophecy that "'I shall ruin you'" (191). Clym, however, dismisses her concerns as the result of being "'desperate, [and] full of fancies'" (191).

Consequently, the word 'blindness,' which is repeatedly used by others to describe Clym's behavior, is only too apt in this circumstance.

Eustacia also freely admits to having loved another man before Clym (she does not require the persuasion necessary of Elfride Swancourt or Tess), and surprisingly unlike Knight or Angel, Clym does not concern himself with his predecessors. The extent of Eustacia's sexual experience before marriage must therefore be discovered through Hardy's carefully worded suggestions, all of which seem to point toward the fact that Eustacia has, very likely, been sexually involved with Wildeve. In what must be considered a truly enlightened fashion for 1878, this knowledge of the novel's heroine is meant to figure less prominently in the reader's estimation of Eustacia's character than the question of her intentions and how she proceeds to carry them out.

Through Clym, Eustacia hopes to make something of her life in her quest to experience beauty in all its cultured forms. In Eustacia's imagination, Paris, the focus of her dreams and aspirations, offers the promise of a reason for being and a confirmation that there exists one congenial place in the world to which she belongs. Although Eustacia's longing to escape from the heath is desperate enough that she will do almost anything to get away, the artificiality of her ideal, with its bright lights and amusements, renders her dream somewhat childish.

Nonetheless, what Eustacia essentially seeks, apart from the parties and dancing and the gay society, is to feel in touch with the powerful vitality of the life force. At one point she asks Wildeve: "'do I desire unreasonably much in wanting what is called life--music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world?'" (262). Eustacia requires constant drama and romance in order to feel that she is truly alive, and it is no wonder that she is so bitterly disappointed with her life at Egdon. As Hardy explains in the opening chapter, "Haggard Egdon appealed to a much subtler and scarcer instinct, to a more recently learnt emotion, than that which responds to the kind of beauty called charming and fair" (32). Clearly Eustacia is not of the order of people who were meant to understand "the untameable, Ishmaelitish thing" (33) that is the heath.

Although Eustacia's misfortunes at times seem so much her own doing, Hardy does not, as David Cecil points out, "condemn her for snatching at every chance to achieve fulfilment."²⁹ Nor does Hardy entirely share Mrs Yeobright's view of Eustacia as being merely "lazy and dissatisfied" (187) and "of [no] use to herself or to other people" (176). Hardy builds the character of Eustacia Vye around the premise of her dissatisfaction: yet he is also careful to prove, by means of her innate sensitivity and intelligence, that she is a woman not without potential, vague and indistinct though it may be. Somewhat

contradictorily, Eustacia is both refined and hindered by her environment. Refined because "Isolation on a heath rendered vulgarity well-nigh impossible" (84), and hindered in that "Her power was limited [on a lonely heath], and the consciousness of this limitation 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 thereto" (82). Therefore, Clym's remark to her that "'There is no use in hating people--if you hate anything, you should hate what produced them,'" is as much a comment to the reader about Eustacia as it is about the heathfolk.

If Eustacia's brain is a juxtaposition of the "strangest assortment of ideas, from old time and from new" (83), so is the narrator's depiction of her character. Eustacia is both a tragic heroine and an object of satire, and her attractiveness contains the decidedly "pagan" charm, to borrow Hardy's word, of an age when sexuality was not equated with weakness and sin.³⁰ At the same time, it is Hardy's intention to show, through courtly and classical allusions, that the romantic hero or heroine is largely an artificial construct incapable of withstanding a confrontation with nineteenth-century ideology. Likewise, the falsely idealized vision of love Eustacia and other romantics bring to a relationship--she is first described as "filling up the spare hours of her existence by idealizing

Wildeve for want of a better object" (86)--is clearly destructive to both lover and beloved.

In the first weeks of their marriage, Clym and Eustacia "were enclosed in a sort of luminous mist, which hid from them surroundings of any inharmonious color, and gave to all things the character of light" (227), but the pleasant mist soon dissipates, and within a month Eustacia is again bored and unhappy with her situation. A crisis occurs when Clym discovers that Eustacia continues to harbor a secret hope that he will change his mind and return to Paris. Her disappointment is great, but for Clym, "It was the first time that he had confronted the fact of the indirectness of a woman's movement toward her desire" (233).

There is more to Eustacia's dissatisfaction with Clym than his refusal to take her away from Egdon. Clym apparently pinpoints the problem when he admits to Eustacia, eager to be off to a country dance: "'Yes, perhaps I am jealous; and who could be jealous with more reason than I, a half-blind man, over such a woman as you'" (241). Clym's "half-blindness" and his unwillingness to rebel against his misfortunes invests him with a quality of spiritual and emotional impotence in Eustacia's eyes. Wealth, power, and position are powerful aphrodisiacs for a good many people, and Eustacia is no exception. Stripped of his uniqueness as an outsider and the glamour of his profession as a diamond merchant, Clym becomes outwardly interchangeable with any of

the other heath-dwellers--and gone is his sexual allure for Eustacia.

It is testimony to the basic conventionality of the male characters Knight, Angel, and Clym, that their love is idealizing, and lasts only as long as the women they love do nothing to disturb the vision imposed upon them. In all three instances, when the women find themselves incapable of living up to their lovers' expectations and the vision is proved false, the men experience a keen sense of betrayal. Thus when Elfride Swancourt confesses her aborted elopement with Steven, Knight immediately thinks the worst of her, because "Having now seen himself mistaken in supposing Elfride to be peerless, nothing on earth could make him believe that she was not so very bad after all."³¹ Clym behaves in much the same manner towards Eustacia after his discovery that by failing to open the door to his mother when she came to make peace, Eustacia indirectly contributed to her death. In an instant, Clym's love for his wife turns to violent hatred, and he curses her aloud: "'May all murderesses get the torment they deserve!'" (296). From having been Clym's "Olympian girl" and a "martyr to superstition" (177), Eustacia is transformed through Clym's imagination into a creature of despicable evil: a "murderess" and a "devil" (297), and a "well-finished and full-blown adept in a certain trade" (299) in possession of such extraordinary powers of sexual attraction that Clym

must avert his eyes even while accusing her, lest her should unwillingly be "tempted to softness" (302).

Clym's attempt to play the traditional role of the injured husband is at odds with his reason for wanting to extract a confession from Eustacia as to who was in the house with her the day Mrs Yeobright was shut out, in order that, as Clym tells her, "'I could...mourn for and pity you, if you were contrite, and would confess all. Forgive you I never can'" (300). Clym's offer of pity to Eustacia appears to be an effort to assuage his conscience rather than Eustacia's, as well as to flatter his sense of generosity toward a woman who by general consensus would have warranted being immediately turned out of her home. But if Clym expects Eustacia to beg him on bended knees for forgiveness, he is mistaken.

As punishment, perhaps, for Eustacia's refusal to abase herself before him, Clym deals her the finishing blow with a single query: "'How could there be any good in a woman that everybody spoke ill of?'" (301). Earlier in the story when Clym defends his relationship with Eustacia to his mother, he does so by remarking that his choosing her "'proves her to be worthy. I have never yet supported what is bad'" (197). Although Clym means to persuade Mrs Yeobright through her implicit faith in him, his words, innocently spoken, nonetheless deny Eustacia possession of her own worth. She is deserving of Clym's affection because of his confidence in his own judgement, just as later, when he

believes his judgement to have been mistaken, Clym, as confidently as before, negates Eustacia's value by the same method. In this respect Eustacia is not so very different from Tess, who considers herself "'so utterly worthless'" the moment Angel withdraws his favor.³² Eustacia's fate and her sense of self-worth ultimately depend on one man's recognition of--or blindness toward--her value as a wife and a human being.

To the end of the novel Eustacia, as does Thomasin, resists the appellation "lost woman." If she is "lost," it is not as Clym or anyone else in the novel understands the term. Clym reminds her that she is by no means an innocent, to which Eustacia responds with candor that does her credit: "'Certainly I am not absolutely [innocent],' she replied. 'I have not done what you suppose; but if to have done no harm at all is the only innocence recognized, I am beyond forgiveness. But I require no help from your conscience'" (300). Although Eustacia's assertion buoys her up in the quarrel with Clym, her inward denial that she is dishonorable or of criminal intent in her treatment of Mrs Yeobright cannot supply her with the inner strength that even Thomasin is shown to have, because it is not guilt which drives Eustacia to contemplate suicide, but the knowledge that she "'has made a bad bargain with life, and...[is] weary of it--weary'" (306).

Eustacia's unwillingness to take up the role of abandoned wife, living on "as a painful object, isolated,

and out of place" (317), left few alternatives for the Victorian woman who felt as she did, the common Victorian attitude being that a woman who failed at marriage was considered a failure at life. Eustacia's decision to make a new life for herself by going away to Paris runs into practical snares, however, and the familiar need for male support forces her to consider the newly-rich Wildeve as a companion in flight. The conclusion she arrives at reveals escape on her terms, as an independent woman, an impossibility:

'Can I go, can I go?' she moaned. 'He's not great enough for me to give myself to--he does not suffice for my desire!...If he had been a Saul or a Bonaparte--ah! But to break my marriage vow for him--it is too poor a luxury!...And I have no money to go alone! And if I could, what comfort to me? I must drag on next year, as I have dragged on this year, and the year after that as before...O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! (321)

As Eustacia is fully aware, even should she escape the heath with Wildeve there is no guarantee that she will find happiness in a new place, for as she has discovered, Wildeve is only a substitute for the dream-lover she is never to find.

In a spirit of utter despair and desperation, Eustacia laments her fate as the wife of a half-blind furze-cutter in an age dictated by the circumstance that "When men fell, their dependent women fell with them";³³ as well as the

economic circumstances preventing her from traveling abroad. Eustacia also rails at a "'Heaven [that has] devise[d] such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!'" (321), for she, like most of Hardy's characters, is compelled by circumstances and emotions she is incapable of controlling.

It is the almost allegorical rendering of Eustacia and Clym that is finally responsible for raising her above the realm of the temptress and the immature dreamer, placing her within the sphere of Hardy's tragic heroines. As Hardy has revealed through Eustacia's persistent romanticism and the images linking her with Hellenism and Prometheus, Eustacia represents a state of unconsciousness belonging to a past era and a way of thinking and a way of life no longer feasible in the modern age. Upon her death, it is observed that "The stateliness of look which has been almost too marked for a dweller in a country domicile had at last found an artistically happy background (339), the conclusion being that there is no place for Eustacia in the present, and only death can approximate the grandeur of her expectations for a life of beauty, splendor, and excitement. Hardy explains that "The old-fashioned revelling in the general situation grows less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws, and see the quandry that man is in by their operation" (167). The heath, and Clym upon it, is representative of the arrival of the modern, conscious age,† all the difficulties and pain that attends such knowledge.

With the realization that she has become "isolat[ed] from all humanity" (321) and no release from her torment appears possible, Eustacia, an anachronism among the Victorians, chooses death as her tragic solution. Nevertheless, it is exactly those personality traits--her vanity, her fantasies, her idleness, and her unreasonable expectations of marriage and men--that make Eustacia unfit as a woman to achieve contentment in Hardy's world.

From a group containing Viviette Constantine, Felice Charmond, Lucetta Templeman, Bathsheba Everdene, and Eustacia Vye, only one woman, the much-chastened Bathsheba, survives to discover some measure of future happiness with a man; all of the others die, so that with the exception of Eustacia, their former lovers are able to marry or rejoin with purer, simpler women unencumbered by the restlessness and passionate sexuality of their previous attachments.

Chapter II

Hardy's Victimized Women in *The Woodlanders*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, and *Tess* of the d'Urbervilles

Her loves dependent on a feature's trim,
A whole life's circumstance on hap of birth,
A soul's direction on a body's whim...
("Discouragement," Hardy)

Among Hardy's fictional women, the majority appear destined to suffer. Regarding Hardy's more spirited and seductive females, personal temperament and an intense desire to create lives of their own choosing play an important part in bringing about their misfortunes. Yet there is another category of Hardy's frail and fallen women characters. These are the "good" girls like Grace Melbury of *The Woodlanders*, "ever anxious to please."¹

Hardy's collection of short stories, *A Group of Noble Dames*, about women of the aristocracy, includes several examples of women trapped in brutal, sadistic marriages, as in "The Duchess of Hamptonshire" and "Barbara of the House of Grebe," or in marriages of less overt, but no less damaging, cruelty. Lady Penelope is one of those in the latter class: a young woman unjustly accused of murder by her husband and the community, and subsequently hounded into a premature grave. There is also Lady Mottisfont, forced to acquiesce in her husband's decision to take from her the

foster child she has made her life, in order to turn it over to his selfish mistress. But Lady Mottisfont, despite her pain, allows the child to be taken away, only to attempt to drown herself afterward.

Each of the stories mentioned depicts heroines displaying extraordinary patience and submission in the face of misery or injustice. Their silent suffering is their only means of reproach for the wrongs done to them; perhaps because they realize that it is often easier to internalize their misery than to direct it outward, as Hardy suggests they might be better off doing, and risk the consequences of a confrontation, like the Lady Penelope who would rather lose her life than attempt to refute her husband's unspoken accusation. As for Tess Durbeyfield, her misguided pride and unfounded belief in her own unworthiness motivates her to conceal the hardships she experiences as the result of Angel's decision to separate until she, too, finds herself condemned to an existence of inexpressible pain. Although *A Group of Noble Dames* can not be discussed here at length, these stories are nonetheless important to keep in mind because they offer evidence that Hardy's preoccupation with victimized women extends beyond the few novels to be examined in this chapter.

Each of Hardy's heroes and heroines is in some way misunderstood by others, but what is important about the female characters selected for examination in this chapter from *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *The Woodlanders*, and *Tess of the*

d'Urbervilles, is not simply that they suffer, but how they react to the abuses they encounter in their lives, and why.

Unfortunately, Hardy's victimized women are often passive in situations when action would likely have proved more beneficial, thus recalling to mind Margaret Fuller's observation that "In all ranks those women who are gentle and uncomplaining, too candid to intrigue, too delicate to encroach, suffer much."² Examples of the type of women Fuller describes can be found in Grace Melbury's repeated efforts to avoid confronting Fitzpiers with his infidelity at the expense of her own happiness, as well as in the narrator's suggestions that Tess and Elfride are rather too quick to accept the sorry and shameful lot dealt them by their lovers' hands.

Mary Jacobus, in her article "Towards a Feminist Poetics," notes that "To waken from the drugged pleasant sleep of Victorian womanhood was agonising; in fiction it is much more likely to end in drowning than discovery."³ Certainly, Eustacia Vye's death by drowning, a probable suicide, follows a discovery not of a new world, but of her own unsurmountable limitations. And when Tess finally does awaken to rebel against her relationship with Alec, the knife she plunges into his heart is as much a suicide as it is a murder.

As a young girl, Tess obeys her parents and falls into error for which she must suffer the consequences. As a woman, Tess hangs the entire hope of her existence upon

Angel Clare, and gives to him all the love she has ever felt for a man. "'I have no wish opposed to yours'" (256), she informs Angel when he decides to desert her. Hardy later remarks:

"That she adhered with literal exactness to orders which he had given and forgotten; that despite her natural fearlessness she asserted no rights, admitted his judgement to be in every respect the true one, and bent her head dumbly thereto."⁴

Tess's willing acceptance of Angel's punishment forces her to have to bear more than her share of life's misery, but she does not disturb him until he returns to seek her out. Only then, with Tess's expectations for happiness seemingly extinguished by Angel's second departure from her, does she dare to make one last plea to recover his love. If her killing of Alec is firstly an act of frustration and despair, it is, secondly, a desperate attempt to free herself for Angel; but by committing murder, Tess also assures her own punishment and death, and her aimless wandering with Angel afterward shows only a feeble attempt to avoid her fate.

The Christian view of suffering as a means of cleansing the soul and preparing the individual for a new phase in life or the after-life is not what Hardy has in mind for his heroines. Suffering brings no rewards in itself, and any lessons the heroine learns are invariably consigned to the grave as her male counterparts continue on with their lives, to profit, one hopes, from her experiences.

Hardy's efforts to depict the suffering of women and the particular constraints of their lives take a disturbing turn among some of his novels and short stories. In several instances the female characters are made to seem more pathetic than either admirable or edifying. These women are denied any kind of release from their unhappiness, and because they are often permitted to recede into the background at the conclusion of the story, their experiences summarized by other characters, Hardy is, in effect, imposing silence on those whom he has already sought to prove have a special need for speech and recognition. Nevertheless, at his most successful in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy is capable of portraying a woman, shaped though she is by suffering and powerless to prevent the incidents which contribute to her destruction, who manages to gain from her personal tragedies a profound awareness of the human condition. Hence, Tess Durbeyfield moves us not only through the unfortunate things that happen to her, but by the strength she exhibits in retaining the spirit that those around her nearly succeed in desolating and defiling.

In Hardy's fiction, as in life, the good are not necessarily rewarded, nor are the bad consistently punished. More often than not, misfortune inexplicably strikes one like Tess, about whom Hardy asks: "Why was it that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been

traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive..."⁵ This is a question Hardy never answers fully—"Thus things around. No answerer I.," he writes in the poem, "Nature's Questioning." But in addition to the failings or deficiencies of a particular character and the obvious smallness of men who fail to comprehend the nature of the love it is their good fortune to have inspired, and the unyielding, uncomprehending society, as Hardy often portrays it, that would sooner condemn than learn to forgive, there is always another factor present in Hardy's characterizations that cannot be overlooked: the references to a perverse destiny or fate which one is apparently powerless to control. As he refers to it in *The Dynasts*:

The Prime, that willed ere wareness was,
Whose Brain perchance is Space, whose Thought its
 laws,
Which we as threads and streams discern
We may but muse on, never learn.⁶

Despite the difficulty Hardy has at times bringing the various elements of his fiction into convincing play, taken as a whole, Hardy's body of work begins to manifest a more coherent form. The novels acknowledge the possibility of Fate as an influence over the course of human life, yet almost always more prominent than the influence of Fate in Hardy's fiction is the recognition of how our own tendencies and human institutions effect the outcome of our existence, particularly in *The Woodlanders*.

