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Thomas Hardy and His Reviewers:
Concepts of the Art of the Novel in the
Criticism of Hardy's Novels from 1871 to 1912.

A thesis submitted to the University of London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

There is a tradition that Hardy's reception as a novelist was primarily characterized by attacks on the morality and philosophy of his novels or on his failure to produce works which conformed to the conventional popular novel of the day. This belief is most detrimental when it is argued that Hardy indiscriminately bowdlerized his novels to counteract these attacks and to appease editors, readers, and critics. This narrow approach to the critical reception of Hardy's novels ignores the broader artistic considerations, the concern with various concepts of the art of the novel, in the criticism of his novels from the time of the publication of his first novel in 1871 until that of his last major revisions for the Wessex Edition in 1912.

To arrive at a precise understanding of criticism of Hardy's novels during the time he was writing and of the nature of Hardy's reaction, this study begins with a discussion of Hardy's response to criticism. The second chapter defines the critical climate into which Hardy's novels were first introduced through an examination of the status of the novel and its functions. The remaining chapters analyze various areas of concern in the criticism of Hardy's novels, indicating to what extent specific criticism reflects or deviates from tendencies in general criticism. Concepts of representation and the controversy over realism and idealism, discussed in the third and fourth chapters, greatly influenced considerations of the relationship of art and morality, the relationship of art and philosophy, and concepts of tragedy. They also formed the basis of many discussions of artistic and

technical questions concerning plot, character and characterization, use of setting, point of view, and style. This study thus illustrates the importance of various concepts of the art of the novel which governed the critical reception of Hardy's novels as well as the intimate relationship between this reception and the transitional nature of novel criticism in the late nineteenth century.

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Chapter I

Thomas Hardy and His Critics: An Introduction

'But I think he is right in some of his arguments, though wrong in others. And because he has some claim to my respect I regret all the more that he should think so mistakenly of my motives in one or two instances. It is more vexing to be misunderstood than to be misrepresented; and he misunderstands me. I cannot be easy whilst a person goes to rest night after night attributing to me intentions I never had.'¹

Throughout his writing career, Thomas Hardy was extremely sensitive to criticism of his work. This is especially true of his novels, which he felt were misunderstood, misrepresented, and unjustly censured. Certain myths have evolved concerning the critical reception of Hardy's novels. It is generally assumed that the criticism and Hardy's consequent sensitivity were primarily the result of opposition to Hardy's moral or philosophical stances or to his refusal to provide his readers with the conventional popular novel of the day, complete with impeccable heroine and hero, villain, and resolution of their problems with a happy ending. Such assumptions fail to take into account the broader artistic implications of this opposition; they overlook both Hardy's and nineteenth-century critics' concepts of the relationship of art and morality, the relationship of art and philosophy, and the nature of tragedy. Moreover, such assumptions overlook one of the major controversies of the middle and late nineteenth century--the whole issue over realism and idealism in the novel. Discussions of these various aspects greatly influenced considerations of artistry and technique.

By the time that Hardy published his first volume of poetry, Wessex Poems, in 1898, all his ideals of art, all his

1. Thomas Hardy, A Pair of Blue Eyes (London, 1975), p.178.

notions of the aims and functions of his art, had been challenged, condoned, or impartially analyzed. Critical assessments of his poetry tend to reveal the same hostilities as those of his prose writing. Even the most frequent criticism given of his poetry--that Hardy had mastered the art of prose writing and should not turn to poetry²--had its counterpart in discussions of his prose style. By 1898, Hardy knew his critics well enough to be able to anticipate their reactions:

He observes that he had been under no delusion about the coldness and even opposition he would have to encounter--at any rate from some voices--in openly issuing verse after printing nothing (with trifling exceptions) but prose for so many years.

Almost all the fault-finding was, in fact, based on the one great antecedent conclusion that an author who has published prose first, and that largely, must necessarily express himself badly in verse, no reservation being added to except cases in which he may have published prose for temporary or compulsory reasons, or prose of a poetical kind, or have written verse first of all, or for a long time intermediately.)

Because the same basic hostilities arose in the criticism of Hardy's prose and poetry and because Hardy's ideals of art were essentially the same for his prose as for his poetry, the most valuable study of Hardy and his critics is that which concentrates on the period during which Hardy was evolving his ideals of art, the period of his novel writing. Furthermore, this was

2. One of the earliest reviews of Hardy's Wessex Poems set the tone of much of the criticism that followed. This critic opened his review with the comment: 'As a rule their [novelists'] whole training and nature is not only un-lyrical but anti-lyrical. Their desire is to tell a story or paint a character, and to do so with detailed elaboration, with the aid of constant side-lights, rejecting nothing as common or mean which will serve that central purpose. It is a method anti-poetic even in the case of the ballad.' He went on to apply this idea to Hardy's poems. 'Reviews. Mr. Hardy as a Poet', The Academy, 56 (January 14, 1899), p.43.
3. Florence Emily Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy (1962; rpt. London, 1975), p.299--hereafter cited as Life.

the period when critics were becoming acquainted with and trying to confront these ideals as manifested in Hardy's novels. General surveys of Hardy's novels between the time of his last published novel, The Well-Beloved, in 1897 and the time of the publication of the Wessex Edition in 1912 presented few new approaches or hostilities; their main value is to underscore the critical assumptions already established from 1871 to 1897.

Hardy came to believe that he had suffered so much abuse from critics that he could be considered one of the most maligned writers of the age. Recollecting a conversation that he had with Swinburne in 1905, he wrote: 'We laughed and con- doled with each other on having been the two most abused of living writers; he for Poems and Ballads, I for Jude the Ob- scure.'⁴ Hardy's hostile remarks about critics of his work were not confined to those who had reacted adversely to Jude. His acute sensitivity to criticism was well known to friends and critics alike. Florence Hardy remarks upon the 'Apology' prefixed to Late Lyrics and Earlier:

Some of his friends regretted this preface, thinking that it betrayed an oversensitiveness to criticism which it were better the world should not know. But sensitiveness was one of Hardy's chief characteristics, and without it his poems would never have been written, nor, indeed, the greatest of his novels. He used to say that it was not so much the force of the blow that counted, as the nature of the material that received the blow.⁵

4. Life, p.325. Cf. The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Volume One, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford, 1978), p.x--hereafter cited as Collected Letters, Volume One.
5. Life, p.415. One of these friends would have been James Barrie. See Barrie's letter to Florence Hardy in 1928 re- garding The Early Life of Thomas Hardy in Letters of J.M. Barrie, ed. Viola Meynell (London, 1942), p.152. Another friend who would have been well aware of Hardy's sensitiv- ity was Edmund Gosse. Robert Gittings, The Older Hardy (London, 1978), p.53, aptly comments on their relationship: 'One cannot be sure, in spite of their long friendship and

It did not take the intimacy of friendship to reveal that Hardy was keenly aware of and concerned about what his critics wrote; as early as 1871, John Morley was writing to Macmillan that Hardy should 'shut his ears to the fooleries of critics, as his letter to you proves he does not do'.⁶ If the public were ignorant of Hardy's consciousness of criticism, it could not remain so after the appearance of the prefaces to Tess in 1891, 1892, and 1895 at which time less astute men than John Morley began to comment on Hardy's sensitivity. In 1895, one reviewer noted, 'The only complaint any one could make of Mr. Hardy is that he does not know how great a man he is. He takes much too severely the attacks of small critics', and another, 'Perhaps Mr. Hardy is a little unjust to the critics who did not like Tess'.⁷ Thus, by 1897 and the close of Hardy's novel-writing career, his public and critics could not help but to be well aware of Hardy's sensitivity to criticism.

Hardy was, naturally enough, particularly sensitive to personal attacks and misrepresentations of his character and the facts of his life. It was the personal note of one of the

loyalty, that this association was wholly good for either. Both were abnormally sensitive to hostile criticism. . . . Each leapt to the other's rescue over any fancied slight.' Hardy addressed many letters to Gosse concerning the criticism of his works and Gosse responded with condolence. See, for examples, Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.110, 154, 156, 159, 253, 255, and Evan Charteris, The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse (London, 1931), pp.206, 225-6, 421. Unpublished letters at the Dorset County Museum from Gosse to Hardy dated March 22, 1887, April 1, 1897, and January 21, 1904 also reflect this tendency in their friendship.

6. Charles Morgan, The House of Macmillan (London, 1943), p. 97. Part of this letter, with slight alterations, is reprinted in Life, p.86.

7. 'Authors and their Works. Thomas Hardy', The Magazine of Music, 12, No.7 (July, 1895), p.143; 'The New Hardy', The National Observer, 14, No.339 (May 18, 1895), p.12.

earliest reviews of his books, The Spectator's review of Desperate Remedies, which most irritated him:

After its first impact, which was with good reason staggering, it does not seem to have worried Hardy much or at any rate for long (though one of the personalities insinuated by the reviewer, in clumsy humour, that the novel must have been 'a desperate remedy for an emaciated purse', may well have been galling enough).⁸

Later, he claimed that 'quizzing personal gossip', especially the conjecture that he was 'a house-decorator', influenced his decision 'to put aside a woodland story he had thought of' and to write The Hand of Ethelberta.⁹ Hardy firmly believed that neither personal remarks nor biographical information were in the least useful to attain a true estimate of a work; as he wrote to Kegan Paul in 1881, 'I have an opinion that the less people know of a writer's antecedents (till he is dead) the better'.¹⁰

More important than Hardy's antipathy to the inclusion of personal information in a review was his keen awareness that his novels were often misrepresented as containing ideas, opinions, or sentiments which he had no intention of trying to convey. Hardy realized that misrepresentation of his work was often the result of critics who had certain theological, philosophical, political, social, or moral banners to carry, who believed that he was carrying a banner of his own which supported or conflicted with theirs, and who praised or condemned his work accordingly. Especially after the publication of Tess

8. Life, p.84. Cf. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.12. The review to which he refers is John Hutton, 'Books. Desperate Remedies', The Spectator, 44, No.2234 (April 22, 1871), pp. 481-3.
9. Life, p.102. Hardy's sensitivity to misrepresentations of his life and experiences also helped to provoke the writing of his biography. See Life, p.vii.
10. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.89.

was Hardy to feel the full critical force of those who believed that he was attacking traditional Christian beliefs and substituting for them a theology or philosophy of his own:

Among other curious results from the publication of the book was that it started a rumour of Hardy's theological beliefs, which lived, and spread, and grew, so that it was never completely extinguished.¹¹

Hardy also felt that he was misrepresented as being an advocate for certain social reforms and as attempting to undermine social conventions and institutions. This was particularly the case after Jude the Obscure which several critics saw as an attack on both marriage and educational institutions, a criticism which Hardy felt to be an untrue interpretation of the book.¹²

It was, however, the attacks on the morality of his books which Hardy saw as most unjustified. The first review to suggest immorality was John Hutton's review of Desperate Remedies in The Spectator of which Hardy said:

But, alas, on the 22nd the Spectator brought down its heaviest-leaded pastoral staff on the prematurely happy volumes, the reason for this violence being mainly the author's daring to suppose it possible that an unmarried lady owning an estate could have an illegitimate child.¹³

The next major wave of criticism against the morality of Hardy's works came with the publication of Two on a Tower and, again, Hardy could not understand why

. . . eminent critics . . . print the most cutting rebukes you can conceive--show me (to my amazement) that I am

11. Life, p.243; Hardy goes on to defend his position, pp. 243-4. Cf. Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.257, 265. See Life, p.383 for a general comment which well summarizes Hardy's attitude towards those who approached a work with a theological or political bias.
12. See, for examples, Life, p.271, and the 1912 'Postscript' to Jude the Obscure included in Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings, ed. Harold Orel (1966; rpt. London, 1967), pp. 34-5--hereafter cited as Personal Writings.
13. Life, p.84.

quite an immoral person: till I conclude that we are never again to be allowed to laugh & say with Launce-- 'it is a wise father that knows his own child'.¹⁴

The controversies over the morality of Tess and Jude disturbed Hardy the most and he took every occasion to defend the morality of these books.¹⁵ If some critics were to insist upon interpreting and judging his books in accordance with their own biases and prejudices, Hardy could be just as insistent in maintaining that his work was being misrepresented.

From all appearances, these misrepresentations troubled Hardy the most; certainly these criticisms made him most vociferous. Occasionally, however, an undertone is caught in these comments or a remark is made by Hardy which reveals that he, like his heroine Elfride Swancourt, believed that "it is more vexing to be misunderstood than to be misrepresented",¹⁶ that Hardy felt more keenly and deeply the criticism of those who tried to confront his novels impartially as works of art, but who failed to perceive and understand his ideals, his aims and intentions. Sometimes Hardy's concern that his books have been misunderstood is revealed in his dismay that the real substance and artistry of his work have been overlooked because of the moral indignation of his critics. Thus, he wrote in his 1912 'Postscript' to Jude:

In my own eyes the sad feature of the attack was that the greater part of the story--that which presented the shattered ideals of the two chief characters, and had been more especially, and indeed almost exclusively, the part of interest to myself--was practically ignored by the adverse

14. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.110; cf. p.114.
15. See, for examples, Life, pp.272, 273; Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.250, 252, 253; Personal Writings, pp.26-9, 33-5; Frederick Dolman, 'An Evening with Thomas Hardy', The Young Man, 8, No.87 (March, 1894), pp.76-8.
16. See quotation from A Pair of Blue Eyes on p.1 of this study.

press of the two countries; the while that some twenty or thirty pages of sorry detail deemed necessary to complete the narrative, and show the antitheses in Jude's¹⁷ life, were almost the sole portions read and regarded.

When a critic was able to overcome this moral indignation and attempt to view his novel as a work of art, Hardy was pleased. He wrote to William Blackwood concerning a generally condemnatory review of Tess:

Among the many reviews of the novel that I have read I do not remember one by a critic holding opinions different from my own in which the true principle for such cases has been so well recognized--that of frankly alluding to the difference of opinion on dogma, &c., & then criticising the work on purely artistic grounds.¹⁸

Hardy also believed that critics had a tendency to judge books by minute analysis which prevented their seeing a book as an artistic whole. He could not condone this 'impotent or mischievous criticism' which he believed to be

. . . the satirizing of individuality, the lack of whole-seeing in contemporary estimates of poetry and kindred work, the knowingness affected by junior reviewers, the overgrowth of meticulousness in their peerings for an opinion, as if it were a cultivated habit in them to scrutinize the toolmarks and be blind to the building, to hearken for the key-creaks and be deaf to the diapason, to judge the landscape by a nocturnal exploration with a flash-lantern. In other words, to carry on the old game of sampling the poem or drama by quoting the worst line or worst passage only . . . of reading meanings into a book that its author never dreamt of writing there. I might go on interminably.¹⁹

17. Personal Writings, p.33.

18. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.259. The review to which he refers is 'The Old Saloon: "Tess of the D'Urbervilles"', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 151 (March, 1892), pp.464-74. It is generally believed that this review was the work of Mrs. M.O.W. Oliphant who was the usual writer of 'The Old Saloon' articles in this magazine. For other remarks which reveal Hardy's pleasure in appreciative criticism and a responsive reading public, see, for examples, Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.67, 89; Personal Writings, p.26.