Grace Melbury returns home from boarding school and her travels abroad the pampered and adored only child of a prosperous timber merchant. Like Felice Charmond, one of Hintock's outsiders, Grace returns to the village of her birth with an air of distinction. She is no longer the same girl who unwillingly left her home for boarding school years earlier (168); instead, she is a young woman who has had the advantage of an education and contact with a larger world than most of Hintock's residents have ever known. Although the extent of Grace's education is never fully established beyond her familiarity with a few French writers (52) (we can only be sure that what education she did receive was obtained at the most fashionable girls' schools Mr Melbury's money could buy), in the eyes of Little Hintock, Grace is a cultivated woman; her refined tastes and the fact of her having lived apart from her family makes her seem to them to be of a superior breed and sensibility.

It isn't long before Grace is singled out for attention by the elegant and well-traveled Mrs Charmond. After only one visit to Hintock House for tea, Grace feels herself to be more at home in Mrs Charmond's mansion than anywhere else since she returned (67). Accustomed as she has become "to servants^{and} everything superfine these many years" (61), and to "scenes widely removed from [Hintock], both as regarded place, and character" (59), it is no wonder that she is drawn to that which seems familiar in Mrs Charmond's lifestyle. Yet when the vain Felice Charmond decides to

eschew Grace's friendship because she fears being outshone by the younger woman's good looks, it isn't Grace who suffers as much as her father from the rejection and the rupture of a pleasant dream.

Hardy has taken considerable care in presenting the timber-merchant's ambitions, for it is apparent that Melbury loves his daughter deeply and cares about her welfare. The night before Grace's return home, Melbury is sleepless with worries about the possible state of Grace's health, and fears that she might not be well-provided for in the event of his death (15). Much of what Mr Melbury does, however misguided that may be, is, in his belief, in Grace's best interest. Be that as it may, it is still less Grace's fastidiousness or snobbery than her father's ambition which succeeds in turning her heart from her former suitor, Giles Winterborne, to the sophisticated Dr. Fitzpiers.

From the beginning of the novel Mr Melbury vacillates between two basically selfish desires: one being to marry Grace to Giles in order to repay a debt of conscience to the young man's dead father, and the other, to see Grace married to a man of wealth and social standing. The fact that the carrying out of one plan must necessarily cancel the other is a problem for which Melbury never quite manages to find a solution. Despite his promise to Giles that the old engagement between him and Grace still stands, Melbury, nevertheless, "seeing what an immense change her last twelve-months had produced in his daughter, after the heavy

sum per annum that he had been spending for several years upon her education" (62), is convinced that Grace could find a worthier mate than the gentle and honest Giles, and secretly hopes that something will occur to prevent the marriage.

Mr Melbury, although not a hard or unfeeling man, persists in viewing his only daughter as a possession--albeit a precious one--which he believes he has the power to dispose of in marriage as he sees fit. Every word he utters, every thought he displays reflects the notion of women as commodities. To Melbury Grace is a "gift as valuable a one as it lay in his power to bestow" (14), and a "gem he had been at such pains in mounting" (65). Clearly, one does not educate a beautiful gem or an exquisite piece of artwork; rather, one polishes and refines it. As Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn comment in their discussion of Levi-Strauss's *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1969), in patriarchal societies, "Women are the gifts which men exchange between each other." Moreover, "Men, not women, have the power to determine the value of women in the exchange and the meanings associated with them."⁷ Mr Melbury is shown following the patriarchal pattern exactly, and largely unquestioningly. Indeed, his primary reason for sending Grace to school is not to provide her with a future outside the home, nor is it to foster in her any kind of independence, financial or otherwise. Melbury makes his real reasons very plain to his daughter by one day allowing

her to examine his checkbook. Her reaction is one of dismay:

'I, too, cost a good deal, like the horses and waggons and corn,' she said looking up sorrily.'

To which her father replies:

'...But if you do cost as much as they, never mind. You'll yield a better return.'
'Don't think of me like that!' she begged. 'A mere chattel.'(68)

Essentially Grace's education is meant to secure her the highest bidder in the marriage market, as well as to satisfy Mr Melbury's thinly concealed aspiration to see his daughter advance socially where he has failed.

Protest though she may to being treated like "chattel," her affection for Giles is not strong enough to withstand the force of her father's parental persuasion. According to Melbury,

'a woman takes her colour from the man she's walking with. The woman who looks an unquestionable lady with a polished-up fellow looks a tawdry imitation article when she's hobbing and nobbing with a homely blade....Today has shown me that whatever a young woman's niceness, she stands for nothing alone. You shall marry well.'(66-67)

Hardy is very aware of the existence of the mentality Melbury is expressing; Eustacia herself discovered it when her dazzling new husband became an outdoor laborer. Accurate view of society though this may be, it nonetheless reduces

women to the level of chameleons, their identity constantly changing depending upon the company they keep. That is until the woman reaches the stage where she has no other identity apart from being an addendum to her husband, a mere trinket in his collection. Most importantly, Hardy reveals the dangers implicit in the unquestioning faith of the daughter who is above all taught to blindly trust and obey. Despite the troubles that eventually befall Grace and the understanding on her part that "Acquiescence to her father's wishes [in marrying Fitzpiers] had been degradation to herself" (158), near the end of the novel when she and Giles are waiting for her divorce to come through, Grace is still "reverently believing in her father's sound judgement and knowledge, as good girls are wont to do" (209).

In her essay, "Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today," Rosalind Coward describes the "adoration of a person on whom your welfare depends, the exaggerated evaluation which children experience before the process of becoming a separate person begins."⁸ Although Grace soon comes to recognize her mistake in allowing her father to think for her and to marry Edred Fitzpiers against her own better judgement, she is never more than briefly successful in achieving autonomy from her father. Even after marriage she remains with her husband under the Melbury roof, and the two of them are provided for, at least in part, through her father's money. As well, when the marriage begins to

falter, Melbury finds himself "fight[ing] his daughter's battle still" (164).

The pattern of obedience established in Grace's childhood is reaffirmed rather than attenuated in maturity; and although Grace is not without a mind of her own, when Fitzpiers enters her life, she possesses none of the resources of independence and experience necessary to resist the handsome doctor's erotic onslaught. In some ways Grace resembles women like Bathsheba and Thomasin who mistakenly value sexual attractiveness over more lasting qualities of honesty and love, and like those two characters, Grace casts aside the man most likely to bring her happiness, as well as the character closest perhaps to Hardy's masculine ideal. Faithful and honest, sensitive and sincere, Giles Winterborne is probably the most unselfish man in Hardy's repertoire. He is equally "Autumn's very brother" and a part of the natural world with which he is surrounded, and he is also Grace's steadfast admirer and a representation of chivalrous masculinity, seemingly "risen out of the earth, ready to her hand" (156).⁹ Like the supremely faithful Gabriel Oak and Diggory Venn, Giles is powerless to do otherwise than suffer and wait as the woman he loves turns to an inferior man capable of bringing her only unhappiness.

Hardy arranges the contrast between Giles and Fitzpiers in much the same way he does with Gabriel and Troy. Giles's life-affinity is emphasized through his almost uncanny "power of making trees grow" (49), by means of the "gentle

conjuror's touch" he uses in "spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress, under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth" (49-50). Giles's tools are his fingers, and the instinctive way he has of knowing exactly what the roots require to survive holds the same kind of erotic possibility expressed in Oak's handling of the sheep clippers. Fitzpiers, however, is a conjuror of a different sort, and though he is a skillful physician and therefore possessed with the ability to do good for others, he bears a strong resemblance to the demon lovers of Romance through the unusual influence he exercises over Grace; and more than one resident of Hintock suggests that "he has sold his soul to the wicked-one'" (24).

The "deathly" sword-play Troy executes in the fern-pit for Bathsheba's amusement is representative of his destructive sexuality, as we have already seen; but the genteel Fitzpiers is no less dangerous in that his attraction for Grace always has a strangely deadening effect upon her faculties of action and judgement. Once in the presence of Fitzpiers it is said that Grace "became as if spell-bound" (97); "She was like an inexperienced actress who, having at last taken up her position on the boards and spoken her speeches, does not know how to move off" (100). As their relationship progresses, so do Grace's helpless feelings of being under the influence of some powerful drug, or a force much stronger than herself:

The intoxication that Fitzpiers had as usual produced in Grace's brain during the visit passed off 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, irresistible Fitzpiers.(124)

The often inescapable "sexual law," as Harvey Curtis Webster terms it, the force which "governs sexual selection"¹⁰ in Hardy's fiction, also figures prominently in *The Woodlanders*, compelling Grace and Fitzpiers to commence a relationship whose beginnings are rooted in falsehood on his part and ignorance on hers. Yet, it is important to note that Grace is not alone among Hardy's heroines in her peculiar reaction to Fitzpiers's company. Among Hardy's more victimized women there is the tendency for them to experience sexual arousal as a semi-dream state, or a kind of hypnosis unwillingly imposed. Two other characters fitting this description are Tess Durbeyfield and Cytherea Graye of Hardy's first published novel, *Desperate Remedies* (1871).

When Tess meets Alec d'Urberville for the first time she does so in the role of a poor relation looking for work. He is a rich dandy, never taking his eyes off Tess for an instant. He flatters and flirts with the slightly bewildered girl, feeding her strawberries. Her reaction is to eat in a "half-pleased, half-reluctant state whatever d'Urberville offered her." Before long he is cutting roses

to adorn her bosom with, while "She obeyed like one in a dream."¹¹ Although briefly overwhelmed by d'Urberville's compliments and charm, Tess returns home to find that Alec has written on his mother's behalf to offer her a job tending their fowls. To Joan Durbeyfield's excited questions she can only reply that she'd rather not take the job, though "I don't know quite why."¹²

Cytheria Graye, like Grace and Tess, shares their feelings of mistrust for the distracting stranger she has just met, without being able to articulate exactly why "she shrank from him, even whilst she admired."¹³ There is a marked similarity between Grace's encounter with Fitzpiers and Cytheria's with Manston. Both women are forced to take shelter from the rain with men they don't know, whose mere presence inspires them with a profound mixture of excitement and fear and a mingled display of passive attraction and helplessness, as is seen most vividly in Cytheria's reaction to the wild organ music Manston plays during a thunderstorm: "She found herself involuntarily shrinking up beside him, and looking with parted lips at his face."¹⁴ When the storm ceases and she is able to get away, "'O, how is it that man has so fascinated me?' was all she could think. Her own self as she had sat spell-bound before him, was all she could see."¹⁵

Grace, Tess, and Cytheria enjoy the attention they receive from their respective admirers; yet as soon as they are alone again, all three women reveal themselves to be

preoccupied, not so much with sexual guilt as one might suppose, but with fears that their emotions have somehow gotten the better of them. However, whether or not they realize it, a possible loss of self is what threatens the three heroines most.

In the three novels just mentioned, the dream-like incidents occur in the company of Fitzpiers, Manston, and d'Urberville, all of whom fall into the category of the suave, Romantic villain. All these men are older and more sophisticated than the women involved, and in each case Grace, Tess, and Cytherea is persuaded by the authoritativeness of the men to enter a stranger's property, despite serious reservations. The pattern that emerges reveals Hardy's victims to be women who behave as if they are unquestionably at the disposal of a male will.

One might be tempted to interpret the women's lapses into dreamy passivity as an unconscious way of avoiding direct questions of moral and emotional responsibility arising from an erotic experience, were it not that the women's enjoyment of these episodes is brief and disturbing. Moreover, it appears that none of the three ever seriously entertains the idea of having her admirer for a husband. Marriage seems beyond the range of possibility where these particular characters are involved because of the women's initial feelings of awe for these men: awe inspired by their worldliness and social standing. But as Hardy makes clear in *The Woodlanders*, awe is an emotion which tends to

preclude the possibility of genuine intimacy unless it is soon accompanied by "confidence and trust" (154). Disenchantment quickly follows when Grace and Cytherea discover that their lovers are by no means the "superior beings" (*Woodlanders*, 154) they had thought them to be, but only men with the sensual desire to possess. Although Tess never holds Alec in the esteem Grace does Fitzpiers, her disillusionment is no less painful, and far more tragic in consequence than that of the others.

In one sense, the women's behavior in allowing the continuation of relationships which no longer give them pleasure shows a combination of self-sacrifice to duty, or perceived duty, and a kind of self-protectiveness in order to avoid present pain and the need to make choices, all at the cost of future happiness. Grace, for instance, weds Fitzpiers primarily to avoid a rupture in her relationship with her father (124). While it is far easier for Grace to "float with the current" (124) hastening her toward marriage with a man she does not really love rather than choosing to resist, her obedience also makes a statement about the nature of father-daughter relationships in Hardy's novels and short stories. Essentially, the daughter's consciousness of owing a debt to her parents is enormous, even when the parents are John and Joan Durbeyfield. Grace and Tess make the alliances they do because of the obligation they feel-- Grace because of the trouble and expense Mr Melbury goes to

in order to have her educated, and Tess because of her guilt at being responsible for the death of her father's horse and his means of making a living; and later, to provide for her widowed mother and homeless brothers and sisters. Yet apart from Grace's belief that she must do her duty is the fear of displeasing her father and bringing the kind of shame upon him that he assures her will cause him to be "'weary of 'ee as a daughter, and [unable]...to look upon you as the hope of my life [any]more'" (127).

In the characters of Grace and Tess, Hardy demonstrates a keen recognition of the difficulties of the daughter's role in the Victorian family. Like Tess, Grace's life is governed by parental expectations which can only be fulfilled by an exercise of self-sacrifice. Even then, the obedient daughter may very well discover that the debt is one that can never be discharged, for there is no end to the obligation she owes them for being a daughter. Tess herself learns this painful lesson when she returns home after her disgrace with Alec. Almost the first words her mother utters are words of reproach, not because she became Alec's mistress, but because she failed to secure suitable financial recompense to provide for the family she and her husband are too shiftless to support: "'Why didn't ye think of doing some good for your family instead o' thinking only of yourself?'"¹⁶ Joan demands. Mr Melbury's well-meaning hopes that Grace will someday be supported in comfort and style as a member of high society reveal that his

respectable middle-class motives are really no better than those of Mrs Durbeyfield's. Both parents prove themselves to be oblivious to the consequences of their advice.

It isn't long before Grace's marriage reveals itself to be as unfortunate a choice as Hardy portended. Though Fitzpiers would not be termed a mercenary, sheer love of the pretty Grace is not his only reason for deciding to marry her:

Apart from his lover-like anxiety to possess her, the few golden hundreds of the timber-dealer, to hand, formed a warm background to Grace's lovely face, and went some way to remove his uneasiness at the prospect of endangering his professional and social chances.(130)

Once returned from their honeymoon abroad, Fitzpiers begins to regret having chosen a mere Hintock girl when he was free to pursue someone of more aristocratic background (166). Through Fitzpiers's alliance with Grace, Hardy is saying two things. He is drawing the reader's attention first to society's equation of marriage with an exchange of property, and to the irony of that society's attempts to maintain the pretense--at least in the minds of women--of marriage as a romantic achievement: the supposed triumph of finding oneself adored by an ardent lover. Secondly, Hardy is comparing the crumbling gentility who marry money, and those of a lower station striving to advance by uniting with a name. Both reflect a practice of mutual exploitation in which women play the pawns.

As Fitzpiers begins to neglect his wife in favor of the mysterious stranger from his past, Felice Charmond, Grace is left increasingly alone. To the alarmed Mr Melbury, Grace resembles nothing more than "a weak queen-bee" (162), lonely and neglected, and no longer interested in tending to the light housework of her apartments. It seems that her education has been all but forgotten. Now that she is married, Grace's sphere has dwindled to the scope of her father's house and vegetable garden.

Instead of Eustacia-like efforts to vocalize her unhappiness, Grace maintains a stoic's silence on the subject, waiting uncomplainingly for her husband's return, yet to Melbury's mystification, Grace's mood is more one of sad resignation than jealous anger (167). Knowledge of her husband's waning love is one reason for Grace's silence; another comes to light after an unexpected confrontation with Felice in the woods:

'Why,' cried Grace. 'I thought till now that you had only been cruelly flirting with my husband, to amuse your idle moments--a rich lady with a poor professional gentleman whom in her heart she despised not much less than her who belongs to him. But I guess from your manner that you love him desperately; and I don't hate you as I did before.--Yes, indeed,' continued Mrs Fitzpiers with a trembling tongue, 'since it is not sport in your case at all, but real--O I do pity you, more than I despise you. For you will suffer most!' (180)

Grace's consciousness that Felice is no less a victim of her husband than she is instills her with greater magnanimity than would be expected on such an occasion, for, indeed, the

worldly and independently wealthy Felice is as susceptible to Fitzpiers's influence as Grace was. Perhaps even more so. Where Grace is infatuated for a few months before clear vision returns, Felice, in the fashion of other Hardy temptresses who have discovered that the tables have been turned on their games of emotion, finds herself "becoming an animated impulse only, a passion incarnate" (176). Earlier, Grace is described as "a vessel of emotion, going to empty itself on she knew not what" (44). Felice is but another side of the same coin, her identity nearly reduced to nonexistence by a self-consuming emotion.

It is not only Felice's relationship with Fitzpiers that assists the creation of a curious tie between herself and Grace. At the beginning of the story Grace invites comparison with Felice because both return to Hintock as outsiders and are quickly drawn to one another. Their confrontation reveals more similarities between them than differences.¹⁷ When Grace catches sight of Felice coming toward her, she is described as having "stood like a wild animal on first confronting a mirror or other puzzling product of civilization" (179). The first impression raised by this scene is that nature vs. culture and innocence vs. artifice. However, as Penny Boumelha reminds us, the "function [of the mirror,] after all, is to reflect the observer--to reproduce similarity and not difference."¹⁸ Indeed, it is not the cold March wind alone that enables two women, lost in the woods, to huddle so closely together

that "each one's body as she breathed alternately heaved against that of her companion" (183). Even after Felice's confession that she and Fitzpiers have been lovers, the close of her meeting with Grace has them "kissing each other almost unintentionally" (185), in what Boumelha aptly describes as "a moment of spontaneous physical supportiveness."¹⁹

The previously sheltered Grace Melbury displays no evidence of any physical or moral shrinking from Mrs Charmond or her secret. When Fitzpiers has an accident on his horse and Felice and Suke come to his bedroom in search of him, Grace mockingly urges them: "'Wives all, let's enter together!'" (196). Despite her initial anger, Grace is quickly moved by the sight of the other women's genuine anguish over Fitzpiers's disappearance, until "The tears which his possibly critical situation could not bring to her eyes surged over at the contemplation of these fellow-women whose relations with him were as close to her own without its conventionality" (196). Struggling against her own feelings of hurt and betrayal, Grace is conscious of the weakness the three women share. For the first time in the novel Grace behaves independently, though the strength she gleans from the experience is one which proves impossible for her to maintain, so often is she governed by the thoughts and desires of others.

If Grace and Felice are victims of convention and the marriage law, what of Marty South? She cannot be considered

a victim in the same sense, for "Nothing but a cast of the die of Destiny had decided that the girl should handle the tool; and the fingers which clasped the heavy ash haft might have skilfully guided the pencil or swept the string, had they only been set to do it in good time" (9). Marty is the product of circumstances beyond her control, though she is by no means helpless. While her father lies dying upstairs, she manages to support them both by teaching herself to carry on his occupation of spar-cutting, and when she realizes the hopelessness of her unrequited love for Giles, she cuts off her hair, her only beautiful feature, and sells it. Her real misfortune, apart from being poor, is her lovelessness. Faithful and capable of deep emotion, she is nevertheless plain and shy, and her lack of the feminine beauty apparent in every other heroine of Thomas Hardy's (however much he may mock them for vanity) destines Marty to a future of solitude. In the meantime, Marty drifts in and out of the novel in the form of a bystander, ruefully commenting on the frequently foolish doings of those around her. Hardy clearly pities Marty for the poverty and joylessness of her existence, noting her oppression as being based principally on economic factors more than anything else, a view of English rural life explored little in Hardy's earlier works.²⁰

Waiting the remainder of the night for Fitzpiers's return, Grace's feelings for her absent husband are mixed, but as the narrator suggests, a little show of reciprocal

affection from Fitzpiers would very likely have turned her in his direction again (197). Instead, the injured doctor stays away, with the result that Melbury decides to inquire into the possibility of his daughter's obtaining a divorce. After unjustly blaming her father for the quarrel that precipitates her separation from Fitzpiers (197), Grace lapses into nervous illness and alarm lest her errant husband should return after all. What mental processes have brought Grace to dread her husband as intensely as she does remain unrevealed to the reader, though the result is a renewed receptiveness to her father's will, doubtless because his will is closer to her own this time--the desire to marry her old love, Giles Winterborne.

In addition to the faith Grace extends to her father, she comes to regard the rumored new divorce law with equal confidence and expectation. To Grace (and Melbury as well) "The 'new law' was to her a mysterious, beneficent, godlike entity, lately descended upon earth, that would make her as she once had been without trouble or annoyance" (208). The 'new law,' in Grace's mind, is far more than just a means of separating from an uncaring husband; it is also a magical restorer of youthful innocence and freedom. Prior to the occasion when Giles unthinkingly strokes the flower pinned to her dress in an unconscious imitation of what he had seen Fitzpiers do to Felice, Grace experiences a sudden, passionate feeling of release quite unrelated to any thoughts of permanent separation or divorce. Giles's

appearance at her side the moment after Fitzpiers's departure on her pony causes her to think that "Nature was bountiful" (156) in supplying her with a new lover just as soon as she has been cast off by another. Hardy momentarily favors both Grace and the reader with a glimpse of the possibility of a natural marriage inspired by the sight of Giles fresh from his work at the cider press. All at once,

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 (156).

At this crucial juncture in her life, midway between hopes for a future of her own creation and the memory of a past manufactured by others, Grace finally acknowledges her feelings for Giles as being independent of social laws; and for the first time, the dividedness that has characterized her is replaced by a vision of possible wholeness. She may indeed be only a "crude country girl" once the layer of pseudo-culture has been peeled away, but for that moment Hardy lets us breathe a sigh of relief for the knowledge that Grace actually appears capable of real passion. Unfortunately, the instant Giles reaches out to touch her, her rebelliousness against the social order and its accompanying vision of natural love disappears. All at once the finishing school façade slides back into place, and she

is again the prim young lady rebuking the mortified Winterborne for "taking a liberty" (157).

Though Grace's actions are sometimes a disappointment, Hardy never really leads us to expect anything different from her. Grace makes her first appearance in the novel significantly described as having a look which "expressed a tendency to wait for others' thoughts before uttering her own: possibly also to wait for others' deeds before her own doings" (30). One might even venture to say that none of Hardy's other heroines is as clearly a product of Victorian social convention as Grace Melbury. That is not to imply that she is without identity or individuality of her own, but rather, that she almost always appears to the reader through the eyes of another character. Hardy's vague physical description--"It would have been difficult to describe Grace Melbury with precision, either then or at any time" (30)--makes it seem that her changeable prettiness is a deliberate attempt to make us understand that "What people therefore saw of her in a cursory view was very little; in truth, mainly something that was not she. The woman herself was a conjectural creature who had little to do with the outlines presented to Sherton eyes" (30).

While the description may be an accurate one, it is also possible to interpret the statement as another of Hardy's reminders that public perception can only be an approximation of the individual's inner self, particularly when the individual happens to be a woman. Yet Grace

herself behaves in many ways as a reflection of the three important men in her life: her father, Fitzpiers, and Winterborne, as she tries variously to be what each wants her to be. Even in the midst of one of the most sexually charged scenes in the novel, when Giles, knowing full well that Grace will never be released from her marriage, yields to temptation and kisses her after waiting so unselfishly for so long, Grace "bursts into tears in spite of herself" as she questions Giles: "'Oh, why does not my father come home and explain....and let me know clearly what I am!'" What Grace is is neither virgin nor wife--an "impressionable creature...who combined modern nerves with "primitive feelings" (223). As long as Grace is, for the time being, no longer subjected to the daily indignities of life with Fitzpiers, she is willing to submit, almost stoically, to her disappointment and the necessity of relinquishing her newly-found lover: "'Then let it be, and never mind, Father,' she said with dignified sorrow. 'I can bear it. It is your trouble that grieves me most'" (221). Only when fear of her prodigal husband's return takes possession of her does "primitive feeling" compel her to make her first real decision.

In the scene of Grace's attempt to avoid Fitzpiers by escaping to a schoolfriend's home in a distant town, she is delayed by a storm and forced to take shelter in Winterborne's cottage. So determined is Giles to make amends for his earlier kiss of the trusting Mrs Fitzpiers

that he refuses to enter the cottage while Grace remains there. Instead, ill though he has been, he chooses to sleep outdoors, exposed to the rain, while attempting to conceal his weakened physical condition from her. Giles's scrupulous avoidance of any kind of intimacy with Grace reflects a degree of devotion and self-sacrifice surpassing even that of the long-suffering Gabriel Oak. Grace, on the other hand, conveys in the following passage the reasons behind her desire to leave Fitzpiers while avoiding any intimacy with Giles--in a scene which must remind us of Sue Bridehood and her rejection of Jude:

'You know what I feel for you--what I have felt for no other living man, what I shall never feel for a man again! But as I have vowed myself to somebody else than you, and cannot be released, I must behave as I do behave, and keep that vow. I am not bound to him by any divine law, after what he has done; but I have promised, and I will pay' (231).

Respect for divine laws, Grace admits, has nothing to do with her decision to abide by her marriage vows. She is motivated instead by adherence to convention rather than to any feeling of moral obligation she owes Fitzpiers. Grace is convinced, as are a number of Hardy's other female characters, that it is a woman's duty to suffer for the misfortunes in her life even if the situation is not necessarily one of her making. As another example of this mentality, who can forget Sue Bridehead's insistence after her children's death that "'I must drink to the dregs!'"²¹

Or Tess's decision on her wedding night that "It was wicked to take all without paying. She would pay to the utmost farthing."²² Bathsheba, too, we have seen, is seized with such a degree of repentance that she is willing to sacrifice the rest of her life to Boldwood for the sake of a misleading valentine. This is the ever-present guilt in Hardy's novels: the woman's certainty that it is always her responsibility to atone for having been raped, misunderstood, or co-erced into a situation against her will or better judgement.

Grace's insistence on maintaining the conventions in her relationship with Giles is contrasted with his strength and goodness and the endurance of his love, making her strict adherence to an empty, loveless marriage seem cowardly and almost cruel, until she comes to reproach herself the night of the storm: "how selfishly correct I am always--too, too correct! Can it be that cruel propriety is killing the dearest heart that ever woman clasped to her own!" (255). But Grace's illumination comes too late. Her invitation to Giles the previous night--"'Come to me, dearest! I don't mind what they say, or what they think of us anymore'" (233)--is refused by the seriously ill Winterborne. He dies soon afterward without recognizing her or fully comprehending her change of heart.

Winterborne's death marks an important turning point in Grace's character. In an effort to save Giles, Grace calls on the recently returned Fitzpiers to attend him. Knowing

nothing about the reason for Grace's visit to Winterborne's cottage, Fitzpiers asks her the obvious question: whether she and Giles have been lovers. Here the narrator interprets Grace's decision to tell him a lie: "Triumph at any price is sweet to men and women--especially the latter. It was her first and last opportunity of repaying him for the slights she had borne at his hands so docilely" (241). Understandably, Grace makes the most of her opportunity to retaliate, and in telling the lie she experiences a "thrill of pride" at having been, in thought, if not in deed, what she could not be to Giles in his lifetime. After the initial shock of Grace's "admission," Fitzpiers's respect for her is greatly increased (249). He had formerly taken for granted Grace's passivity and obedience even after running away with Felice, and is stirred into a "smouldering admiration"--and renewed sexual attraction--by her show of independence from him (250).

In the role of the fallen woman Grace takes a defiant satisfaction, no doubt fuelled by the secret knowledge of her own innocence, although she wastes no time in informing her father of the truth the moment he expresses his disapproval. Her twice-weekly visits to Giles's grave with Marty throw an idealizing light upon his memory that cannot completely erase her sense of responsibility for his death, until she resolves to consult Fitzpiers's professional opinion on the matter. From this point onward, the novel takes an unsatisfactory turn. During her first meeting with

her husband since Giles's burial, Hardy supplies sufficient hints to cast doubt on Grace's ability to resist Fitzpiers's romantic persuasion once again. After the passage of several months, the "memorial act to which she and Marty had devoted themselves" takes on "a soothing monotony" (251); and although she continues to tell Fitzpiers that "'My heart is in the grave with Giles'" (256), the light-hearted tone Hardy uses to describe their conversation suggests that it is only a matter of time before they will be reunited. However, what has disturbed critics of *The Woodlanders* is not the prospect of a happy ending--which it really is not--but the rapid descent from a near-tragic tone into farce, the reason being that Giles's death instantly resolves both Grace's personal dilemma, and the larger conflict in the novel between the natural and the artificial, and between marital commitment and sexual desire.²³ Consequently, the tragic potential reaches its climax some thirty-six pages before the conclusion, leaving the rest of the novel dangling, without a purpose.

The other reason for the problems to be found with the ending stem from Grace's herself and the fact that her behavior also comes under attack from within the novel. Unlike heroines such as Eustacia or Tess, suffering does not appear to refine Grace. Grace is denied tragic status and merely comes to resemble Mrs Charmond more fully in the coquettishness she later displays towards Fitzpiers during meetings she keeps secret even from her father.²⁴ Moreover,

as seen in previous novels, there is an illicitness about Grace's reunion with Fitzpiers that recalls his European travels with Felice. The fact that they are discovered by Melbury and his men in a hotel, Grace blushing guiltily, only contributes to the impression of a clandestine relationship.

In the search for his missing daughter Melbury remarks, "'Faith, I believe she's mesmerized'" (272), a comment that recalls Grace's first meeting with Fitzpiers. The repetition of this pattern between them, together with Melbury's gloomy prophecy that "'the woman walks and laughs somewhere at this very moment whose neck [Fitzpiers] will be coling next year as he does hers to-night'" (274), negates the Victorian novelistic convention of marriage as a desirable conclusion. Hardy has this to say about Grace's fate in his autobiography:

You have probably observed that the ending of the story--hinted rather than stated--is that the heroine is doomed to an unhappy life with an inconstant husband. I could not accentuate this strongly in the book, by reason of the conventions of the libraries, etc. Since the story was written, however, truth to character is not considered quite such a crime in literature as it was formerly.²⁵

In addition to the point Hardy has been making in *The Woodlanders* about the inadequacy and the ineffectualness of the marriage laws, at the center of the novel is the problem of forming satisfying relationships between men and women. Although Hardy's characters do fall in love, it is almost

always against type. Grace observes to Marty that Marty and Winterborne, as outdoor workers, "'could speak in a tongue that nobody else knew...the tongue of the trees and fruits and flowers themselves'" (249), but Marty admits that "'the one thing he never spoke of to me was love; nor I to him'" (249). Instead, Winterborne loves the unattainable Grace, Marty loves Giles who is indifferent to her as a woman, and Fitzpiers loves a woman who, perhaps, would have been better off with someone like Giles--a man she nevertheless couldn't help condescending to: the lesson being that there is no lasting happiness in a union with someone who denies his or her own true nature by "yearning to be something other than what one is."²⁶

By returning to Fitzpiers, Grace marks out a future for herself no less lonely or painful than Marty South's; perhaps more so, because for Grace there can only be bitter regrets and daily reminders of her choice, whereas for Marty, at least she seems likely to profit from Winterborne's memory in the positive sense of continuing his work:

'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 ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven.... But no, no, my love, I never can forget 'ee; for you were a good man, and did good things!' (277)

Inevitable though Marty's fate appears to be, Hardy's sympathy at the conclusion of *The Woodlanders* lies more with

her than with Grace. Marty, after all, is thwarted by nature in her sexless appearance and retiring manner, never having had the luxury of expecting anything more out of life than what she had already got. While it is not my intention to argue whether Grace is more or less worthy of our sympathy than Marty South, it hardly seems that Grace deserves Hardy's treatment of her. By attempting to distance Grace from the reader in the final chapter by having other characters discuss her and describe her behavior during Fitzpiers's second courtship as calculating "'enough to freeze yer blood'" (276), Hardy evades his own issues by leaving us with a type instead of a character. Apparently, having Grace return to Fitzpiers implies that she has betrayed the natural values Winterborne represented; yet by shifting focus from Grace to Marty Hardy is only reinforcing the victim pattern he seemed so anxious for his characters to escape from. In a truly conventional fashion Hardy finds it easier to transform Grace into the *femme fatale* who "'can lead the doctor'" anywhere she wants him (275), even though her ascendancy isn't likely to last long, while reserving his sympathy for poor loveless Marty vowing staunchly to remain true to the memory of the man she loved--"Nay, though he never/ knew love like mine,/ I'll bear it ever/ And make no sign."²⁷ Interestingly, Hardy manages to undercut the romance of Grace's return to her husband while romanticizing Marty's behavior, which appears almost unnecessarily bleak and self-sacrificing.

Not until *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* does Hardy manage to bring together entirely within one character the qualities both of fallenness and innocence, personal responsibility and victimization. Yet before examining *Tess* I would like to look at the novel which, at times, reads like a prototype of *Tess*.

In March of 1899 Mrs Coventry Patmore wrote to Hardy about her late husband's fondness for *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873). She relates:

From 1875...to 1896 he continually had *A Pair of Blue Eyes* read aloud to him. Each time he felt the same shock of surprise and pleasure at its consummate art and pathos. In illness, when he asked for *A Pair of Blue Eyes* one knew he was able to enjoy again.²⁸

Blue Eyes was a popular success for Thomas Hardy beyond his expectations, though more than a century later it may be difficult to understand how the novel could have borne the scrutiny of Patmore's re-readings for over two decades, *Blue Eyes* today being classed among Hardy's lesser novels for a number of reasons which will be discussed.

Much of Hardy's work shows an ongoing interest in what constitutes female morality and the question of the extent of the individual's responsibility for her fate. In *Tess*, Hardy tends to emphasize circumstance and society, but in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, responsibility is ultimately attributed to Elfride herself. There is in Elfride much of *Fancy Day's*

shallowness and inconsistency and a great deal of unamusing childishness, yet as F.R. Southerrington reminds us, "Certainly there is a quality of innocence and inexperience about Elfride which may tend to disarm one's judgement of her."²⁹ Be that as it may, a careful reading of the novel reveals the extent of Elfride's involvement in the choices she makes. Only in the latter portion of the story, after giving herself up heart and soul to the activity of adoring Henry Knight, does she begin to bear greater resemblance to the image of the victim in Hardy's fiction.

Elfride is actually more a victim of herself than of anyone else in the novel, it being a mistaken sense of guilt and a feeling of unworthiness as the beloved of an intelligent man which prevents her from telling Knight the truth about her relationship with Stephen Smith from the beginning. Because of the nature of the secret she conceals, her suspected fallenness in the view of society, and the strong resemblance between the philosophical, idealistic Henry Knight and Angel Clare, I have chosen to categorize Elfride with Tess and Grace Melbury, as she eventually shares more of the common features of Hardy's passive, put-upon females than those of his proud, determined temptresses.