19. Personal Writings, p.56. Cf. Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.159, 258.

In general, Hardy's opinion of the status of criticism, especially of novel criticism, in his age was not very high. His sentiments about reviewers and reviewing are perhaps best summarized in a notation made in 1880:

At this time he writes down, 'A Hint for Reviewers-- adapted from Carlyle:

'Observe what is true, not what is false; what is to be loved and held fast, and earnestly laid to heart; not what is to be contemned, and derided, and sportfully cast out-of-doors.'²⁰

All these comments reveal that, while he might resent misrepresentations of his character and works, it was the criticism which failed to see the inner truth and beauty of his art which most deeply wounded him; Hardy yearned for true appreciation and true understanding.

Because of the viciousness of some of the attacks made on Hardy's novels which concentrated on the morality, the supposed philosophy, and the failure to adhere to conventional tone and format and because of Hardy's equally vicious responses to these attacks, it is usually assumed that Hardy was writing in an atmosphere totally uncongenial to an unbiased critical assessment of his art. Work which has been written on the subject of Hardy and his critics between the years 1871 and 1912 tends to propagate such an assumption. Studies of Hardy and his critics have concentrated on these issues, making no attempt, or only the most superficial attempts, to examine the broader artistic issues mentioned earlier; nor has any serious attempt been made to connect these issues with technical aspects in the criticism of Hardy.

20. Life, p.137. For Hardy's low opinion of novel criticism, see, as an example, his remarks in an 1886 letter to Robert Louis Stevenson, Collected Letters, Volume One, p. 147.

The earliest studies²¹ to assess the criticism of Hardy's novels tend to assume that the only characteristics of this criticism are attacks, first, on the immorality and, secondly, on the pessimistic philosophy of his novels. These studies do not define the critical background against which Hardy's novels were first produced because it is assumed that, except for the notorious Victorian prudery and optimism, this background cannot be defined. Generally, these studies simply break down into chronological surveys of reviews. Only since 1950, have there been any serious attempts²² to reconstruct a critical background and to examine Hardy and his critics within the context of a well-defined critical atmosphere. Again, however, the emphasis, with varying degrees of elaboration, has been on the non-literary

21. These studies include Katharine Bricker, 'Criticism of Thomas Hardy in the Major British Reviews. 1871-1930', Master's Essay, Columbia University, New York, 1932; Ruth L. Edwards, 'The History of Thomas Hardy's Critical Reputation as a Novelist', Master's Thesis, University of Southern California, 1935; Evelyn Marie Wilson, 'The Reception of Thomas Hardy's Novels in America', Master's Thesis, University of Illinois, 1939; Donald James Winslow, 'Thomas Hardy: His British and American Critics', Diss. Boston University Graduate School, 1942; Phoebe Forrestine Keeler, 'Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Interpretations, Evaluations and Analyses since 1891', Master's Thesis, Boston University Graduate School, 1943. The relevant chapters in Carl J. Weber, Hardy in America (Waterville, Maine, 1946), are also a product of this era.
22. These studies include Roy Theodore Hugh Stevens, 'Contemporary Criticism of Hardy, Gissing and "Mark Rutherford" as Novelists: 1870-1900', Diss. Christ's College, University of Cambridge, 1953; James Raymond Hodgins, 'A Study of the Periodical Reception of the Novels of Thomas Hardy, George Gissing, and George Moore', Diss. Michigan State University, 1960; Arthur Frederick Minerof, 'Thomas Hardy's Novels: A Study in Critical Reception and Author Response, 1871-1900', Diss. New York University, 1963; Hildegard Schill, 'The Criticism of Thomas Hardy's Novels in England from 1871-1958', Diss. Birkbeck College, University of London, 1963; Ambrose A. Beny, 'The Evolution of Hardy Criticism: 1871-1966', Master of Philosophy Thesis, University of Leeds, 1969; John Peck, 'Novel Criticism in the Eighteen-Eighties', Diss. Bedford College, University of London, 1975.

aspects of this background and, although some of these studies are very thorough in this respect, they rarely deviate from a non-literary approach to examine the artistic implications of the material that they are analyzing. Even when the controversial issue of realism is considered, it is within these limits. Thus, these studies have all concentrated on the hostilities arising between Hardy and his critics because of differences in opinion over social, moral, philosophical, and religious matters or Hardy's refusal to give his readers optimistic resolutions, those hostilities which led Hardy to believe that he was misrepresented; little or no emphasis has been placed on the broader artistic implications which resulted in Hardy's deeply-felt belief that he was misunderstood.

A serious repercussion of this emphasis in studies of Hardy and his critics is that attempts have been made to demonstrate that Hardy was very willing to bowdlerize or adapt his novels to conform to nineteenth-century tastes. It has been argued by some that Hardy was never dedicated to the art of novel writing, that he always desired to establish himself as a poet but circumstances forced him into novel writing, and that, therefore, he wrote his novels solely for pecuniary reasons and sought only to please and entertain, making sacrifices wherever necessary to cater to the demands of late nineteenth-century tastes in popular fiction. These sacrifices were made, it is contended, chiefly by avoiding frank treatment of passionate situations and articulation of unorthodox ideas and by including sensational and sentimental elements in his narratives. The myth that Hardy was not true to his own ideals as an artist is based primarily on the assumption that his main disagreements with critics were over moral and philosophical issues and his

deviation from the conventional novel pattern of the day.²³

One of the earliest and most thoroughly developed examples of these views is Mary Ellen Chase's examination of The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess, and Jude. She does concede that many of the alterations were made for serialization, rather than for the novel in its finished form--alterations in incident and plot 'evidently made either to add sensationalism and suspense to his story or to eliminate the extremely unorthodox, the unconventional, and the improper'--and that some 'minor alterations . . . were made simply because of the author's desire to improve the literary quality of his novel before that novel should be published in book form'. Nevertheless, her general conclusion is that Hardy's bowdlerization 'has belied his own philosophy of life, his conception of the irony and futility of human effort against the Power that rules the world' and that, in so doing, 'he has descended to please and placate a reading public for whose taste and judgment he has only disdain' and has perverted his own ideal of 'an artist with a mighty theory of his art--that of its adherence to the Truth'.²⁴

Hardy, himself, has contributed to the assumption that he was willing to appease his readers, editors, and critics by

23. These arguments are a summary of those of Arthur Minerof, 'Thomas Hardy's Novels: A Study in Critical Reception and Author Response, 1871-1900'; and Walter Albert Stanbury, Jr., 'Thomas Hardy and His Magazine Public, 1881-1891', Master's Thesis, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Duke University, 1932. Stanbury does, however, differentiate between the serial and volume forms of Hardy's novels, noting that 'the magazine versions of his stories were, to some extent, the mind of a part of the public expressing itself through Hardy, whereas in the novels as they stand today Hardy spoke for himself' (p.135). Minerof makes no such concessions.