Elfride's ties to Fancy Day are expressed through the fact that it is difficult to think of another girl among Hardy's repertoire quite so frivolous and capricious. After beginning a love affair with the visiting architect, Stephen

Smith, Elfride forces him to make a hypothetical choice between saving either her or his best friend, should they both happen to be drowning. Pouting and sulking all the while, Elfride will allow him no peace until he surrenders to her: "'There, now I am yours!' she said, and a woman's flush of triumph lit her eyes."³⁰ Her entire relationship with Stephen is marked by a sense of mental and social superiority, and a pleasure in making him bend to her will, a sure sign of Hardy's forthcoming disapproval evident in the remark that with Stephen Smith, "She was ruling a heart with absolute despotism for the first time in her life" (58). Hardy sees nothing charming in a coquette, no matter how young she is. That her feelings for Stephen are based more on the pleasure of being loved and admired than on any deeper emotion quickly becomes evident, Hardy leaving us no doubts about the shallowness of Elfride's emotion the night she pledges herself to marry him: "Never were conditions more favourable for developing a girl's first passing fancy for a handsome boyish face--a fancy rooted in inexperience and nourished by seclusion--into a wild unreflecting passion fervid enough for anything" (92).

Being "An impulsive inconsequent girl" (99), the narrator relates, Elfride's passion leads her first to engage in all the activities of love-sick heroines: "She wore melancholy jewellery, gazed at sunsets, and talked to old men and women" (99); but it isn't long before she determines to follow through with the "mad action" of

eloping with Stephen (100). After setting out alone on her horse to meet him, Elfride experiences a sudden change of heart and longs to return home; but, incapable of making the decision herself, she relinquishes responsibility, "vow[ing] she would be led whither the horse would take her" (103). Instead of regarding this episode as evidence of the workings of chance among human endeavors, of which there are an abundance in this novel, Southerington sees it as evidence of Hardy's awareness of the dangers of passivity and indecision:

As Elfride gazed into a road-side pool she contrasts its placidity to the turbulence of her own feelings: but the insects upon it are noted for their 'idle motions,' the vegetation waves placidly in the wind--and Elfride, by resigning her powers of choice is equally at the mercy of the winds of chance and circumstance and of cause and effect. Elfride does no more than align herself with lower orders of life, and the leaf-skeletons at the bottom of the pool may be intended to suggest the tragic result of just such a refusal to decide.³¹

Hardy tends to differentiate between accidents and unforeseen circumstances in his work, as opposed to the deliberate relinquishing of responsibility Elfride is guilty of, wherein "All she cared to recognize was a dreamy fancy that today's action was not her own" (104). Her decision not to choose is more culpable, according to Hardy, than any other choice she could have made for the sheer irresponsibility her action reveals.

While it may appear that Hardy is unduly critical of a girl as young and inexperienced as Elfride, he does, in fact, make allowances for her youth--and for her sex. Sitting on her horse debating whether to continue or return home, Elfride thinks to herself that Stephen or no Stephen, "if I had a mamma at home I would go back!" (103). Elfride is another one of Hardy's motherless females like Grace, Bathsheba, Eustacia, and Fancy Day (who has only a "queer" step-mother). Mothers as guides are noticeably absent in nearly all of Hardy's novels, as are female friends. What is unusual is that Elfride's motherlessness is acknowledged as having a visible effect, however small, on her character, when deceased mothers in Hardy's novels are so seldom spoken of. Parental neglect on the part of Mr Swancourt as he pursues a wealthy widow twenty years his senior throws Stephen and Elfride into one another's company until his social ambitions, like those of Mr Melbury, help to sever the romance.

Even as Hardy is blaming Elfride for failing to live up to her responsibilities as an adult in her relationships with Stephen and Knight, he stops to consider, as he did in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, whether the fact that she is a girl and only nineteen years old makes her less responsible for her behavior than a man would be in the same circumstances. (Let us not forget that Stephen's judgement and moral responsibility are never diminished by virtue of either his age or sex.) Of Elfride, Hardy writes:

It is difficult to frame rules which shall apply to both sexes, and Elfride, an undeveloped girl, must, perhaps, hardly be laden with the moral responsibilities which attach to a man in like circumstances. The charm of woman, too, lies partly in her subtleness in matters of love. But if honesty is a virtue in itself, Elfride, having none of it now, seemed, being for being, scarcely good enough for Knight. (242)

Hardy's criticism is coupled with a reference to a commonly held Victorian thought--thought which Mill opposed and Hardy himself rejects--on women's weakness where moral judgement and its attendant responsibilities are concerned.³² It would seem that although the women in Hardy's fiction are apt to behave more impulsively and with less forethought than their male companions, their sex alone cannot be expected to shield them from criticism or blame which they have brought upon themselves.

Hardy's comment that "The charm of a woman...lies partly in her subtleness in matters of love" is negated not only by the sentence that follows, but throughout all of his novels, deception invariably resulting in a relationship's undoing. From Knights's mouth the words emerge which can be attributed to the author as well: "...don't ever listen to the fashionable theories of the day about a woman's privileges and natural right to practice wiles. Depend upon it, my dear girl, that a noble woman must be as honest as a noble man" (247).

As is generally the case among Hardy's women, their secrets eventually come to light. It is the keeping of a

damaging secret which connects Elfride to Fancy Day and invites her comparison with Tess Durbeyfield. Southerington takes the view that but for Elfride's "actions with Stephen Smith, Knight's intractability would not have shown itself in such a disastrous form."³³ On the contrary, any attempt to blame Elfride solely for Knight's reaction is misreading Knight's character and Hardy's intention. Mr Maybold, the vicar of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, who unwittingly proposes marriage to the already-engaged Fancy, advises her about her future husband, Dick. "Tell him everything; it is best. He will forgive you."³⁴ However good and sensible such advice may be in regard to plain Dick Dewey, it cannot take into account the complex nature of Henry Knight's or Angel Clare's love.

Following Stephen's departure for India to make his fortune, Elfride coincidentally meets and falls in love with his best friend and mentor, Henry Knight. After saving his life in a bizarre accident on the afternoon of Stephen's return home, Elfride reveals her love for Knight: "There could be no dispute that the allegiance she bore him absorbed her whole soul and existence. A greater than Stephen had arisen, and she had left all to follow him" (271). She tries to resist her disloyal impulses toward the more intellectual Knight, resolving to "sacrifice herself" (187) to Stephen nevertheless. Nature and circumstances decree that Elfride's emotion cannot be stifled for very long. Once again, not unlike in Bathsheba's situation,

Hardy disapproves of the notion of a marriage based on self-sacrifice--for the good of both partners--yet there remains lingering evidence that Elfride is blamed for becoming so recklessly involved with Stephen in the first place.

Elfride makes up for any fickleness she showed Stephen in her utter devotion to Knight. No longer does Elfride look upon a man's love with a feeling of triumph. There is nothing she would not do to please Knight, attesting to an emotion so absorbing that she is led to relinquish all claim to independent thought and action. Like Tess with Angel, Elfride lives in a state of awe towards a man she regards as her intellectual superior. In essence, she tries to graft her entire being onto his, in that

She never once held an idea in opposition to any one of his, or insisted on any point with him, or showed any independence, or held her own on any subject. His lightest whim she respected and obeyed as law, and if, expressing her opinion on a matter, he took up the subject and differed from her, she instantly threw down her own opinion as wrong and untenable.(271)

"Vassal unto Love" is the quotation Hardy uses to introduce chapter thirty, and although it is his intention to demonstrate just how earnestly and intently Elfride loves Knight, he disagrees with Elfride's mode of expression and the excuse it offers Knight for taking advantage of her affection. However badly Hardy's heroines may end up, he clearly respects those who are capable of thinking for themselves.

A chance meeting with Stephen when she is in Knight's company prompts Elfride to make a confession to her new lover. At the last moment she loses courage and decides to postpone the truth. Elfride's weakness may be considered reprehensible, but her fear that Knight will withdraw his love if he learns of her secret engagement is not without substance. In Knight the Victorian principle of purity is adopted overzealously. At the age of thirty-two he has never kissed a woman, and it is his wish that the woman he is to marry is equally unspoiled. Of Angel Clare we are told that "he was, in truth, more spiritual than animal....Though not cold-natured, he was rather bright than hot--less Byronic than Shelleyan."³⁵ Henry Knight bears a marked similarity to Angel, for "it must be said that Knight loved philosophically rather than with romance." Significantly, the first realization of his love for Elfride occurs after they are parted, when "he appeared to himself to have fallen in love with her soul, which had temporarily assumed its disembodiment to accompany him on his way" (175).

Knight takes especial pleasure in the belief that Elfride is a kind of Miranda who "had hardly looked upon a man till she saw me" (176). He likewise admits to Elfride in a confidential moment that he never would have proposed to her if he thought she had loved before, "'since your freedom from that experience was your attraction'" (267).

Knight's words immediately conjure up the aggrieved Angel's musing that

'I thought--any man would have thought--that by giving up all ambition to win a wife with social standing, I should secure rustic innocence as surely as I should secure pink cheeks.³⁶

Where Knight and Clare are concerned, the women they love must be pure in mind and body, as well as displaying mythical and material values of purity. When Angel learns of Tess's past, he no longer regards her as the same person she was before, whereas for Knight, Elfride essentially ceases to exist when her secret is uncovered. Her allure for him is found in her blankness and her lack of knowledge and life experience. Elfride, on the other hand, is more generous and accepting in her love as her answer to Knight's repeated questioning about her past shows:

I didn't ask you a single question about your past: I didn't wish to know about it. All I cared for was that, wherever you came from, whatever you had done, whoever you had loved, you were mine at last.(291)

Insecurity is at the center of Knight's displeasure with Elfride. His first thought after discovering that Elfride has known other kisses than his is the certainty that "she must have laughed at him inwardly" (278) for his clumsiness and inexperience, and that by keeping a secret she has succeeded in making a fool of him.

Knight's jealousy reflects a thwarted possessiveness. Even the earrings he gives Elfride are not without significance. "'Fancy that I have been able to improve you,'" he remarks after fitting her with the jewelry, all the while surveying her "as if she had been a large bouquet" (253-54). The need to influence and improve Elfride is what Knight's love is all about. The role of teacher he adopts with Stephen is simply extended to his fiancée. Knight has the same protective impulses toward Elfride as Angel has for Tess, and those impulses are ultimately responsible for controlling both women. Knight can never be happy until he has discovered every corner of Elfride's mind and impressed it with his image:

'I know,' continued Knight, with an indescribable drag of manner and intonation,--'I know I am absurdly scrupulous about you--that I want you too exclusively mine. In your past before you knew me--from your very cradle--I wanted to think you had been mine. I would make you mine by main force.' (283)

After Knight realizes the impossibility of such possession and complete control as he desires, he resorts to misogynous comparisons of Elfride with Eve, the temptress and betrayer (285), and likens her to a second-hand idol in his heart (292).

Unfortunately, there can be no solace for either Knight or Angel once they are confronted with the knowledge that their love is based upon an image of the ideal woman that

Tess and Elfride have been called upon to imitate. Knight aptly expresses this idea when he tells Elfride that "'a religion was building itself upon you in my heart'" (304). In Knight's character and that of Angel Clare, we can trace their connection with the movement of some mid-Victorian agnostics toward a form of "woman-worship," when disillusionment with Christianity and the Church left a disturbing void in the lives of some that needed to be filled.³⁷ Angel, of course, is an admitted agnostic, and Knight's scorn for Mr Swancourt's prayers and "Christian" church renovations reveals two minds at odds with traditional religion.

Toward Knight, Elfride adopts a self-deprecating attitude, her sense of inferiority always visible just below the surface...and for good reason. The historical romance she publishes with such pride, her conversational abilities and her skill at chess are all depicted in the novel as trivialities when compared to Henry Knight's more scholarly achievements. Oddly, Elfride derives a certain pleasure from "ador[ing] her new lover from below his pedestal" (223), for "she idolized him, and was proud to be his bond-servant" (279). Hardy, however, is acutely aware of the difference between the rewards of love and happiness society implicitly assured women they would receive if they accepted their dependence upon men as natural and inevitable, and the kinds of unhealthy relationships their dependency produced. As we have seen, it is often the gentlest, most dependent

women in Hardy's fiction who are treated worst by their lovers, as the following passage shows:

Elfride's docile devotion to Knight was now its own enemy. Clinging to him so dependently, she taught him in time to presume upon that devotion--a lesson men are not slow to learn. A slight rebelliousness occasionally would have done him no harm, and would have been a world of advantage to her.(279)

Elfride's docility in the face of Knight's prying questions and jealous indignation only exacerbates his anger and suspicion. Hardy attempts to explain why Elfride (and Tess as well) seem unable to protest against their lovers' unjust treatment:

...had she been a stronger character--more practical and less imaginative--she would have made more use of her position in his heart to influence him. But the confiding tenderness which had won him is ever accompanied by a sort of self-commitment to the stream of events, leading every such woman to trust more to the kindness of fate than to any argument of her own.(291)

Whereas Elfride's inability to "make use of her position" with Knight gives her the appearance of being very weak and foolish, Tess's acceptance of Angel's treatment highlights her naiveté and her indomitable sense of wrongdoing:

There was, it is true, underneath a back current of sympathy through which a woman of the world might have conquered him. But Tess did not think of this; she took everything as her deserts and hardly opened her mouth.³⁸

One of the differences between Hardy's female victims and his other women characters is the former's fatalistic view of life. It has been suggested that Hardy's own tendency toward a belief in the influence of fate or "Immanent Will," as he sometimes calls it, stems from the attitudes of the farmers and outdoor workers of his native Dorset.³⁹ As people who were traditionally at the mercy of large landowners and the vagaries of weather, it is no wonder that English rural workers of previous centuries often chose to accept their lot instead of trying to resist it when opportunities for change seemed limited. Thus, we can trace Tess's relationship to the attitudes she holds. Despite the narrators' suggestions that Elfride and Tess are at least partly responsible (a stance that Hardy never abandons in his novels) for the break-down of their relationships because of their hesitancy to defend themselves or their motives, their behavior also reflects what they know to be true of their lovers' personalities. It may be that Angel's continued proximity to Tess would have broken down the physical barriers between them, just as Elfride's later visit to Knight's apartment in London, had it been prolonged, would likely have had a similar effect, because sexual attraction is a strong force in both relationships. However, as Hardy acknowledges in *Tess*,

The intuitive heart of woman knoweth not only its own bitterness but its husband's, and even if these assumed reproaches were not likely to be

addressed to him or to his by strangers, they might have reached his ears from his own fastidious brain.⁴⁰

Either way that Tess or Elfride decides to behave--to release their lovers or to try to keep them--they are almost certain to fail, for in Angel and Knight's philosophy, a woman who is sexually pure is equated with goodness and honesty. Only Stephen Knight comes closest to assessing Elfride's behavior as that of a woman rather than a fallen deity.

Beyond a period of aimless wandering in Europe following Elfride's unwilling return to her father, Knight undergoes no changes by the novel's conclusion. Only after he discovers from Stephen his error about Elfride's chastity does he begin to pursue her again. Knight informs Stephen that in the course of his extensive travels, he returns "without having...imbibed half-a-dozen ideas worth retaining" (321), the truth of which is borne out by the circumstances of his renewed interest in Elfride. Knight has learned very little from his earlier treatment of her. He cast her off as soon as it became clear to him that she had a "past," and is only interested in taking her back when he is certain that she has not done what he originally suspected. Knight's words on his discovery of Elfride's marriage to Lord Luxellian and her recent death are apparently meant to be read ironically:⁴¹

'Since we don't know half the reasons that made

her do as she did, Stephen, how can we say, even now, that she was not pure and true in heart?' Knight's voice had now become mild and gentle as a child's. He went on: 'Can we call her ambitious? No. Circumstance has, as usual overpowered her purposes--fragile and delicate as she--liable to be overthrown in a moment by the coarse elements of accident. I know that's it,--don't you? (345).

Knight's speech reads like a parody of Hardy's own views, yet for Elfride, "circumstance" has far less to do with her loveless marriage (loveless at least on her part) and early death than Knight's harsh, unrelenting behavior.

It is significant that *A Pair of Blue Eyes* concludes, as does *The Return of the Native* and *Tess*, with the heroine's demise and subsequent absence from the remainder of the novel, giving the narrator and other characters the opportunity to comment and reflect on her life, as we also saw done in *The Woodlanders*. For Elfride, unlike Tess or Eustacia, there is no tragic summation. Her story is told by the aptly-named serving-girl Unity, who adds the final piece to the story of "Miss Elfride." In a manner again foreshadowing Tess's experiences, Elfride agrees to marry Lord Luxellian despite her personal reluctance because, she tells Unity, "I'll do anything for the benefit of my family, so as to turn my useless life to some practical account" (346). At the age of twenty or twenty-one, Elfride regards her life as "useless," and unlikely to improve if she remains unmarried. Though it is impossible to determine what impact her parents' wishes have in making her decide to

marry Luxellian, her father's harshness and her step-mother's "cold politeness" suggest the likelihood that Elfride marries because it is the only way to escape from her unhappy home.

By distancing Elfride from the reader, again, much as he does with Grace, Hardy makes it easier to fit Elfride into a particular role. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* shows that Hardy had difficulty determining whether Elfride is to be interpreted as a coquette who receives her just punishment in the end, or as a victim. Only by physically removing her from the story is Hardy able, at the last moment, to reinforce the image of her as a victim. In doing so, however, Hardy reduces the novel's conclusion to merely formulaic dimensions. The image of Elfride that stands out most vividly in the end is of a lovely satin-wood box: her coffin in Lord Luxellian's vault. She is but the newest addition to the tomb's collection of other beautiful, forgotten women.

In life, Elfride is first the possession of her father and his elderly wife, and later, of Henry Knight, who values her because he likes feeling himself to be the master and protector of someone, riddled though he is with insecurity; and finally, of Luxellian, who always courts Elfride in the company of his two young children ("he was in a great trouble because the little girls were left motherless," 346). Presumably, when Elfride no longer feels herself to be Knight's possession ("Surely I belong to you, and you

are going to keep me for yours?'" she asks him, 307), her life is suddenly bereft of meaning; the chains around her have become her life-line and she cannot dream of functioning without them.

Hardy's exploration of women who become victims and the traits and circumstances that foster this state takes an unfortunate turn in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* when the protagonist is referred to one moment--as is also the case in *Two on a Tower*--as "Poor little Elfride," and then to overtly insinuate that "frailty, thy name is woman." *A Pair of Blue Eyes* seems to suffer from Hardy's uncertainty as to whether he is writing a satire on women and romance, or a romance with the heroine as victim. What is important about *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is Hardy's experimentation with the victim theme that is to reappear, in a modified though unmistakable form, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

The furor and controversy aroused by Hardy's publication of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is today something of a literary legend. In addition to favorable reviews of the novel, there were those whose purpose Hardy believed was to brand it with a "scandalous notoriety."⁴² Tess's character was debated over society dinner tables, and Hardy himself acknowledged having received letters on several occasions from "wives," as described in *The Life*, "with a past like that of Tess, but who had not told their husbands,

and asking for his counsel under the burden of their concealment."⁴³ One is perhaps amazed when one considers the emotional impact of a novel powerful enough, and apparently sympathetic enough in the treatment of its subject, to prompt women, some of whom were "educated women of good position," to risk confiding their deepest secrets--and not always anonymously--to a complete stranger.⁴⁴

Noorul Hasan, in his essay on *Tess*, refers to her "great, grotesque career of suffering and victimization."⁴⁵ *Tess*, as Hardy intended her, is often looked at as an archetypal victim enduring injustice upon injustice. Hasan describes this particular aspect of *Tess*'s characterization as follows:

Tess's personality issues from cultural compulsions. Her profoundest responses in the novel are so evocative of cultural archetypes that she sometimes acquires the personality of the immemorial ballad heroine. There is no opposition between her intense self-awareness and her representative role as the 'cultural' woman wronged.⁴⁶

Hasan seems to have arrived at the center of the novel's appeal: the quality of *Tess*'s suffering that is not only tragic, but which also contains the essence of a universal experience among women.

The "grotesqueness" of *Tess*'s suffering and Hardy's reliance on the intricate workings of Chance place *Tess*'s downfall on very shaky ground. David Cecil blames Hardy's "wild, Gothic imagination," and the fact that "To satisfy the demands of his imagination, he [sometimes] neglected the

claims of probability."⁴⁷ Without a doubt, Hardy has gone to great pains to insure that Tess is seen, unequivocally, as a victim of society and traditional patriarchal attitudes about women--these attitudes reflecting the inclination to regard women as chaste receptacles of male thought and will, and of course, as objects of sexual desire. Tess is a victim twice-over in having been exploited sexually by Alec and emotionally by Angel, but unlike some of Hardy's other portrayals of women, there are no mocking undercurrents. If she is a threat to men, it is very subtly acknowledged, and her artlessness in such matters renders her forgiveable. Within this novel, Hardy freely allows himself to express what Virginia Woolf believed was only to be found in a woman's fiction, or at best, in the writing of a "working man, a Negro, or one who for some reason is conscious of disability: that is, the consciousness of a "woman's presence--of someone resenting the treatment of her sex and pleading for its rights."⁴⁸ Whatever fault one may be likely to find with Woolf's generalizations about male writers, one must agree that Tess shows an unusual degree of awareness of women's problems. Whether Hardy's compassion is tempered by a sense of protectiveness not extended toward his other heroines remains to be seen.

Contrasted to the sadly comic John and Joan Durbeyfield, and their pathetic dreams of grandeur, is their sober young daughter, Tess. The irresponsibility of the shiftless parents lends the girl an unusual seriousness and

maturity. When John proves to be too drunk to make the two a.m. journey to market with the family beehives, Tess is called upon for the task. As she and her little brother jog along in the darkness over rough roads, Abraham calls her attention to the myriad stars, or planets, as he imagines them, overhead:

'Which do we live on--a splendid one or a blighted one?' he asks Tess.

'A blighted one,' she replies.⁴⁹

Such a jaded outlook, as Cecil has observed, bears more resemblance to the philosophy of a middle-aged novelist than to the experience of a teen-age girl, and it is this kind of dull hopelessness that marks all but a brief period of Tess's career.⁵⁰

Dozing on the wagon seat, Tess loses control of the vehicle, causing the Durbeyfield's only horse to be impaled by a mail cart. The scene is rich with foreshadowing as Tess, in her anxiety, tries to staunch the horse's wound by pressing her hand against it, "with the only result that she became splashed from face to skirt" with the animal's blood (44). The blood symbolized by the red ribbon she alone among the white-gowned girls of the club-walking wears in her hair, and the actual blood spattered across her face and dress seem to presage a loss of virginity and a violent death. Likewise, the impaling of the horse's heart, and Tess's certainty that she alone is responsible for murdering Prince (46) bears a strong resemblance to her eventual

murder of Alec. This one small episode sets out the basic problems of the novel in miniature.

Tess's acceptance, against her better judgement, of Mrs Durbeyfield's plan for her to "claim kin" with the d'Urbervilles whom they believe to be rich relatives, is based on her sense of responsibility for her impoverished family and guilt at having been the one to cause the accident that killed Prince. Tess is but another of Hardy's women, like Grace or Elfride, who act for the sake of pleasing or benefitting her family, despite her own wishes to the contrary. Even after Alec distresses Tess by forcing her to submit to his first kiss in the gig, she adheres to her promise "to work for his mother," because:

her resolve...had been taken, and it seemed vacillating even to childishness to abandon it now, unless for graver reasons. How could she face her parents, get back her box, and disconcert the whole scheme for the rehabilitation of her family on such sentimental grounds?" (69)

Tess chooses to stay on at Trantridge, finding the work not uncongenial, though d'Urberville follows and flirts with her all the while. Although she does not fall in love with him, she does learn to tolerate his company. Hardy sets the stage for Tess's seduction with a warm, moonlit autumn night and a dance at which the everyday workfolk are transformed into a picture of "satyrs clasping nymphs--a multiplicity of Pans whirling a multiplicity of Syrinxes; Lotis attempting to elude Priapus, and always failing" (77). Unwilling to

participate in such a passionate dance, partly through shyness, and partly through a sense of her own dignity, she nevertheless determines to wait for her companions; but she soon regrets her decision when she is challenged to a fight with one of Alec's former mistresses, the drunken dark Car. A means of escape presents itself in the form of Alec's timely arrival on the scene. In her anxiety to flee, and by so doing triumph over her adversaries, Tess leaps into the saddle with Alec. After several miles of aimless wandering in the fog on horseback, Alec leaves Tess in the woods ostensibly to find the road back to Trantridge. When he returns, he finds that she has cried herself to sleep. The actual intimacy is left to our imagination, though a mutual love-making it clearly is not. Hardy responds by questioning the possible reason why it is "that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive" (89). The ungovernable quality of sexual attraction, circumstance, and a degree of fatefulness all play their part in this occurrence.

In her analysis of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Lara Claridge argues that Tess is less a victim than we may think, and that "sexual initiation is always choice," even in *Tess*.⁵¹ What Claridge does not acknowledge are the subtleties and ambiguities of any sexual choice--those involving the individual's unconscious and conscious

desires, as well as the fact that for Tess, dependent on d'Urberville's charity for her job, financial pressures exist for allowing Alec's early harrassment of her to continue unchecked; otherwise, we run the risk of diminishing the seriousness of Alec's crime against Tess, and in so doing, fall into the mistaken trap of blaming the victim for the assault.

What is important is to assess, as we did with *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, how much responsibility Tess must bear for the things that happen to her, for the reason that, despite the workings of Fate or Chance, Tess is given several opportunities to choose the direction her life will take, beginning with the strawberries she eats from Alec's hand during her first and only visit to the d'Urberville garden. Despite a brief protest that she would rather take the berries with her own hand, Tess does accept d'Urberville's invitation to eat, "and with a slight distress she parted her lips and took it in" (53). Hardy apparently wants us to observe that Tess is not always antipathetic to Alec's gestures, capturing instead the dual impulses that are so much a part of her personality. Another example takes place when Alec is teaching her to whistle:

She attempted to look reserved; her face put on a sculptural severity. But he persisted in his demand, and at last, to get rid of him, she put up her lips as directed for producing a clear note; laughing distressfully, however, and then blushing with vexation that she had laughed. (73)

Obviously Tess is not trying to encourage Alec's attention. Rather, it appears she lets down her guard for a moment, and immediately regrets her action. Tess is intelligent enough to know that Alec poses a certain threat to her, but as to how he will gain the advantage, she is yet too innocent to realize. As she later tells Alec the morning of her parting from Trantridge, "'I didn't understand your meaning until it was too late'" (92).

Part of the difficulty of analyzing Tess of the d'Urbervilles arises because of Hardy's need to maintain the reader's faith in Tess's moral purity both before and after her fall. He must therefore constantly assert Tess's innocence even while manufacturing situations in which this innocence is made to seem questionable. By focusing frequently on Tess's sexuality juxtaposed with images of her as Eve, Hardy has the tendency to cloud the narrative with uncertainties he is unprepared to resolve. Mary Jacobus believes some of the novel's difficulties occur because for Hardy, "the sign woman...is a rich source of mythic confusion, ideological contradiction, and erotic fascination."⁵² Tess, of course, combines all of the ingredients Jacobus mentions: she is the archetypal female powerfully attractive to men and women, she is the woman in the Garden, the one who tempts without realizing she does so, and she is also victim and tragic heroine. That Hardy manages, for the most part, to make her a believable and extremely engaging character while burdening her with so

many disparate roles is a mark of literary genius, but he flounders when he tries to force Tess to conform to a moral and literary convention which, in the end, can only hinder the character and confuse our understanding of her.

The question of how pure a woman Tess really is has been of great interest to countless reviewers of Hardy's work. Why, when Hardy is emphasizing Tess's victimization by Alec, does he have her remain with him another two weeks after the night in the Chase? The problem, perhaps, is that Tess has never been in love with her seducer, a fact for which Tess suffers enormous guilt--as her confession to Alec reveals:

'If I had gone for love of you, if I had ever sincerely loved you, if I loved you still, I should not so loathe and hate myself for my weakness as I do now!...My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all.'(92)

Hardy explains Tess's behavior far less critically than she does, his matter-of-fact summary of the events being that

She had dreaded [Alec], winced before him, succumbed to adroit advantages he took of her helplessness; then, temporarily blinded by his ardent manners, had been stirred to confused surrender awhile, had suddenly despised and disliked him, and had run away. That was all.(98)

Apparently Tess's "confused surrender" is in no way meant to render her impure in Hardy's terms. That she responds to Alec for a time we cannot forget, but Hardy suggests that such lapses aren't as important as her behavior on the

whole. However, Hardy is not content to present Tess's innocence in terms of social morality alone, but seems anxious to sheer away from that argument entirely by later examining Tess through a more Romantic perspective.⁵³ Having become pregnant, Tess

looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while, she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism, she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.(101)

Hardy, in effect, denies the existence of Tess's "sin" by placing it within a natural perspective, but it is not by the natural world that Tess is judged. Furthermore, nature is a cruel force in the novel to which individuality and personal desire must invariably bend in the face of instinct, as happens to each of the dairy-maids in love with Angel:⁵⁴

The air of the sleeping chamber seemed to palpitate with the hopeless passion of the girls. They writhed feverishly under the oppressiveness of an emotion thrust on them by cruel Nature's law--an emotion which they had neither expected nor desired....The differences which distinguished them as individuals were abstracted by this passion, and each was but portion of one organism called sex.(163)

From the multiplicity of statements and possibilities Hardy provides us with, we are left with the difficulty of trying to construct a single, coherent argument defending or

disproving Tess's innocence. The reader is, therefore, left with more uncertainties than the narrative is capable of resolving.

As Hardy would have it, Alec is always the aggressor in his relationship with Tess. He has the money to place her in his debt with gifts and favors for her family, and neither Alec nor Tess is ever quite able to overcome the feeling "that in a physical sense this man alone was her husband" (378). There is a part of Tess that responds to Alec's persuasion, however much she may wish to deny it to herself. Her terror of returning to Alec once Angel has deserted her is not the consequence of any visible hold d'Urberville has over her; on the contrary he uses no subterfuge to entrap her. By the second time, Tess knows very well what Alec wants from her. The effect Alec's reappearance at Flintcomb-Ash has on Tess has her behaving more like someone who is compelled to do something, than like someone tempted by the brief fantasy of escaping with Alec and his wealth from her "subjection....to a whole world who seemed to despise her" (338). When Tess rejects Alec's offer of assistance and strikes him across the face with her work glove, he responds tellingly: "'You don't know me yet! But I know you.'" She remained "as if stunned" (351). More than being just an arrogant show of anger on d'Urberville's part, Alec's words and Tess's reaction reveal that there can be no escaping from the self-knowledge she shares with Alec. Between Tess's two lovers, Alec and Angel, it is Alec who,

in his crude and selfish way, most appreciates her character for being "unsmirched in spite of all" (341). Like Henry Knight, Angel is concerned with changing and improving Tess--educating her and making her genteel enough to withstand the scrutiny of his family. Alec, on the other hand, shares with Stephen Smith an acceptance of his former lover just as she is.

The destructive idealism of Angel and Knight, as we have discovered earlier, is finally shown up for what it is: the need to control, almost to recreate the woman he loves. If any lesson is to be gleaned from the behavior of Angel and Knight, it is that the cost of maintaining these men's love is high, requiring no less than a woman's unceasing compliance and pliability in molding herself to his particular vision of what his wife is to be. Angel's expectations are especially difficult for Tess. Although Angel is already preparing for his career as a farmer and has been living among rural people for some time, he nevertheless singles Tess out from the other milkmaids because of the innate refinement and sensitivity that sets her apart from other women of her class. For the same reason, he professes to despise the ancient name of d'Urberville, yet looks forward to presenting Tess to his parents as a member of that ancestral line. In both Angel and Knight, the spiritual elements always outweigh the animal (258), suggesting a constitution which offers little hope of a change of heart for either Elfride or Tess. We

are clearly told that Angel is the type who, "In considering what Tess was not,...overlooked what she was, and forgot that the defective can be more than the entire" (283).

On the surface, Tess and Angel's courtship amidst the bounty of Talbothays Dairy is one of Hardy's most idyllic portrayals of any relationship. But throughout Tess's sojourn there, numerous hints suggest that it is not the Elysium it seems to resemble. In the early morning hours the two of them, alone in the meadow, "were impressed with a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve" (146). Inevitably, any reference to Eden carries with it an expectation of the Fall, which Hardy slyly alludes to in the statement associating Tess with the Magdalen ("He little thought that the Magdalen might be at his side," 147). Moreover, in the misty-grey morning light--vague as the light of Angel's imagination--Tess is etherealized into "a visionary essence of woman" (147); a being without individuality, she embodies something of all women. Angel responds to this image of Tess by calling her Artemis and Demeter until she protests, "'Call me Tess.'"

Despite their disparate natures, "All the while [Tess and Angel] were converging, under an irresistible law, as surely as two streams in one vale" (145), and they can no more alter the course of that flow than the three restless dairymaids can help falling in love with a man from whom any return of affection is almost unimaginable. Peter Morton notes the Darwinian element present in the Talbothays scenes

and what he refers to as the "anti-human drive...of sexual selection" operating among the various inhabitants of the dairy farm.⁵⁵ Around Tess and Angel the biological force of attraction forms inexplicable bonds, blinding them to all other realities as surely as Clym and Eustacia are at one time oblivious to their reality.

Tess fulfills for Angel the fantasy of the sensuous, yet untouched child of nature, but she also possesses illusions of her own about the man she loves. There is a scene in which she comes upon Angel playing the harp outdoors, and draws nearer only to find herself in a garden very different from Alec's well-tended lawns and conservatory. The place where Angel sits "had been left uncultivated...and was damp and rank with juicy grass" (139). The three paragraphs describing the "garden" are filled with descriptions of "offensive smells," "weeds," "cuckoo-spittle," "slug-slime," and "sticky blights" that stain Tess's hands and clothes. In addition, Angel's music is "thinly played" on a "second-hand harp" with "no great skill" to recommend it to any but the fondest listener. There is nothing paradisaical in this setting, and unlike the Miltonic associations of Alec and his garden, Angel's domain is one of foul weeds and undisciplined vegetation serving to warn us of the potential flaws that threaten Tess's future with Angel Clare.⁵⁶

Earlier in this chapter we saw Elfride Swancourt abase herself before the man she believed to be her moral and

intellectual superior. Elfride's behavior is repeated by Tess, who is also awed by Angel's education and upbringing. In short, "She thought every line in the contour of his person the perfection of masculine beauty, his soul the soul of a saint, his intellect that of a seer" (209). Being loved by Angel is, in Tess's view, the coveted achievement of her life. On her wedding day she acknowledges to herself:

Her one desire, so long resisted, to make herself his, to call him her lord, her own--then, if necessary, to die--had at last lifted her up from her plodding reflective pathway.(229)

Rather than rendering her unquestioning devotion for a man unworthy of such supreme faith either pitiable or ridiculous, as is the impression we receive when Elfride is the worshipper, Tess is ennobled by her love for Angel, and Hardy clearly means us to respect the depth of her emotion. Unfortunately, Angel can no more live up to her image of him as saint and seer than can she to his.

The only alternative Tess can see to having Angel to love is death--first morally and spiritually after her return to Alec, and finally, physical death--the reason being that the image Tess forms of Angel is actually a projection of herself and the person she would have liked to have been, but could not be ("My life looks as if it had been wasted for want of chances! When I see what you know, what you have read and seen and thought, I feel what a

nothing I am,'" 142). When she loses Angel's love it is as if her reason for being, for living instead of merely existing, has been taken away. Meeting Tess again after she has gone to live with Alec, Angel observes that "Tess had spiritually ceased to recognize the body before him as hers--allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction disassociated from its living will" (400). For Angel, before his journey to Brazil, the shattering of his illusions about his new bride is an affront to his ego and a usurpation of the rights of a Victorian male.