24. Mary Ellen Chase, Thomas Hardy from Serial to Novel (1927; rpt. New York, 1964), pp.182, 198, 200.

making concessions and that these concessions were necessitated by the restrictions that a conservative-minded public placed on fiction. His most famous statement occurs in a letter to Leslie Stephen, written at the time of the serialization of Far from the Madding Crowd:

The truth is that I am willing, and indeed anxious, to give up any points which may be desirable in a story when read as a whole, for the sake of others which shall please those who read it in numbers. Perhaps I may have higher aims some day, and be a great stickler for the proper artistic balance of the completed work, but for the present circumstances lead me to wish merely to be considered a good hand at a serial.²⁵

Writers who have used this remark about his merely wishing 'to be considered a good hand at a serial' as the chief support for their thesis that Hardy was not a dedicated artist usually ignore his qualification ('Perhaps I may have higher aims some day, and be a great stickler for the proper artistic balance of the completed work . . .') and disregard the circumstances under which it was written. Robert Gittings aptly comments:

Nothing in Hardy's life has been more misinterpreted than this last sentence. Book after book repeats this as a guiding principle in his writing life, and patronizes him for having such low and utilitarian aims. The fact is, it should simply be taken as a gambit in his temporary manoeuvres with Stephen, to allay the editor's alarms, and to insure a profitable sale for his novel elsewhere; for this was Hardy's first big success in America, carefully prepared by skilful advertising. He needed the money; for now he was taking the plunge and intended soon to marry.²⁶

25. Life, p.100. For Hardy's opinion of the detrimental influence of the magazine and circulating library on fiction, see his remarks in 'Candour in English Fiction', Personal Writings, pp.128-33. The passage quoted above must be contrasted with a statement he made to George Gissing in 1886: 'It is a great pleasure to me to find from what you say that you are bent upon high artistic aims, & not merely striving for circulating-library popularity.' Collected Letters, Volume One, p.149. Gissing's letter to Hardy is partially quoted in Life, p. 182.

26. Robert Gittings, Young Thomas Hardy (London, 1975), p.196.

Hardy's remark must be weighed against other comments which show him to be a conscientious artist and against some of the circumstances in his career as a novelist. Several comments made by Hardy illustrate that, even while serializing, he wished to take precautions so as not to jeopardize artistry to meet the requirements of serial publication.²⁷ Hardy also stressed that, while he might have to make concessions for serial publication, this was not the end product; it was the novel as finally published, with all its revisions and all possible care bestowed upon it, which must be judged. Thus he wrote to Thomas Macquoid concerning Tess:

I am glad you like Tess--though I have not been able to put on paper all that she is, or was, to me. Clare's character suffers owing to a mock marriage having been substituted for the seduction pure & simple of the original MS.--which I did for the sake of the Young Girl. The true reading will be restored in the volumes.²⁸

To assert that Hardy was a conscientious artist and remained so, despite the fact that all his novels from A Pair of Blue Eyes onwards appeared in periodical form before being published, does not ignore the circumstances under which Hardy was writing. Early in his career, Hardy was concerned with attaining for himself a position as a recognized writer. He was also, as he says in his 1889 preface to Desperate Remedies, 'feeling his way to a method'.²⁹ Consequently, during this

27. See, for examples, his letters to the Harpers about the projected serialization of A Laodicean and to Thomas Aldrich concerning the serialization of Two on a Tower. Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.75, 101.

28. Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.245-6. See, also, his remark about The Mayor of Casterbridge in Life, p.179. This comment, although another example of Hardy's disgruntled statements about his novel writing, does reveal that Hardy was a conscientious artist in revising and did take pride in a plot that 'was quite coherent and organic, in spite of its complication'.

29. Personal Writings, p.3.

early period, he was more willing to listen to and take the advice of critics, editors, and friends than he was later to do. So, for instance, in deference to George Meredith's recommendation to him, after reading The Poor Man and the Lady, 'to "write a story with a plot"', Hardy wrote Desperate Remedies:

. . . the powerfully, not to say wildly, melodramatic situations had been concocted in a style which was quite against his natural grain, through too crude an interpretation of George Meredith's advice.³⁰

Having discovered that the writing of sensational crime novels went 'quite against his natural grain' and having listened to critics who praised the rural scenes of Desperate Remedies, Hardy decided to develop this latter talent in Under the Greenwood Tree.³¹ In A Pair of Blue Eyes, he again experimented with rural scenes, this time attempting a compromise between the melodrama of Desperate Remedies and the slight plot of Under the Greenwood Tree.³² With the encouragement of Leslie Stephen to follow his own inclinations and judgments while writing Far from the Madding Crowd, Hardy began to see, as Stephen remarked, that he had 'a perfectly fresh and original vein, and I think that the less you bother yourself about critical canons the less chance there is of your becoming self-conscious and cramped'.³³ Hardy may not have listened to Stephen's

30. Life, pp.64, 85.

31. See Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.11, 12, 16.

32. Hardy was again influenced by 'the representation of critic-friends' in the direction that A Pair of Blue Eyes took. He described it as 'plot, without crime--but on the plan of D.R. [Desperate Remedies]'. Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.13-4.

33. Frederic William Maitland, The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen (London, 1906), p.290. For Stephen's encouragement of Hardy to follow his own inclinations and judgments, see the letters of February 17 and August 25, 1874 in Richard Little Purdy, Thomas Hardy. A Bibliographical Study (London, 1954), pp.337-8, 339.

advice to ignore 'critical canons' but, over the next few years, he did attempt to develop this 'fresh and original vein'. Before he was able to do this, however, he had to conquer his sensitivity to being labelled a rural writer, a sensitivity which prompted the writing of The Hand of Ethelberta.³⁴ Although the decision to write this novel was, in many respects, a misdirection of his talents, it at least demonstrates that Hardy was now willing to sacrifice popularity and profit and that he was willing to reject what was expected of him to write what he wanted and felt he needed to write.

After these years of apprenticeship, Hardy's ideals and aims were to find expression in The Return of the Native. In this novel, his tragic vision and method were first fully conveyed. As Hardy writes to John Addington Symonds in 1889:

The tragical conditions of life imperfectly denoted in The Return of the Native & some other stories of mine I am less & less able to keep out of my work. I often begin a story with the intention of making it brighter & gayer than usual; but the question of conscience soon comes in; & it does not seem right, even in novels, to wilfully belie one's own views. All comedy, is tragedy, if you only look deep enough into it. A question which used to trouble me was whether we ought to write sad stories, considering how much sadness there is in the world already. But of late I have come to the conclusion that, the first step towards cure of, or even relief from, any disease being to understand it, the study of tragedy in fiction may possibly here & there be the means of showing how to escape the worst forms of it, at least, in real life.³⁵

Despite a possible change in plans concerning the future of Thomasin and Venn at the end of this novel, a change which Hardy claimed to be the result of 'certain circumstances of serial publication' and the alternative of which he very debatedly posits as 'the more consistent conclusion',³⁶ (a point with which

34. See, for examples, Life, pp.62, 102-3.

35. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.190.

36. Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (London, 1974), p.

many readers and critics have taken issue), it is evident that by the time of the writing of The Return of the Native, Hardy was willing to sacrifice worldly considerations to give true and full expression to these 'tragical conditions of life'.

Later in his life, although Hardy still listened to the advice of others, he displayed much more discrimination than when, in those early days, he had listened to George Meredith's recommendation 'to "write a story with a plot"'. So, for instance, he took Rebekah Owen's advice to restore the goldfinch episode to The Mayor of Casterbridge in the 1895 edition, but this restoration does not illustrate Hardy's willingness to appease a friend. Instead, it demonstrates a well-considered decision that this episode was necessary to strengthen the final tragic impact of the novel.³⁷ Moreover, while Hardy often did give way to editorial influences, these influences were not always detrimental and, in fact, very often contributed to the artistry of the whole. His early apprenticeship under Leslie Stephen helped in this respect because, although Hardy adhered to many suggestions made by Stephen while serializing Far from the Madding Crowd, these suggestions could be beneficial. As Michael Millgate remarks: 'It seems perfectly possible, indeed, that Stephen sometimes used the Grundian threat as a tactful cover for criticism of a more aesthetically significant kind.'³⁸

413. In a letter of February 8, 1878, Hardy remarks to his illustrator in Belgravia that Thomasin 'ultimately marries the reddleman, & lives happily', which is, as Purdy and Millgate note, 'an interesting indication that the conclusion of the novel was not recast at the last minute'. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.53.

37. See Personal Writings, p.18. Ian Gregor, The Great Web (London, 1974), p.126, writes suggestively on this point.

38. Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy (London, 1971), p.82.

Tess, perhaps more than any other Hardy novel, illustrates the effects of bowdlerization and subsequent revisions. Nevertheless, this process became, for Hardy, one of rethinking and reworking his material. John Laird, who has done the most thorough study of the evolution of this novel, concludes:

Some of the changes were forced on Hardy by the moral attitudes of editors and publishers of magazines and newspapers, whose opinions, in turn, were often no more than typical expressions of the general spirit of Grundyism still abroad in genteel society of the day; while others arose quite naturally from the creative process itself. Even the enforced changes were usually handled by Hardy with genuine creative artistry: the stimulus may have been external and censorious but most of the author's ultimate alterations were imaginative and vivifying.³⁹

A major point raised by those who contend that Hardy was not dedicated to the art of novel writing is Hardy's switch from prose to poetry, a switch which he himself at times claimed to be a reaction to attacks made on his last three novels.⁴⁰ Again, these comments must be weighed against other considerations. An early critic, Max Beerbohm, succinctly sums up the controversy over Hardy's switch from prose to poetry when, in 1904, he wrote:

Eight years ago 'Jude the Obscure' was published. Since then Mr. Hardy has given us two or three volumes of poetry, and now a volume of drama, but no other novel. One assumes that he has ceased as a novelist. Why has he ceased? The reason is generally said to be that he was disheartened by the many hostile criticisms of 'Jude the Obscure'. To accept that explanation were to insult him. A puny engine of art may be derailed by such puny obstacles as the public can set in its way. So strong an engine as Mr. Hardy rushes straight on, despite them, never so little jarred by them, and stops not save for lack of inward steam. Mr. Hardy writes no more novels because he has no more novels to write.⁴¹

39. J.T. Laird, The Shaping of Tess of the d'Urbervilles (London, 1975), pp.3-4.
40. See, for examples, Life, pp.246, 286, 291; Personal Writings, p.34.
41. Max Beerbohm, 'Thomas Hardy as Panoramalist', The Saturday Review, 97, No.2518 (January 30, 1904), p.136. A. Alvarez

This latter sentence should be read in conjunction with Hardy's comment to Vere Collins in 1928: "Besides, I had written quite enough novels. Some people go on writing so many that they cannot remember their titles."⁴²

Moreover, one of the most important statements made by Hardy reveals that he was very aware of changes occurring in the novel and that he neither approved of these changes nor felt that he could adapt to them. After noting the little effect that 'misrepresentations of the last two or three years' had on 'informed appreciation' of his novels, but the decisive effect it had on his switch from prose to poetry, he remarked:

He abandoned it [novel writing] with all the less reluctance in that the novel was, in his own words, 'gradually losing artistic form, with a beginning, middle, and end, and becoming a spasmodic inventory of items, which had nothing to do with art'.⁴³

This observation coincides with remarks made in a letter to Florence Henniker in 1912:

I notice that you are quite up to date in the mode of constructing your narrative. I had left off writing novels before the mode came in--or rather was revived--and should not in any case adopt it: I mean, the making the story a chronicle covering a good many years--so many yards cut off the roll of life, without any attempt to make an organic whole of the piece, as in a drama. Your method has the attractive swiftness of movement which stories preserving the unities do not possess, and so leads one on skipingly: though it has, on the other hand, the defects of its qualities, unavoidably.⁴⁴

develops an interesting and credible argument around the idea that 'Mr. Hardy writes no more novels because he has no more novels to write' in his article, 'Jude the Obscure', included in Hardy. A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Albert J. Guerard (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), pp. 113-22.

42. Vere H. Collins, Talks with Thomas Hardy at Max Gate (London, 1928), p.42.

43. Life, p.291.

44. One Rare Fair Woman, ed. Evelyn Hardy and F.B. Pinion (London, 1972), p.151.

Hardy was obviously referring here to the direction that the novel had taken with H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, and John Galsworthy, a direction which he felt to be uncongenial with his own aims and ideals as a novelist. Hardy had, as he wrote, 'mostly aimed at keeping his narratives close to natural life and as near to poetry in their subject as the conditions would allow',⁴⁵ and these new conditions would, he must have believed, have further hindered critical acceptance of his novels. Thus, although Hardy certainly felt keenly the attacks made on his later novels, other and probably more important considerations were involved in his decision to abandon the novel form.

It becomes evident that the belief that Hardy wrote his novels carelessly, bowdlerized them, and then pieced them back together again, with no concern for their artistry, and the belief that Hardy made numerous artistic concessions to avoid quarrels with readers, editors, and critics, both require many qualifications. These beliefs are very often based on the assumption that the primary differences between Hardy and his critics arose over moral, social, and philosophical issues and Hardy's failure to give optimistic resolutions to the conflicts raised in his novels. This assumption has led to many fallacies concerning Hardy's position as a novel writer; consequently, the critical climate into which Hardy's novels were first introduced demands serious re-examination. Only then can the true nature of the disagreements between Hardy and his reviewers be fully understood.

45. Life, p.291.

Chapter II

The Status of the Novel and Its Functions after 1870:

A Period of Transition

By the time Hardy published his first novel in 1871, few prejudices remained to interfere with the novel's claim to rank with other art forms. Those who denigrated the novel as a genre were in a small minority. The novel was recognized, by most, to be a legitimate and respectable genre which called for serious examination and analysis. Although advocates of the novel still, at times, felt compelled to justify the novel, this ceased to be an important critical issue and writers were now able to direct their attention to technical considerations. Consequently, the critical climate into which Hardy introduced his novels was one of transition. It was a period when, for the first time, few challenged the admissibility of the serious critical attention being given to the novel.

Prior to the 1870's, religious prejudices against the novel had hindered much serious evaluation. As late as 1866, critics had still to contend with such evangelical doubts about the effects of the novel as were voiced by a writer in a Methodist magazine, The London Quarterly Review. Not only was novel reading regarded as a frivolous pastime, serving no intellectually or morally profitable ends, but it was also seen as being a harmful stimulant to the imagination. While this writer did grant that 'the imagination and fancy are talents given to us by God' and 'would not have been given at all if they were not fitted to subserve some valuable purpose', he went on to argue that novels

. . . very frequently fall far below even the humblest of these ends; that, instead of refining, they deprave the

taste, that they enfeeble rather than strengthen the intellect, that they stimulate the very feelings which they should have sought to repress, and that the recreation which they profess to furnish frequently degenerates into the worst forms of intellectual dissipation.¹

Yet, by 1880, Henry Holbeach discerned a distinct and radical change in attitudes towards the novel over the last twenty or thirty years 'in what were known as the "religious circles"', circles whose 'condemnation of the novel' had once been 'absolute and unreserved'. He further noted that now 'nearly everybody reads a story of some kind' and that even 'the avowedly religious periodicals' often have serials running in their pages.² After 1870, if critics felt it necessary to defend the novel, the defence was no longer instigated by religious prejudices but, instead, by concerns of a more literary nature.

One quality of the novel impeding its general acceptance as an important genre was its occupation with common life which seemed, to some critics, to exclude it from being considered a high form of art. A writer for the Temple Bar argued that 'prose fiction is necessarily an ephemeral thing' and that even a great novel could not be of a very high order because the novel's 'proper sphere and department' is with 'the known' in life, being restricted by demands for 'fidelity to nature, accurate reproduction of the thing seen'. In contrast, this writer continued almost in Sidneyan terms, 'The essential soul and glory of high art is superiority to nature, utiliza-

1. 'Recent Novels: their Moral and Religious Teaching', The London Quarterly Review, 27, No.53 (October, 1866), pp.101-2.
2. Henry Holbeach (W.B. Rands), 'The New Fiction', The Contemporary Review, 37 (February, 1880), pp.251, 259. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England. 1850-1870 (London, 1959), pp.5-6, 48-50, and Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel. 1865-1900 (London, 1965), pp.1-6, discuss and give further examples of religious prejudices against the novel and the changes that these prejudices underwent.

tion of nature for higher purposes, infusing into nature a something divine that was not there before', these being elements which conflicted with the novel's demands for realism: 'For life, as we do not know but would fain have it, a loftier region, a diviner air [than that of the novel], are required.'³ In conjunction with this belief in the limited nature of the novel, went the assumption that it was an inferior form of art because it confined itself to the particular, rather than to the general. These were not new ideas about the limitations of the novel, but dated back to the early years of the nineteenth century. Richard Stang comments that, beginning early in the century, 'the chief aesthetic justification' for placing the novel lower in rank than other genres

. . . was that great literature must be based on general truths and general types and not minute particularities, i.e. it could not be realistic, and the novel by its very nature forced the author to imitate the transitory. After all, what was so changeable as manners? And manners, it seemed, were the novel's most natural subject matter.⁴

These assumptions--that the novel was by its nature confined to common life and particularities, the trivial and ephemeral aspects of life--were the major barriers against the novel attaining full acceptance even after 1870.

Most critics, however, recognized that the novel was capable of extending itself beyond the merely trivial and ephem-

3. 'Our Novels. The Simple School', Temple Bar, 29 (July, 1870), pp.500, 502.
4. The Theory of the Novel in England, p.4. Hardy, at times, was also inclined to feel that the novel's attention to manners made it an inferior, or at least not wholly satisfactory, form. He insisted, however, that his own novels could not be classed with those whose sole concern was with manners. See, for examples, Life, pp.104, 291; Personal Writings, pp.118-9. These ideas will be developed in the third and fourth chapters.

eral; some, indeed, claimed that the novel was usurping the place of the poem and the drama in its concern with great and permanent interests. In 1879, a critic for The British Quarterly Review wrote:

In speaking of the novel, we use the word in its largest and most comprehensive sense as the successor of the poem, the sense in which that is at once the efflux of the spirit of the age and the interpreter of human nature. In that character poetry for us at present exists no longer. . . . the drama . . . has been transformed into the novel. Human life, social and personal, is now exhibited in its pages. . . . The modern drama, as set forth on the stage, does not pretend to mirror nature or real life; it has no mission, no parable; it has quite other purposes to serve. All this is transferred to the novel. And it is not only as a picture of outward life, with its varied action and passion, that it serves us. It gives us also the springs of that action and the elements of that passion; it gives us, more or less truly, the thought of the age as to the meaning of the social and moral phenomena amidst which we live. We have accepted it at once as our exponent and our instructor.⁵

Moreover, Tennyson, in 1885, expressed a similar opinion, although not in such panegyric language:

The form of prose fiction is a vastly greater one [than 'the metrical and dramatic form'], indeed it may be termed all-comprehensive, and admits of the introduction of lyric or epic verse, in all varieties, as well as the profoundest analysis of character and motive, and is susceptible of the highest range of eloquence and unrhythmical poetry, and whatever it may lose in metrical melody (which, however, is not greatly regarded in dramatic dialogue) it gains immeasurably in its other elements. All things considered, I am of opinion that if a man were endowed with such faculties as Shakespeare's, they would be more freely and effectively exercised in prose fiction with its wider capabilities than when 'cribb-ed, cabined, and confined' in the trammels of verse.⁶

Thus, by the time that Hardy came to write, the novel was generally admitted to be an established and legitimate genre and, consequently, critics could concentrate upon special issues

5. 'Art. VI.--The Novels of George Meredith', The British Quarterly Review, 69, No.138 (April 1, 1879), pp.411-2.
6. Tennyson and His Friends, ed. Lord Tennyson Hallam (London, 1911), p.53. Cf. Hardy's comment on Shakespeare in 1908. Life, p.341.

pertaining to the novel rather than defending its claim to rank with poetry and drama as a worthy form of art.

One important issue to which critics addressed themselves was a definition of the functions of the novel. Before any serious criticism could be advanced in this area, critics and practitioners of the novel had had to dispel the notion that the novel's sole function was to give pleasure, a term which had been used in its narrowest sense to mean simply diversion or amusement. To counteract this misconception, advocates of the novel had stressed the novel's utilitarian value, its potential to instruct and elevate. By the 1870's, there was a tendency to view the functions of the novel with a broader outlook. There was a re-assessment of what was meant by pleasure. The potential of the novel for instruction and elevation was re-examined and redefined. Furthermore, other criteria came to be recognized as indispensable when discussing the functions of the novel. The representational quality of the novel, always tacitly acknowledged, was emphasized and closely analyzed. And, most important, largely owing to the influence and example of the French novel and French critical traditions, considerations of form and technique were recognized as being essential in any evaluation of the novel. Therefore, throughout the period in which Hardy was writing his novels, there was a definite movement towards a more artistic, formal approach to the novel.