The circumstances of Tess's fall--the fact that she was "a child....more sinned against than sinning" (249)--are of far less concern to Angel than the act itself. The irony, of course, is that the apparently spotless Angel should also have a similar stain on his past: his often-quoted "eight-and-forty hours' dissipation with a stranger" (243). Even his reason for concealing the incident until after their marriage because he was afraid of losing her is the same as Tess's, but, as Anne Mickelson reminds us, Victorian society "saw nothing wrong in the division of man into social and private selves," whereas for a woman such options were relatively unthinkable.⁵⁷

Consequently, Angel regards Tess as altogether a different person from the girl he knew at Talbothays, and although Tess protests briefly that she has not changed--that she is, indeed, the same woman Angel fell in love with--both prior to and succeeding this scene, Tess thinks of

herself as a divided being. She reveals her inner dissonance on her wedding day as she prays in her room: "'Oh, my love, my love, why do I love you so!' she whispered there alone. 'For she you love is not my real self, but one in my image, the one I might have been!'" (232). Any possibility for a life undivided by guilt is crushed by Angel Clare, while it would appear that Tess's sole hope for achieving wholeness is dependent on being loved by the right man. At the end of the novel, Tess is still trying to recover her childhood innocence by presenting the virginal Liza Lu, her younger sister, to Angel, as if she could somehow rewrite the past.

Laura Claridge denies that Tess is truly a victim of circumstances, and as we have observed in some of Hardy's other fiction, there is the tendency for victims to seem to abet or advance their own victimization. While one may be inclined to agree that Tess is perhaps not entirely the helpless victim of Alec and Angel we may at first consider her to be, she is very much a victim of the values they and others possess about women. As has been suggested, Hardy is critical of Tess's behavior in having willfully "delivered her whole being up to him [Angel]...as his absolute possession, to dispose of as he should choose" (265), and of the pride that prompts her to disguise her pain with a stoic's silence on the afternoon of their parting (271), because by doing so she unwittingly gives him permission to abuse her or to cast her off, however he sees fit.

Moreover, Tess has so thoroughly incorporated the sense of guilt and wrongdoing into her psychology that she does not seriously think to question the injustice of her punishment until nearly the end of the novel.

There are times when Tess's submissiveness and silent acceptance of the events of her unhappy life align her with nature and animals.⁵⁸ In happier times, Tess's voice is described as "cooing" (282), while later, she is compared to "a bird caught in a clap-trap" (309). On the way to Flintcomb-Ash Tess flees from all human association, preferring to take refuge in a small copse. Hardy compares her situation to the dead and dying pheasants that surround her during the night. The birds have been left by hunters and Tess identifies with them as "kindred sufferers" (297). As well, Tess bears ties to the earth which render her hardly distinguishable from her surroundings, like a "thing scarcely percipient, almost inorganic" (298). Her alliance with nature and animal life emphasizes her vulnerability, and at times undercuts her humanness. Kathleen Rogers has written that "Tess herself is almost less a personality than a beautiful portion of nature violated by human selfishness and over-intellectualizing. She is the least flawed of Hardy's protagonists, but also the least human."⁵⁹ What saves Tess from being nothing more than a pretty little animal like George Eliot's Hetty Sorrel is her strength and her moral consciousness, a consciousness that is only extinguished when she takes d'Urberville's life. Still,

Rogers is right in calling attention to Tess as she does, because it reminds us that it is only this ideal, perfect specimen of wronged womanhood who is spared Hardy's irony and chastisement.

Boumelha has remarked that in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, "sex and nature are assigned to the female, intellect and culture to the male."⁶⁰ Of course, Boumelha's observation can be extended to several of the novels dealt with in this thesis. Certainly, this is true of Eustacia and Clym, Knight and Elfride. Moreover, even Sue Bridehead, the one female character who is clearly defined as capable of reason, eventually breaks down and succumbs to what is depicted as the irrationality of emotion, with results that are little less than disastrous for herself and those around her. Significantly, when men flounder or fail in Hardy's novels, it is often because reason and the powers of the intellect have been undermined--however unintentionally--by the overwhelming force of female sexuality, and it is the insidious effects of submitting to this sexuality that Hardy's men, like Angel and Knight, seem to fear most.

Tess's sexuality works toward her destruction as surely as it does for the other heroines we have discussed. Tess is apparently incapable of flirtation, and the narrator makes much of her modesty, but modesty offers only small protection from a perverse fate that grants women beauty seemingly as a gift, and then makes them suffer for it. Beauty, for Tess at least, is something of a curse in the

way that it invites others--like Mr and Mrs Durbeyfield and Alec--to exploit Tess. Nature is deceptive in its fashioning of Tess by endowing her with "a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was," and it is this quality that causes Alec's eyes, in the words of Hardy's slightly melodramatic prose, "to rivet themselves upon her" (54). Even Tess's mood of despair as she travels toward Flintcomb-Ash fails to dim her attractiveness. The narrator speculates that "one reason why she seduces casual attention is [because] she never courts it" (104). Apparently Tess cannot succeed whatever she does, and it isn't until she temporarily disfigures her face that she is able to continue on her way unmolested. Unfortunately, men in the novel do not know how to react to Tess's sexuality: someone like Angel tries to romanticize her, while the coarser men such as Alec and Farmer Groby believe it perfectly natural to want to appropriate Tess's sexuality for their own use. The responses, therefore, that Tess's sexuality elicits from others fails to reflect her perception of herself.

The final chapter in *Tess*, entitled "Fulfilment," concerns Angel's return to England and Tess's return to Alec. Angel, of course, had thought it would be "the easiest thing in the world to rush back into her arms the moment he chose to forgive her" (389); but Tess's letter, rebuking him for his harsh treatment which she finally realizes is selfish and cruel, makes reconciliation far

more difficult than Angel had imagined. In the spirit of his newly-found forgiveness, Angel sets out on a hurried search to find her, only to discover that she has become Alec's mistress. In her agony over losing Angel for the second time, Tess stabs Alec in the heart, rushing out afterward to pursue Angel.

The entry in *The Life* for 1889 may shed additional light on Tess's crime, should we regard Alec as Tess's real husband and Angel as her lover. Hardy writes: "When a married woman who has a lover kills her husband, she does not really wish to kill her husband; she wishes to kill the situation."⁶¹ It is easier, perhaps, to understand Tess's behavior with this observation in mind, though Tess's actions themselves--the image of her running into Alec's bedroom with a breakfast knife, raising her arm and stabbing him to death as he lies in bed--are beyond the imagination of the reader and, one suspects, of the author himself. Tess's reason for committing murder appears to have its basis in a remark Angel makes following her confession, that a reunion between them would be impossible as long as her seducer still lived (260). Meeting Angel after the murder, Tess tells him: "It came as a shining light that I should get you back that way" (406). Simply leaving Alec is not certainty enough in Tess's mind that Angel will take her back; instead, she must destroy Alec, the representative of her past, completely.

If the latter part of Tess partially lacks conviction, it is probably because Alec seems to have lost his evilness. We never hear the bitter taunt that is supposed to incite Tess to murder. He is no longer the villain of melodrama he was at the beginning of the story; but in a way that has complicated our understanding of his relationship with Tess, Alec becomes almost pitiable at times.⁶² Although Tess continues to rail against him as her enemy, such speeches as the one Alec makes to her on top of the rick have an element of compassion and sincerity that call into question the validity of Tess's continued rage against him. He does, after all, care about what happens to her:

For all your closeness, I see you are in a bad way--neglected by one who ought to cherish you.... I came, Tess, to say that I don't like you to be working like this, and I have come on purpose for you. You say you have a husband who is not I. Well, perhaps you have; but I've never seen him, and you've not told me his name; and altogether he seems rather a mythological personage. However, even if you have one, I think I am nearer to you than he is. I, at any rate, try to help you out of your trouble, but he does not, bless his invisible face! (350)

There is decidedly truth in what Alec has to say, which confuses our reaction to the abrupt blow Tess gives him. Whatever her reasons for returning to Alec the second time, whether it be for her own comfort or for that of her family, Tess makes the decision on her own. Justifying murder on those terms becomes a feat the narrator proves unequipped to perform.

Tess is at her most vulnerable following the murder, throwing herself upon Angel for protection, which he is at last willing to give. From this point onward, Tess resembles more and more "a lesser creature than a woman" (417). In a state of utter helplessness and dependency, Tess completes the pattern of isolation from other human beings that began with her fall. When she and Angel come upon an empty house where they stop to rest, Tess refuses to leave even to save herself. She fears neither prison nor death once she has found Angel again, and remarks that "'What must come will come'" (411). Consequently, they spend five days together, an occurrence recalling their earlier stay at Talbothays when they fancied they were Adam and Eve. By now their paradise has shrunk to the circumference of a single room from which Tess looks out to observe that "'All is trouble outside there; inside here content.'" Angel "peeped out also. It was quite true; within was affection, union, error forgiven; outside was the inexorable" (411).

It would seem that their love is incapable of surviving in the real world, but can blossom only in a sheltered environment. Even as they enjoy their reunion, both they and the reader know that it must eventually come to an end. Tess, without looking forward to the ending, senses that to attempt to prolong the joy will only insure that she and Angel will experience sorrow again. Perhaps the real reason why Hardy's unfortunate couples like Tess and Angel, or Sue

and Jude, never leave the sight of their unhappiness in favor of new places is because the chances for a happy, harmonious co-existence among men and women is really an impossibility for Hardy. In Tess's mind there is the added fear that even if they do manage to escape from the police, Angel will learn to dislike her in time:

'And--and,' she said, pressing her cheek against his, 'I fear that what you think of me now may not last. I do not wish to outlive your present feeling for me. I would rather not. I would rather be dead and buried when the time comes for you to despise me, so it may never be known to me that you despised me.' (411)

Tess has no faith in the future; she never had. Her life since she has met Angel has been lived on the edge of personal disaster, and now, as it was when they first knew each other, Tess uses Angel's love as temporary protection from the "gloomy spectres that would persist in their attempts to touch her--doubt, fear, moodiness, care, shame. She knew that they were waiting like wolves just outside the circumscribing light..." (212).

When the darkness once again enters Tess's circle of light, she shakes herself and rises bravely to meet it, though not before she has asked Angel to marry her sister when she is gone. Although Angel does not accept at once, acceptance appears likely. His protest that "'If I lose you I lose all!'" is immediately followed by the afterthought, "'And she is my sister-in-law'" (415). Tess addresses the latter phrase only: "'That's nothing, dearest. People

marry sister-laws constantly about Marlott'" (415). Apparently they do, because the day of Tess's hanging, Angel and Liza-Lu arrive hand-in-hand to learn the news. Angel's companion is described as a "tall budding creature--half girl, half woman--a spiritualized image of Tess, slighter than she, but with the same beautiful eyes" (418). In other words, Liza-Lu is Tess, without her sister's intense sexuality; moreover, she is a virgin. By providing Angel with the feminine ideal he once desired Tess to fulfill, Hardy reinforces the argument he has spent the entire novel trying to disprove: that physical purity and inexperience really are the indicators of a woman's worth.

Tess identifies with her sister as a reminder of the innocent girl she once was. She tells Angel: "'She has all the best of me without the bad of me; and if she were to become yours, it would almost seem as if death had not divided us'" (415). The notion of Angel marrying her sister has an added appeal for Tess, because she appears to see it as a vicarious means of finally disassociating her good self (i.e. the young, virginal girl)--and what she thinks of as her true self--from the bad self (the unmarried mother, adulteress and murderer) that she never considered to be a natural reflection of her character.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles concludes similarly to *The Return of the Native* and *Two on a Tower*, with a woman's death and the possibility of a new life for the men they leave behind. More in keeping with *Tess of the*

d'Urberville's tragic tone than *Two on a Tower*, *The Return of the Native* offers no assurance that Clym's new life will bring him happiness, and the same can be said of Angel; for although he and Liza-Lu walk with hands clasped, "Their pale faces seemed to have shrunk to half their natural size" (418), as if both of them have been aged prematurely by their sad experiences. Unfortunately, Angel and Liza-Lu have merely become figures in a pantomime, so that although we regret Tess's death, we cannot feel the pain that the two observers are supposed to be feeling. This is because Hardy has done here what he has been doing throughout *Tess*, and in a moderate way, what he has tried to do in several other novels, which is to detach himself from his subject at crucial moments in their lives, looking at them no longer from the perspective of the omniscient narrator, but as a third person of somewhat limited understanding. Regrettably, this occurs just at the moment when the reader is anxious to know more about what is going on inside of the protagonist's head.

The novel concludes with the now-famous line: "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess" (419). Her short and unhappy existence has come to a close, appearing to bear out her angry challenge to Alec and to the world to "'Whip me, crush me;...I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim--that's the law!'" (351). For the sake of the novel, we are to believe that victims will

always be victims, that nature, society, and the "Prime Mover" all play a part in the breaking of the human spirit.

Tess's destiny, despite some of the choices she is able to make, is fated through the man she loves, the accidents that befall her, and the society that shapes her responses. Consequently, the only escape she can ever envision is death. Hardy's heroines frequently choose death, either directly, like Eustacia, or indirectly, like Elfride and Tess, because according to the narrators of each novel, the forces that control the women's lives are simply too large to completely overcome through either action or resistance alone, and the men that are to give them strength through their love lack the moral courage to do so.

Chapter III

'A Woman With Ideas': Sue Bridehead as Temptress and Victim in *Jude the Obscure*

Our study of nineteenth-century women in Thomas Hardy's fiction takes us finally to the character of Sue Bridehead in his last novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Sue is in many ways very different from any other woman he has ever depicted, but although she represents a new type for Hardy, Sue is by no means an unfamiliar character in novels of the late nineteenth century.

In 1895, Hardy wrote in a letter to Florence Hennicker that "Sue is a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me, but the difficulty of drawing the type has kept me from attempting it till now."¹ Sue owes her conception to the so-called "New Woman" in the fiction of the 1890's and the novels dealing with social problems in which she first appeared. The New Woman was generally depicted as independent, valuing her freedom, and believing in women's right to choose their own destiny. Hostility towards the New Woman led many critics, among them Hugh Stutfield, writing in 1895, to mock the modern woman of fiction as foolish and unnatural in her desires and "a victim of the universal passion for learning and 'culture', which, when ill-digested, are apt to cause intellectual dyspepsia."² "Emancipated woman in particular," Stutfield continues, "loves to show her independence by dealing freely

with the relations of the sexes. Hence all the prating of animalism, the 'natural workings of sex', and so forth, with which we are nauseated." Stutfield's scornful summation of the New Woman was but one of many similar attitudes expressed by members of the reading public at the time. Nevertheless, as Carol A. Senf reminds us, not all fiction writers with New Woman characters and themes were writing from a feminist perspective.³ Others were trying, in the words of Linda Dowling, "to portray the New Woman's dangerous limitations or self-delusion."⁴ And some writers, like Hardy, at times seemed to be trying to do both.

In Sue Bridehead, Hardy has depicted an early feminist and an educated thinker unabashedly brighter than the novel's hero, Jude Fawley. Moreover, Sue seems to promise the emergence of a very different kind of woman from the ashes of the Victorian fallen woman, victimized and degraded, or the angel in the house, a creature too perfect for any woman to succeed in emulating. Although Hardy does not entirely fulfill the promise--or perhaps we should say, the challenge--Sue offers, he does provide us with a unique characterization of a woman richer and more complex than any he has drawn before.

Sue is undoubtably one of Hardy's most controversial and misunderstood heroines, eliciting a variety of responses from readers over the years, many of them focusing on her coquettishness and presumed "frigidity."⁵ In Sue Bridehead are merged characteristics of both temptress and victim;

these elements mirroring the emerging woman's struggle for selfhood and independence from men and traditional marriage, conjoined with the human need to love and be loved.

Sue exercises over Jude Fawley an influence no less imaginative than the city of Christminster he aspires towards. As a boy watching from a housetop at sunset for a glimpse of the distant city, Jude yearns "to find something to anchor on, to cling to--for some place which he could call admirable," and this desire stays with him until his death.⁶ He arrives at Christminster a grown man, but the old dream, possessing just as powerful an allure, is joined by a second ideal: Jude's love of Sue Bridehead.

Jude's attraction to Sue begins after catching sight of her photograph for the first time, rendering her in his thoughts as elusive and as tantalizing as the boyhood vision of Christminster gleaming in the fading light. Jude's passion for a woman he has never met bears the same intensity and idealization as Eustacia's early passion for Clym, and it is equally as consuming. In his cousin Jude believes he has found the anchorage for his thoughts he had hoped to achieve in academia. But far from being the young woman "steeped body and soul in church sentiment" (112) he supposes her to be, Jude discovers at their first meeting a woman whose mind is very much her own. Despite her association with the New Woman, Sue herself denies Jude's assertion that she is very much a modern girl. "'I am a sort of negation of [civilization]'" (167), she informs him. "'I

am more ancient than medievalism, if you only knew'" (154). Indeed, our first encounter with Sue has her buying pagan statues to adorn her room in Christminster, "the most Christian city in the country" (114), and trembling at her own audacity. Hardy consequently establishes Sue early on as bold and unconventional, yet plagued by pervasive self-doubt.

In manner and appearance Sue is a direct contrast to characters Eustacia, Tess, or Viviette Constantine, and their slow, full-bodied sensuality. Much is made in the novel of Sue's delicate figure and "tight-strained nerves" (130)--constant reminders of her affiliation with "the woman of the feminist movement--the slight, pale, 'bachelor' girl--the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing."⁷ Hardy makes a number of similar references to Sue's figure and appearance which act as signposts for a condition expressed in *The Return of the Native* regarding Clym Yeobright: the idea being that humans are in the process of undergoing an evolutionary change whereby mental activities determine one's physical appearance, resulting in the need for revising traditional concepts of beauty. Of Sue Jude observes: "There was nothing statuesque in her; all was nervous motion. She was mobile, living, yet a painter might not have called her handsome or beautiful" (109).

Sue's impulsiveness and regret for her actions is an integral part of her personality and an important

characteristic in her relationship with Jude. After plunging into an engagement with Phillotson and enrolling in a repressive teacher's college, she writes Jude a "passionate letter" pleading with him to visit her. When he arrives at the school, he notices, immediately, that she is not "quite the woman who had written the letter that summoned him. That had plainly been dashed off in an impulse which second thoughts had somewhat regretted" (151). Her escape from the training school concludes similarly the morning after she takes refuge in Jude's apartment. Her defiance dissipated, she seemed "sorry for her rashness" and "wish[ed] she had not rebelled" (175). As Jude observes to Sue later in the novel, "'you are often not so nice in your real presence as you are in your letters'" (185).

The problem for Sue is that she can only give way to her feelings when Jude is at a distance, as when he comes to visit her before he dies and she asks him to stand apart from her on the other side of the window while they talk. What Jude considers her perversity is actually her fear of intimacy. Her talk about the joys of Hellenism and the need for breaking free of conventional behavior becomes suspect when we realize just how much of her life is based on maintaining self-control, and how deep is her fear of letting go.

Sue's concept of a more ideal world has its roots in Hellenism. In response to Jude's profession of his struggling religious faith, Sue quotes to him: "'O ghastly

glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!" (170). For the city of Christminster she has no respect "'except, in a qualified degree, on its intellectual side'" (170), scorning it, instead, as a "'place full of fetichists and ghost-seers'" (171). She talks of finding real joy in the natural and honest expressions of human love she believes existed before the unnatural imposition of Christianity upon humankind. During her period of happiness with Jude Sue remarks:

'I feel we have returned to Greek joyousness, and have blinded ourselves to sickness and sorrow, and have forgotten what twenty-five centuries have taught the race since their time, as one of your Christminster luminaries says....' (316)

Sue and Eustacia share a similar inclination for paganism, but paganism is shown to belong to a time no longer bearing resemblance to the present world. Sue's talk of having "blinded ourselves" to the realities of "sickness and sorrow" reflects the impermanence of an ideal requiring temporary amnesia of its followers, though, in the world as Hardy sees it, "A man would never laugh were he not to forget his situation," because "Laughter always means blindness--either from defect, choice, or accident."⁸

The world of *Jude the Obscure* is basically a sorrowing place, punctuated only by brief flashes of happiness, for in each moment of joy is contained the certainty of its own end. Twenty-five centuries of sickness and sorrow are not so easily disposed of in the space of an afternoon, and Sue

never really succeeds in forgetting this, as her comment to Jude at the fair indicates.

Like other feminists of the nineteenth century, it is not forgetfulness that Sue seeks, but change, at least as far as her own life is concerned. Sue is not attempting to emancipate womankind; it is perhaps for this reason that she thinks she can live entirely as she chooses, without society's interference. For awhile she does succeed, but Sue is not just an interesting portrait of a New Woman, she is also indicative of the moral and social climate of the day, and an embodiment of the difficulty people faced in putting feminist theory into daily practice.⁹ After having recounted numerous tales of injustices directed toward women throughout his novels, Hardy brings us a woman of intellect, capable of reason, and, at first, seemingly the victim of no man.

One of Sue's more admirable qualities is her independence. She lives apart from her father, and when she meets Jude she is supporting herself as an ecclesiastical art designer. In *The Return of the Native*, Eustacia is offered one of the few occupations at that time available to an unskilled woman above the laboring class: that of lady's companion. It is a position she immediately rejects as one which would merely curtail what little independence she already possesses. In *Jude*, however, Hardy provides a brief look at some of the compensations for women to be found through work outside the home.

Work is a fact of life for most of Hardy's Wessex characters, male or female, and they work chiefly to survive. Hardy seems to accept as a matter of course that women were not always provided for by their fathers or husbands, and were sometimes forced to leave the home in order to find employment. Consequently, his fiction is populated by working women like Marty South, Ethelberta (*The Hand of Ethelberta*), Cytherea Graye (*Desperate Remedies*), Tess, Bathsheba, Sue Bridehead, and Lizzy Newberry of the well-known story "The Distracted Preacher," about a young widow who supports herself and her aged mother by liquor smuggling. That Hardy admired capable women is evident in an 1883 entry of *The Life* concerning a story he was told about a girl

who had been betrayed and deserted by a lover. She kept her child by her own exertions, and lived bravely and throve. After a time the man returned poorer than she, and wanted to marry her; but she refused. He ultimately went into the Union workhouse. The young woman's conduct in not caring to be 'made respectable' won the novelist-poet's admiration...¹⁰

Hardy expresses his interest here, as elsewhere, in women with the strength of character to take care of themselves.

Of course, work is best when it feeds the mind and the soul, as Jude and Angel realize, or, in Tess's case, when work takes her to a new place and teaches her a way of healing emotional wounds, or, as it does for Bathsheba, when work gives her power and self-confidence. For Hardy's men,

excess emotion is regularly channeled into more productive activities. Even in the first days of agony after his discovery of Tess's past, Angel perseveres with his plan to start a farm in Brazil. Similarly, Clym Yeobright follows the enchanting Eustacia around on the heath, yet he never loses sight of his aim to open a school. After Eustacia's death, Clym directs his grief into preaching.

Ian Gregor observes that

Work enters Hardy's novels more decisively than in any English novelist of comparable importance. And it is not merely illustrative; it is seen as it is, as a central kind of learning.¹¹

It is this "central kind of learning" that differentiates Sue, with all her "advantages," as Jude refers to them, from characters like Eustacia or Viviette living claustrophobically within their fantasy worlds. From a merely practical point of view the woman who is employed in some fashion has less time to be bored and to look toward romantic involvements as a cure for her inactivity. For the nineteenth-century feminist and the novelists who wrote on the theme, paid work for women was one important "means of restructuring society and its representations."¹²

Apart from economic independence, the second most distinguishing characteristic of Sue and of the New Woman in general is her desire "to reinterpret the sexual relationship."¹³ Since women's sexual expression was supposed to take place only within marriage, it was

inevitable that the marriage bond would eventually be held up for reevaluation, and is frequently rejected by the New Woman of fiction. Sue Bridehead embraces feminist views, and mistrusts not only marriage, but any other sexual configuration between men and women.

Sue's character also invites comparison with some of the more unflattering aspects of the fictional New Woman. Her surname alone suggests this idea: Bridehead bearing resemblance to 'maidenhead' and virginity, and the idea that hers is a heart not easily moved. Unlike Bathsheba or other coquettes Hardy has depicted, Sue is portrayed as a woman to whom men are attracted, but who has enormous difficulty involving herself in any kind of intimate relationship. Although female chastity was lauded as a woman's greatest treasure by the majority of writers throughout the nineteenth century, *Jude the Obscure* relates the difficulties that result when sexuality is repressed to the degree Sue exhibits.

Notwithstanding Sue's reluctance to become emotionally involved with men, her reaction to Jude's kisses is not that of a prudish or unfeeling woman, despite the image she may at times project. One such encounter is described thus: "They had quickly run back, and met, and embracing most unpremeditatedly, kissed close and long. When they parted for good it was with flushed cheeks on her side, and a beating heart on his" (237). Earlier in their relationship Sue defends herself to Jude with the remark that

'People say I must be cold-natured--sexless--on account of it. But I won't have it! Some of the most passionately erotic poets have been the most self-contained in their daily lives.' (169)

However sympathetic Hardy happens to be to the frustration Jude experiences, he also wishes it to be understood that

...there is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue's nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion, not in inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy as far as it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious. Her sensibilities remain painfully alert notwithstanding, as they do in nature with such women. 14

Unfortunately, Sue's method of withholding herself without being entirely committed to that course is hurtful not only to the men in her life, but finally, to herself as well.

Sue's unconventionality clearly possesses a great deal of attraction for Jude, and he is gratified when she comes to him after fleeing over the walls of the Melchester training college. "What counterparts they were!" (164) he thinks to himself. By this time Jude is already in love with Sue and listens, jealously, to the account of her friendship with a university undergraduate, but his feelings of rivalry quickly turn to misgiving when he begins to fear she may have contributed to the student's death by tantalizing him with her chaste proximity in the same house for fifteen months. During the course of their conversation, Sue's capricious responses to his questions prompt Jude to

speculate: "Was it that which had broken the heart of the poor leader-writer; and was he to be the next one?" Sue's experience with the undergraduate must necessarily spark a feeling of *déjà vu* in a reader of Thomas Hardy. Grace's indirect contribution to Winterborne's death, and Boldwood's murder of Troy and consequent imprisonment resulting from his thwarted desire for Bathsheba, hark back to the theme of the temptress explored in the first chapter of this thesis. Sue concludes her account of the affair in a manner we discover to be characteristic of her later behavior: "'His death caused a terrible remorse in me for my cruelty,'" she informs Jude, "'though I hope he died of consumption and not of me entirely.'"

"'Sue, I sometimes think you are a flirt'" (225), Jude accuses her, and readers over the years have commiserated with him. Desmond Hawkins, writing in 1950, sums up the feeling Sue has sometimes inspired when he calls her "just about the nastiest little bitch in English literature."¹⁵ By this time, Jude is hardly to be blamed for giving in to his impatience with Sue. Over and over Jude and Sue perform the ritual in which she draws near, seemingly prepared to express a deeper fondness than friendship, only to skitter out of reach as soon as he makes a move to reciprocate. For example, the morning of Sue's first marriage with Phillotson has her playing at weddings. Knowing full well Jude's feelings for her, she nevertheless clasped his arm "almost as if she loved him. Cruelly sweet indeed...(192).

Although Sue's treatment of Jude is apparently not calculatingly cruel (in fact, seeing she has hurt him, her eyes fill with sympathetic tears), she does not hesitate to manipulate Jude's emotions in order to maintain what is always a position of superiority in their relationship. For instance, in a dialogue that would have fit comfortably in the mouth of Fancy Day, Sue skillfully deflects Jude's anger over her unwillingness to share his bed once they have run away together:

'Now I forgive you! And you shall kiss me just once there--not very long.' She put the tip of her finger very gingerly to her cheek; and he did as commanded. 'You do care for me very much, don't you, in spite of my not--you know?' 'Yes, sweet!' he said with a sigh; and bade her good-night. (265)

Despite her advanced views on equality between men and women, Sue often resorts to coquetry when she wants her way, rather as if the modern personality is only a veneer that ineffectually conceals the ingrained impulses of the more traditional woman.

One must question Sue's motives for acting out the painful wedding rehearsal with Jude, for although she regards the incident as a consequence of her "curiosity to hunt up a new sensation" (193), Jude has other ideas:

How could Sue have had the temerity to ask him to do it--a cruelty possibly to herself as well as to him? Women were different from men in such matters. Was it that they were, instead of more sensitive, as reputed, more callous, and less romantic; or were they more heroic? Or was Sue

simply so perverse that she wilfully gave herself and him pain for the odd and mournful luxury of practicing long-suffering in her own person, and of being touched with tender pity for him at having made him practise it? (194)

This perversity Jude attributes to Sue is indeed connected with the pleasure she derives from discovering new sensations, but it is not the novelty alone that she seeks. Sue has in common with the temptress, in the early stages of her relationship with Jude, the desire to know that she is loved, without being compelled to reciprocate. In one sense, Sue uses Jude at first as Eustacia uses Wildeve, or Bathsheba uses Boldwood and Oak: in order to gratify the need to be admired by a man--any man. However, for Sue, every pleasure she indulges in involves a guilty reaction, and she punishes herself, as Jude realizes, for enjoying the feelings she inspires in him. Moreover, by the time of her marriage to Phillotson, Sue is beginning to learn that Jude means more to her than she cares to admit, but she finds it easier to marry a man she does not love than to commit herself to a man she does care for, and risk the consequences therein. It is as if Sue has learned all of love's painful lessons without ever having been in love, just as Little Father Time knows only life's misery and none of its joy.

As a child Sue participates in boys' games, enjoying the freedom of their activities, and as a young woman she befriends the undergraduate who shares with her his books

and knowledge. Her unusual experiences for a woman of her time she attributes to "'what people call a peculiarity in me. I have no fear of men, as such, nor of their books. I have mixed with them--one or two of them particularly--almost as one of their own sex'" (167). Only by learning to disregard gender differences is Sue able to partake of some of the privileges--the liberty and the education--that men were more likely to enjoy in a largely patriarchal society. Sue recognizes that the greatest obstacle to women's moral and intellectual growth comes from allowing themselves to be treated as either household objects or objects of sexual desire. "'Fewer women like marriage than you suppose,'" she informs Jude, "'only they enter into it for the dignity it is assumed to confer, and the social advantages it gains them sometimes--a dignity and an advantage that I am quite willing to do without'" (279).

Hardy has provided us with a number of examples of women like Grace and Ethelberta (*The Hand of Ethelberta*), who, for different reasons, contract marriages greatly resembling a barter of goods, and then must live with the consequences. In Ethelberta's case, her decision to marry the repulsive Lord Mountclere is based on her desire to provide for her large family, but there is also an underlying craving for material comfort which enables her to examine the cleverly built stairs in Mountclere's mansion with mingled irony and shrewdness, assessing that "'His staircase alone is worth my hand!'"¹⁶ By the time we reach

Jude, Sue's views appear as a kind of logical thought-progression derived from the suffering recorded in Hardy's earlier fiction. Instead of marriage, Sue adopts a lifestyle in which she must deny her own sexuality if she is to strive to be treated as a comrade and an equal among men, because she fears that to reveal sexual passion for a man is to invite her subjection to him. She initially rejects Christianity because of what she perceives as its life-denying qualities, and borrows her ascetic ideal, if one may call it that, from the Romantics instead. Sue nevertheless shares the feminist belief of her day that women can control their lives only after they have controlled their sexuality. Until Sue becomes emotionally involved with Jude, she apparently manages this satisfactorily for herself. Kathleen Blake has noted that "In fact Victorian feminists were responding to the same thing that Victorian prudes were--the noticeable disadvantages of being seen in a sexual light by men,"¹⁷ some of these disadvantages being a greater risk of pregnancy and exposure to venereal disease, and the apprehension that being more sexually available without gaining greater rights in the legal and domestic spheres would merely make women more open to exploitation. In light of the attitudes forming at the time, Sue's behavior begins to seem somewhat less aberrant.

There is no doubt that Sue derives strength from her chastity. The night Sue makes her escape from the training college to Jude's lodgings, he is said to feel that "she was

treating him cruelly, though he could not quite say in what way. Her very helplessness seemed to make her so much stronger than he" (169). To know that Sue requires his protection from the rest of the world is what Jude seems to want from her most at that moment; but at the same time he realizes that her helplessness is only an illusion, because in her detachment from the emotions of love and desire that distress Jude, Sue is the stronger one. She rests securely in the belief that

'no average man--no man short of a sensual savage--will molest a woman by day or night, at home or abroad, unless she invites him. Until she says by a look "Come on" he is always afraid to, and if you never say it, he never comes.' (167-68)

Sue's remark reveals incredible innocence about men and enormous confidence in her own inviolability, later causing Jude to wonder if "Perhaps Sue was thus venturesome with men because she was childishly ignorant of that side of their natures which wore out women's hearts and lives" (195). Her ensuing entanglement with Phillotson is evidence that Jude is at least partially correct in his analysis.

Sue herself admits to Jude that "'before I married [Phillotson] I had never thought out fully what marriage meant, even though I knew'" (235). Presumably Sue did not realize the degree of commitment--emotional as well as physical--necessary to the construction of a successful marriage. Moreover, we do not know what Sue's expectations about sex with Phillotson happened to be; whether she never

intended to give the look to "come on," or--as seems more likely for Sue--she did not suppose that the respect and gratitude she bore for Phillotson (230) were insufficient ingredients for being anything other to him than a friend.

In her study of five Victorian marriages, *Parallel Lives*, Phyllis Rose analyzes the possible reasons for sexual dissatisfaction among some Victorian married couples, and arrives at the conclusion that "in many cases a distaste for sex developed from a distaste for the first sexual partner and from sexual performance which was essentially forced."¹⁸ Sue hints at feelings akin to those Rose describes when she discloses to Jude the reasons for her unhappiness with Phillotson:

'...there is nothing wrong except my own wickedness, I suppose you'd call it--a repugnance on my part, for a reason I cannot disclose, and what would not be admitted as one by the world in general!... What tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to this man whenever he wishes, good as he is morally!--the dreadful contract to feel in a particular way in a matter whose essence is its voluntariness!...I wish he would beat me, or be faithless to me, or do some open thing that I could talk about as a justification for feeling as I do! (233) [my italics]

Sue also remarks that her reason for refusing to consummate her first marriage with Phillotson would hardly be considered reason enough by the population in general, and she goes on to say that,

'I am certain one ought to be allowed to undo what

one has done so ignorantly! I dare say it happens to lots of women; only they submit, and I kick.
(236)

Her readiness to rebel instead of submitting to her misfortune is probably the most important component of her unconventionality, differentiating her from all of Hardy's heroines we've looked at so far, with the exception, perhaps, of Eustacia Vye.