In 1858, Wilkie Collins stated that 'the Unknown Public reads for its amusement more than for its information'.⁷ The assumption that the novelist's sole function was to provide

7. Wilkie Collins, 'The Unknown Public', Household Words, 18, No.439 (April 21, 1858), p.218.

light entertainment and diversion--that the novel's 'proper purpose' was, as Mowbray Morris insisted, 'to console, to refresh, to amuse; to lighten the heavy and the weary weight, not to add to it; to distract, not to disturb'⁸--was not restricted to this 'Unknown Public' and the popular novels which they read; reading for mere amusement and the expectation that the novelist should cater to this desire extended to a great many readers and all levels of fiction. As a result, for many years, the novel was often held in low esteem even by novelists themselves (Scott and Thackeray, for instance)⁹ and was not deemed worthy of serious critical attention. Although the notion that the novel's only function was to amuse was being continually opposed by the middle of the century, it still held sway over some critics. As Kenneth Graham remarks:

The idea of the novel as pure entertainment died hard, nevertheless. In fact, about this time [the late 1880's and early 1890's] there is a mild reaction against the new seriousness of 'light literature', and some protesters turn in relief to the fare offered by the new school of romance. . . . The view is often found in the writings of the many Gentlemen-Scholars who graced the end of the century, perhaps most notoriously in Andrew Lang, whose lifelong attitude of 'More claymores, less psychology' typified the undercurrent of disparagement (often unconscious) which never quite disappeared.¹⁰

Graham goes on to remark that, 'History was clearly against the Andrew Langs', but some of the less serious book reviews of Hardy's novels reveal that 'the idea of the novel

8. 'Candour in English Fiction', Macmillan's Magazine, 61, No.364 (February, 1890), pp.318-9. This article is signed 'By an Editor' and is generally believed to be the work of Mowbray Morris.
9. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.7-8, 14, notes examples of this. He also discusses the general disappearance of this contempt, particularly with the influence of George Eliot (see especially, pp.45, 223).
10. English Criticism of the Novel, p.10.

as pure entertainment' was never entirely abandoned. It was still seen, by some, to be a high recommendation of a book simply to label it 'amusing', 'entertaining', or 'diverting'. The major sources of these qualities, it was thought, were pleasing characters and a pleasing denouement.¹¹ Hardy's failure always to provide these elements brought down censure from some critics. One reviewer of The Woodlanders criticized it for not being a 'pleasant' story:

It is difficult, if not impossible, to sympathise with any of its persons, either in their character or in their conduct, while such sympathy as can be felt appears to be claimed by the wrong people. And the novel leaves the more unpleasant a flavour insomuch as the close depends upon an utterly¹² contemptible act of forgiveness and reconciliation.

The entertainment to be derived from pleasing characters and a pleasing denouement remained one criterion, although a minor one, used in the evaluation of novels.

While a few critics, readers, and novelists still insisted upon the primacy of the entertaining and diverting qualities of a novel, those who were more serious disparaged the notion that entertainment was the novel's only or most important function. This tendency was most marked among novelists who had finally begun to take their profession more seriously. George Eliot wrote that 'bad literature of the sort called amusing is spiritual gin' and Hardy, in 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', although asserting that 'relaxation and relief', reading for 'hygienic purposes', was not harmful in it-

11. See Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp. 31-4.

12. 'New Novels', The Graphic, 35, No.910 (May 7, 1887), p. 490. Similarly, W.P. Trent, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy', The Sewanee Review, Tennessee, 1, No.1 (November, 1892), p.11, found fault with The Return of the Native because of the 'disagreeable sensations caused by the repulsiveness of many of his characters and of the environment in which they move'.

self, insisted that the proper functions of the novel were far more ambitious.¹³ Despite H.G. Wells's contention that 'the Weary Giant theory' ('the theory that the novel is wholly and solely a means of relaxation') 'ruled British criticism up to the period of the Boer War',¹⁴ it was far more common, in the later years of the century, to find an enlarged conception of pleasure. In their attempts to discover the sources of pleasure derived from novel reading, critics very often associated the idea of pleasure with other functions of the novel. This was the first step towards the abandonment of the belief that the novel's pleasure was trivial and ephemeral.

Some novelists and critics, in their endeavour to oppose the notion that the novel's sole function was pleasure, placed emphasis on its utilitarian value; consequently, moral and intellectual profit came to be viewed, by some, as the most important benefit to be derived from novel reading. George Eliot, through both her novels and criticism, was one of the most influential figures in the campaign against the view of the novel as light entertainment. In her Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book, first published posthumously in 1884, she well established her position:

But man or woman who publishes writings inevitably assumes the office of teacher or influencer of the public mind. Let him protest as he will that he only seeks to amuse, and has no pretension to do more than while away an hour of leisure or weariness--'the idle singer of an empty day'--he can no more escape influencing the moral taste, and with it the action of the intelligence, than a setter of fashions in furniture and dress can fill the

13. George Eliot, Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book (Edinburgh and London, 1884), p.359; Thomas Hardy, Personal Writings, pp.110-4.
14. H.G. Wells, 'The Contemporary Novel', The Fortnightly Review, 90, No.539 (November 1, 1911), pp.860-1.

to assert that the average reader abhors instruction. He--or she--revels in it; witness the vogue of Mrs. Humphry Ward.¹⁷

The serious intent being attributed to the novel as a genre did not go unheeded by reviewers and critics. At its most unsophisticated level, this is apparent in demands that the novel should fulfil some direct and obvious ennobling or edifying function and in the consequent censure which ensued when this function seemed not to be fulfilled. The best way to produce this ennobling effect, some critics still maintained, was through the convention of poetic justice. Hall Caine, a popular novelist and critic of realism in fiction, was one who advocated adherence to this convention:

. . . justice is the only end for a work of imaginative art, whatever may be the frequent end of life. Without it what is a work of art? A fragment, a scrap, a passing impression. The incidents of life are only valuable to art in degree as they are subservient to an idea, and an idea is only valuable to man in the degree to which it helps him to see that come what will the world is founded on justice. . . . Justice is the one thing that seems to give art a right to exist, and justice--poetic justice, as we call it--is the essence of Romanticism.¹⁸

Although some critics denied that they desired so simple a solution to the problems raised in a novel as poetic justice offered, it is obvious that a few still sympathized with the convention, however tenuously. Such was the case with one reviewer of The Woodlanders:

. . . its moral tone is anything but elevating; and while the first essential of a novelist is to interest and hold

17. 'Art.VIII.--The English Novel: Being a Short Sketch of its History from the Earliest Times to the Appearance of "Waverley". By WALTER RALEIGH. Fifth Impression. London: Murray, 1901', The Edinburgh Review, 196, No.402 (October, 1902), p.497. Another review--'Art.III.--Novels with a Philosophy', The Edinburgh Review, 203, No. 415 (January, 1906), pp.64-84--repeats this idea.
18. Hall Caine, 'The New Watchwords of Fiction', The Contemporary Review, 57 (April, 1890), pp.486-7.

the attention, it is no less his duty to try, as far as he may, to leave his reader the better for the perusal of his work. The days of poetical justice are over, it is true, and we no longer expect to find in a novel the wicked invariably coming to grief, and the good universally rewarded. . . . We do not, of course, ask for any rule-of-thumb method of punishing the wicked and rewarding the good; but a novelist can and ought to do some good in his generation by distinctly enlisting our sympathies on the side of virtue, and not on that of vice. In The Woodlanders Mr. Hardy, whether consciously or not, seems to encourage a feeling of sympathy on behalf of a clever trickster and a heartless libertine.¹⁹

Another simple source of edification, as this last quotation reveals, was the depiction of fine and good characters which the reader might emulate. This idea was obviously the basis of John Hutton's criticism of the characters of Desperate Remedies--

Here are no fine characters, no original ones to extend one's knowledge of human nature, no display of passion except of the brute kind, no pictures of Christian virtue, unless the perfections of a stock-heroine are such--

and of Henry Alden's praise of the characters of The Woodlanders:

. . . he [the reader] will be rewarded with pleasures which no one but Thomas Hardy is able to impart. One of these will be the acquaintance with souls like Winterborne and Grace Melbury, so primitively good that a civic evil like divorce for the direct purpose of remarriage never occurs to them as wrong. Grace's father, with his ambition for her, so simple and sincere that it casts out selfishness, is excellent . . .²⁰

The days of poetic justice and simple characterization in the novel might be over but, for a few critics, these conventions still had a compelling force.