Sue's dislike of being married to Phillotson is as much the result of a personal aversion for him in particular as it is an indication of her feelings about marriage in general. When she determines to leave Phillotson to live with Jude, Phillotson assumes that it is to reside "'As his wife,'" to which Sue offers the rejoinder, "'As I choose'" (244). What apparently sounds like an affirmation of Phillotson's question (he "writhed" in response to her reply) is actually a qualification of it. Jude, of course, is as misled as Phillotson regarding Sue's intentions. The following is Sue's attempt at clarification:

'My liking for you is not as some women's perhaps. But it is a delight in being with you, of a supremely delicate kind, and I don't want to go further and risk it by--an attempt to intensify it! I quite realized that, as woman with man, it was a risk to come. But, as *me* with *you*, I resolved to trust you to set my wishes above your gratification. Don't discuss it further, dear Jude!' (261)

Sue indeed intends to live with Jude entirely on her own terms. Jude, supposing that Sue's reticence is due to the

fact that they are not married, assumes that the next step after obtaining their respective divorces is wedlock. In Sue's opinion, however, marriage is structured to inhibit desire and to stifle love--as is apparently the case in every marriage we've examined in this thesis. She tells Jude: "'Apart from ourselves, and our unhappy peculiarities, it is foreign to a man's nature to go on loving a person when he is told that he must and shall be that person's lover'" (278). One hears in Sue's words a distinct echo of Shelley as he was writing in 1813:

A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other; any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration....Love is free: to promise for ever to love the same woman is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed.¹⁹

Sue's alternative to marriage does not carry out the more revolutionary concept she borrows from Shelley, but reverts instead to a kind of adolescent idyll wherein she and Jude would "'go on living always as lovers, as we are living now, and only meeting by day. It is so much sweeter--for the woman at least, and when she is sure of the man'" (278).

Sue's middle-class intellectuality is often contrasted with Arabella Fawley's more prosaic view of marriage as a woman's legal and financial protection against want and abuse (288). Yet there is no denying Arabella's

involuntarily grim representation of marriage evident in the advice she offers Phillotson:

'You were too quick about her. I shouldn't have let her go! I should have kept her chained on--her spirit for kicking would have been broke soon enough! There's nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf taskmaster for taming us women. Besides, you've got the laws on your side. Moses knew.
(338)

Equality between the sexes is obviously a concept of which Arabella has no understanding, love apparently figuring very little into her vision in the first place. Less shocking perhaps is her idea of marriage as a business-like affair--after all, "Poor folks must live" (86). What is meant to disturb us is her self-perpetuation, as a woman, of woman's role as a subservient to her husband. Her two marriages to Jude show Arabella being anything but meek and accepting, however, and despite her mercenary appraisal of each prospective husband as an instrument "with a lot of earning power in him for buying her frocks and hats" (78), Hardy does not punish Arabella the way he might be expected to. Perhaps it is because Arabella's motives are not subtly concealed, and the bargains she strikes, though crude (her sexuality in exchange for a home of her own), are effective, and in many ways understandable for a woman of her class background. Moreover, despite the detrimental effect her entrapment of Jude into two marriages has on the course of his life, Arabella can only be said to create physical

obstacles to the fulfillment of his plans; Arabella never touches his soul as Sue does.

Certain aspects of Sue's character are clearly traceable, as we have mentioned, to the *femme fatale*, but her reputation among some of Hardy's readers as a frigid manipulator of men is misleading. Sue's difficulty expressing love is not an intentional withholding of herself to cause pain to others. At the crux of Sue's dilemma is her attempt to fit herself into a male role typical of the time in the structuring of the relationships in her life, which means insuring that she will be the one to make the decisions about the direction any relationship is likely to develop. In a reversal of roles, Jude is the partner who makes the most concessions--who twice gives up his job to follow Sue, who soothes her piques and agitations, and who literally gives his life for love of her. Both Sue and Jude seem to believe in her intelligence as a force superior to his, he being the one to shape his thinking to fit hers. The night she flees from the college Sue confides to Jude that "'I did want and long to ennoble some man to high aims: and when I saw you, and you wanted to be my comrade, I--shall I confess it?--thought that man might be you'" (173). Not for Sue the quiet role of helpmeet; she wishes to mold a man's destiny. But instead of learning from the male example of dominance she abhors a lesson of moderation, and above all, of equality between the sexes, Sue has the tendency to insist on being unopposed in argument, on having

Jude's unquestioning obedience to her wishes as well as his unflagging devotion, and of keeping him waiting when she wants to make his heart ache, as she likes to put it; as if by imitating "male" tactics of control over a more passive partner she has achieved a feminist victory of some sort. Although Sue believes she is modeling her relationships with men after a friendship between two comrades, in actuality she and Jude perpetuate the struggle for control--Jude wanting a wife and a lover he can depend on, and Sue simply wanting to be loved--using sex as the tool of submission.

Margaret Fuller writes in her analysis, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1855): "Were [women] free, were they wise fully to develop the strength and beauty of Woman; they would never wish to be men, or man-like."²⁰ Fuller believes that women do not know how to go about getting what they want in life, and so, like Sue, they sometimes imitate men, the only active, seemingly powerful role-models they have. But for anyone who mistakes what it is that the nineteenth-century woman desired in her life, Fuller has this response:

It is not the transient breath of poetic incense that women want; each can receive that from a lover. It is not life-long sway; it needs but to become a coquette, a shrew, or a good cook, to be sure of that. It is not money, nor notoriety, nor the badges of authority which men have appropriated to themselves. The want is for... that which is the birthright of every being capable of receiving it,--the freedom, the religious, the intelligent freedom of the universe to use its means, to learn its secret, as far as Nature has enabled them, with God alone for their guide and their judge.²¹

Although Sue has not succeeded even by the standards of Margaret Fuller, she represents not a woman who has tried to be modern and completely failed in the process, but rather a stage in women's quest to find the best solution to their problems within the limitations imposed upon them.

Notwithstanding Sue's difficulty in expressing herself freely to Jude, Hardy recognizes also that Jude's desire for a sexual relationship with Sue is neither unreasonable nor a reflection of moral weakness. As Jude begins to realize:

'All that's best and noblest in me loves you, and your freedom from everything that's gross has elevated me....But I should just like a few virtuous people who have condemned me in the pastto have been in my tantalizing position with you through these late weeks!--they'd believe, I think, that I have exercised some little restraint in always giving in to your wishes--living here in one house, and not a soul between us.'(285)

In novels such as *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Hardy is extremely critical of women who make sport of men's emotions, as we have seen, and perhaps that is why it is so easy to hold Sue responsible for Jude's ruin. Superficial evidence would seem to point to that end, as Jude himself suspects:

Strange that his first aspiration--towards academical proficiency--had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration--towards apostleship--had also been checked by a woman. 'Is it,' he said, 'that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back

those who want to progress?' (238)

Jude essentially answers his own question. It is indeed the artificial system and not women who thwart his future plans. The same can be said of Arabella no less than Eustacia or Ethelberta, who use their physical attractions to secure a man to better their social and material circumstances--or of Sue when she marries Phillotson to quiet the scandal forming around her and Jude because of the training-school incident.

The flirt is a figure so entrenched in literature of the past that questions about her motives, apart from selfish ones of pleasure and/or financial gain, are brought forward only rarely. Hardy probes the idea of the flirtatious woman in Sue for answers that do not necessarily absolve her of the charge of selfishness, but which remind us of just how tenuous was the position of the late-Victorian woman trying to come to terms with the future without being overly burdened by the past.

Kathleen Blake notes:

Men feel that a woman triumphs in the power of frigidity by remaining untouchable while making a man know his own vulnerability, but it should also be understood that....[s]he may need, even desperately, for a man to warm her...²²

As Sue admits to Jude, "'Some women's love of being loved is insatiable; and so, often, is their love of loving'" (225). It happens sometimes, then, that "a woman's love of being loved gets the better of her conscience, and though she is

agonized at the thought of treating a man cruelly, she encourages him to love her while she doesn't love him at all" (262). More than simply wanting to be thought desirable, Sue requires a man's love, as we have mentioned, in order to reaffirm her belief in her own strength, revealing, as Blake describes it, an "impulse [that] owes less to the power of the strong than to the need of the much weakened." ²³

Twice Sue defends her actions to Jude by remarking that "I haven't the courage of my views" (202, 260). To love whom she chooses, to sleep with the man she loves whether or not they are legally joined is the social ideal Sue strives toward for herself. Courage fails her, of course, when she tries to act upon her beliefs. What seems right to her in theory often seems wrong in practice, though it is beyond even her reasoning powers to explain why, leaving the floundering Jude to wonder: "Is a woman a thinking unit at all, or a fraction always wanting its integer?" (271). Boumelha supplies the answer:

Sue's psychological oppression and her failure to combat it effectively add up to a convincing account of a plight many women found, and still find themselves in. Rationally able to demolish damaging beliefs about themselves and their role, women can recognize and understand their emotional involvement in a system of exploitation. But that does not necessarily mean that they can also liberate themselves from emotional complicity in their own oppression. ²⁴

Indeed, possessing an awareness of society's treatment of women unmatched by any other of Hardy's heroines, Sue is little closer to achieving a solution for herself than is a character like Tess Durbeyfield. "'Strange difference of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably'" (419), Jude later explains to Mrs Edlin, but it is not sex, we know, that causes this situation. Rather, we should attribute the narrowing of women's views--to accept Jude's generalization--to women's conditioning in the face of obstacles: better finally to give in to the opposing force than to defy it, it has been taught. Sue's conclusion, that "We must conform," is the modern equivalent of Tess's "Once victim, always victim." Instead of regarding Sue's breakdown as being merely a return to a conventional way of thinking that she had never really abandoned, it is more in keeping with Hardy to see her behavior as typical of the lot of most of his characters, male or female, who experience defeat of their ambitions and bow to limitations they originally sought to overcome.

Despite what Jude says about his and Sue's ideas being "fifty years too soon to be any good to us" (419), his is a vague and unsatisfactory consolation after all. In Hardy's previous novels, fate was given a larger part to play in his characters' destiny, often seeming to be the force that ultimately turned the cards against them. Although Sue and Jude refer to the misfortune that apparently attaches itself

like a curse to married couples in their families, this rather fanciful notion of inherited incompatibility has no bearing on the later action of the story. More to the point is society's disapproval of their poverty and the ambiguity of their relationship, of which Hardy gives us tangible evidence in Jude's difficulty finding work, the teasing of Little Father Time by his schoolmates, Sue's snubbing by her neighbors, and her eventual difficulty finding a landlord willing to house her and her children. At the same time, a practical mind wonders why Jude and Sue cling to a region that is so largely unaccepting of them, for as their friend the Widow Edlin remarks to Sue after she has determined to remarry Phillotson: "'If you didn't like to commit yourself to the binding vow again [with Jude], just at first, 'twas all the more credit to your consciences, considering your reasons, and you med ha' lived on, and made it all right at last. After all, it concerned nobody but your own two selves'" (385). Mrs. Edlin, like the villagers in *Two on a Tower*, adds a new--and puzzling--perspective to the situation of the two lovers. Her remark suggests the possibility that Jude and Sue could, perhaps, begin a new life where they are unknown. By causing them to remain, Hardy seems to indicate that the couple's experiences are not related solely to the attitudes of one region, but are expressive, in Jeannette King's words, of "the feeling of collective man, of the innate injustice in man's nature."²⁵

With the death of Sue's children and Father Time, her life is shattered. The solace she seeks in Christianity is depicted negatively as an escape rather than a means of healing from her loss, and Hardy shows religious teaching as encouraging Sue to believe in her badness and guilt. By the end of the novel, Sue has completely rejected her earlier life with Jude--both its joy and its sorrow, and she denies to Jude that her love for him was formed out of anything but the "selfish and cruel wish" to make him love her without loving him in return (373). Sue's parting advice to Jude is that he and the rest of mankind are in great need of learning 'self-mastery' in order to control what she perceives as unhealthy sexual impulses. As the novel reveals, however, it is these constant efforts to achieve self-mastery that contribute to the destruction of her life and Jude's.

Sue's sad end has as much in common with other fictional nineteenth-century New Women as it does with the experiences of Hardy's other heroines. Hardy saw that the opportunities for women, though greater, perhaps, than they once were, are nevertheless not great enough for the aspirations of the women who were courageous enough, or restless enough, to take advantage of them. It is not weakness that prevents Sue from defying the outside world in the end, but a diminished belief in her own ability to effect changes in the world. While it is true that Jude dies defying conventional religion and morality, his final

words from the Book of Job suggest a future without great promise for humankind. Hardy's own poem, "We Are Getting to the End," from the *Winter Words* selection published in 1928, states in poetic form a feeling already developing in *Jude*:

We are getting to the end of visioning
The impossible within this universe,
Such as that better whiles may follow worse,
And that our race may mend by reasoning....
Yes. We are getting to the end of dreams!

Hardy's view of the future is a doubtful one; hopes for significant social change in *Jude the Obscure*, although Jude mentions that "'It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one'" (345), seem unreal; the seeds of disillusionment have already taken root.

Sue is finally as much the victim of ideas and superstitions that should have been done away with long ago, but which persisted, as she is the victim of herself, and the fears and self-doubt she is unable to conquer. Despite her modernism, Sue has allowed herself, like Hardy's other heroines discussed in this thesis, to become imprisoned by her love for a man. Love is always essential to Hardy's women, and yet the love they find is never a solution to the sadness, the boredom, or the incompleteness they experience in their lives. Clearly, there are no perfect solutions for the characters Hardy has depicted, but that they retain the ability to love is a reflection of the human spirit's unquenchable hope in the redeeming power of that emotion. There is a positive element to be drawn from his characters'

efforts to love regardless of the obstacles they encounter, but there are also tragic reminders of the idealists in Hardy's fiction who strive toward a dream and fail.

In spite of the moral and emotional strength exhibited by Hardy's women in various instances, they are ultimately defeated by conventions they cannot change, and by the values nineteenth-century British society expected its women to uphold; among them, virtuousness--both moral and physical--and absolute loyalty to and dependence upon husband and family--values which Hardy portrayed as forcing women to stifle creative, intellectual, and sexual desires. Equally important, as we have seen, is that Hardy's women, in trying to create unions with men they think will free them, end up fearing that the unconventionality which helped them to gain these men's love in the first place will finally cause their lovers to reject them. And they are right.

Regardless of the pessimism we have come to associate with Hardy's vision of the world, it is also important to remember that Hardy's heroines, apart from their literary value, represent the emergence of a more liberal way of thinking about women, and a movement towards greater confidence in women's abilities that was developing in the years Hardy was writing, and which he can undoubtedly be credited with helping to perpetuate. If Hardy was not a feminist, he was, nevertheless, a lover of humankind.

Notes - Introduction

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3 Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (1878; London: Macmillan, 1979) 84.

4 Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 82.

5 Thomas Hardy, *Two on a Tower* (1882; London: Macmillan, 1960) 6.

6 Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 125.

7 Sally Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women's Reading, 1835-1880* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green UP, 1981) 61.

8 Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982) 8.

9 George Wotton, *Thomas Hardy: Towards a Materialist Criticism* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes, 1985)

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20 Hardy, *Two on a Tower*, 18. All further references to this edition will be included parenthetically in chapter I.

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22 Margaret Fuller Ossoli, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Source, 1970) 43.

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24 Thomas Hardy, preface, *Two on a Tower*, by Thomas Hardy (1882; London: Macmillan, 1960) v.

25 Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 82. All further references to this edition will be included parenthetically within chapter I.

26 John Paterson, *The Making of The Return of the Native* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1963) 105-106.

27 Boumelha 52.

28 Mitchell 107.

29 David Cecil, *Hardy the Novelist: An Essay in Criticism* (London: Constable, 1946) 28.

30 Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1957) 288-89.

31 Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873; New York: Popular, n.d.) 312-313.

32 Hardy, *Tess*, 256.

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4 Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891; New York: Signet-NAL, 1980) 360.

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6 Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts*, ed. Harold Orel (London: Macmillan, 1978) 29.

7 Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn, "Feminist Scholarship and the Social Construction of Woman," *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, eds. Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn (New York: Routledge, 1988) 7.

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9 Geoffrey Thurley, *The Psychology of Hardy's Novels: The Nervous and the Statuesque* (Queensland, St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1975) 119.

10 Harvey Curtis Webster, *On a Darkling Plain: The Art and Thought of Thomas Hardy* (1947; Chicago: U of P, 1964) 168.

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13 Thomas Hardy, *Desperate Remedies* (1871; London: Macmillan, 1986) 117.

14 Hardy, *Desperate Remedies*, 113.

15 Hardy, *Desperate Remedies*, 114.

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- 20 Boumelha 103-104.
- 21 Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895; London: Macmillan, 1982) 425.
- 22 Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 241.
- 23 Boumelha 105.
- 24 Ian Gregor, *The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction* (London: Faber, 1974) 162.
- 25 Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy: 1840-1928* (London: Macmillan, 1962) 220.
- 26 Jean E. Kennard, *Victims of Convention* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1978) 70.
- 27 Thomas Hardy, "The Pine Planters (Marty South's Reverie)," *The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy*, ed. James Gibson (New York: Macmillan, 1982) 271-273.
- 28 Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life*, 302.
- 29 F.R. Southerington, *Hardy's Vision of Man* (New York: Barnes, 1971) 52.
- 30 Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873; New York: Popular, n.d.) 64. All further references to *Blue Eyes* in this chapter will be included parenthetically in the text.
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- 32 Peter T. Cominos, "Innocent Femina Sensualis in Unconscious Conflict," *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1972) 161.
- 33 Southerington 51.
- 34 Thomas Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872; New York, Oxford UP, 1985) 189.
- 35 Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 210.

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- 37 Walter E. Houghton. *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1957) 390.
- 38 Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 258.
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- 40 Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 261.
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- 49 Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 42. All further references in this chapter to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* will be included parenthetically in the text.
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- 51 Laura Claridge, "Tess: A Less than Pure Woman Ambivalently Presented," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 28; 3 (1986): 329.
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14 Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life*, 272.

15 Desmond Hawkins, *Thomas Hardy* (London: 1950) 17; qtd. in Blake, "Sue Bridehead: 'The Woman of the Feminist

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18 Phyllis Rose, *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (New York: Vintage-Random, 1984) 13.

19 Percy Shelley, *Queen Mab* (1813), qtd. in Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1957) 361.

20 Margaret Fuller Ossoli, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1855; New York: Source, 1970) 63.

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