Nevertheless, these narrow notions of the didactic function of the novel were much rarer than might be expected. Some critics and reviewers were still fettered by a narrow and un-

19. 'The Woodlanders: A Novel', The Literary World (April 15, 1887), p.339.

20. The Spectator (April 22, 1871), pp.481-2; Henry M. Alden, 'Editor's Study', Harper's New Monthly Magazine (European Edition), 14, No.446 (July, 1887), p.318.

sophisticated attitude towards the didactic function of the novel, but the general tendency, throughout the later years of the nineteenth century, was a refinement of the concepts of the moral and intellectual profit to be derived from the novel.²¹ Such a tendency belies the myth that Hardy was simply the victim of criticism which made rigidly didactic demands. Furthermore, it reveals that this criticism was not static, but was in transition, being informed by the re-assessment and re-examination of concepts of the utilitarian value of the novel and by the introduction of new ideas which challenged and modified earlier, less flexible concepts.

A refinement of the didactic concepts of the novel can be detected in attempts to combine the functions of pleasure and profit: that is, some critics did not merely discard the notion of pleasure and substitute for it the notion of moral and intellectual profit but, instead, insisted that the function of the novel was to use pleasure as a vehicle for instruction and edification. This position did not, in most cases, simply represent the application of Horace's dulce et utile or Sidney's 'medicine of cherries' theory of literature to the novel. It was, rather, an attempt to combine two seemingly contradictory notions: the notion that the novel should afford a pleasurable means of escape from life and that the novel should fulfil its utilitarian function of bringing the reader into some meaningful relation with life.²² Anthony Trollope was

21. Only some of the refinements will be indicated here. Later chapters will elaborate upon these and introduce others that pertain specifically to the criticism of Hardy's novels.

22. Such a contradiction did not, of course, solely pertain to novels and had been debated by many eminent critics and artists throughout the century, perhaps most notably

the most vocal exponent and advocate of the dual functions of pleasure and instruction in the novel, but he never attained any degree of complexity in his ideas. Trollope, in fact, probably came as close to Sidney's 'medicine of cherries' theory as any critic at this time. Trollope's ideas remained in such a crude state because of his simplified notions of what constitutes pleasure and what type of edification and instruction the novel provides and because he saw them as separate functions and made no attempt to unify them.²³

Robert Louis Stevenson, in his 1881 essay, 'The Morality of the Profession of Letters', revealed a more refined attitude towards the relationship of pleasure and instruction, adhering, as will shortly be seen, to some of the ideas of Leslie Stephen and George Eliot, primarily in his emphasis on 'sympathy' and 'sanity'. In this article, Stevenson argued:

. . . the first duty of any man who is to write is intellectual. Designedly or not, he has so far set himself up for a leader of the minds of men; and he must see that his own mind is kept supple, charitable, and bright.

. . . he should recognise from the first that he has only one tool in his workshop, and that tool is sympathy.

The second duty, far harder to define, is moral. . . . It were to be desired that all literary work, and chiefly works of art, issued from sound, human, healthy, and potent impulses, whether grave or laughing, humorous, romantic, or religious. . . .

There is probably no point of view possible to a sane man but contains some truth and, in the true connection, might be profitable to the race.

In concluding, he brought together the notions of pleasure and profit:

by Matthew Arnold in his 1879 essay, 'Wordsworth', Essays in Criticism. Second Series, ed. S.R. Littlewood (1938; rpt. London, 1958), pp.85-6.

23. See, for examples, Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography (1883; rpt. London, 1928), pp.134-5, 201-2; Anthony Trollope, 'Novel-Reading', The Nineteenth Century, 5, No.23 (January, 1879), pp.24-43.

Any literary work which conveys faithful facts or pleasing impressions is a service to the public. It is even a service to be thankfully proud of having rendered. . . . To please is to serve; and so far from its being difficult to instruct while you amuse, it is difficult to do the one thoroughly without the other. Some part of the writer or his life will crop out in even a vapid book; and to read a novel that was conceived with any force, is to multiply experience and to exercise the sympathies.²⁴

In this essay, Stevenson avoided the simplified concepts of pleasure, edification, and instruction of Trollope and attempted a synthesis of these contradictory functions of the novel. In this respect, he came closer to defining the problems articulated by major nineteenth-century critics.

Further refinements were made in concepts of the edifying function of the novel by Leslie Stephen in two essays in The Cornhill Magazine. In his 1875 essay, 'Art and Morality', Stephen introduced his notion of sympathy, as apparent in the work and as conveyed to the reader, insisting that the artist 'does not force definite propositions upon our intellects, but catches our sympathies by an indefinable sympathy'. This comment contains the germ of his ideas on the difference between didacticism and morality in art. The first difference depends upon the way in which morality is introduced into a work:

Some of these great men lug in their morality rather awkwardly, and forget that a poet is something different from a preacher. That is a blunder in art; but the blunder is not that they moralised, but that they moralised in a wrong way. Instead of leaving their readers to be affected by the morality which permeated the whole structure and substance of their poetry, they chose to extract little nuggets of moral platitudes, and so far failed, because taking the most obvious but least effective mode of preaching.²⁵

24. Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Morality of the Profession of Letters', The Fortnightly Review, 29, No.172 (April 1, 1881), pp.518-20.
25. Leslie Stephen, 'Art and Morality', The Cornhill Magazine, 32, No.187 (July, 1875), pp.99, 96.

Other differences can be discerned in his attack on 'novels with a purpose', developed more thoroughly in his 1881 essay, 'The Moral Element in Literature'. Here he contended that spontaneity, 'the most obvious and essential condition of artistic success', is stifled if the artist writes with a definite political or religious purpose. Moreover, he saw that when an author is writing with a set purpose, 'we feel that the writer's interest is really in that minor problem and not in the deeper and more permanent interests involved'; the artist should be concerned with 'infinite morals'.²⁶ These ideas led him, in his earlier essay, to an attack on the convention of poetic justice, as manifested in 'novels with a purpose', because it was based on a particularized, worldly, and often untrue conception of morality.²⁷

Throughout these two essays, Stephen's emphasis is on the quality of the creating mind, on this mind's moral, emotional, and intellectual health, most aptly summarized in his 1875 essay by the comment:

The great delight and the main influence of literature consist in this, that, as somebody has said, it brings the reader into contact with the best minds at their best moments. . . . We are put en rapport with a great and good man; and all literature may be thus regarded as forming the electric chain by which the great centres of spiritual force exercise an influence upon a wide circle of their fellow-creatures.²⁸

26. Leslie Stephen, 'The Moral Element in Literature', The Cornhill Magazine, 43, No.253 (January, 1881), pp.37-8.
27. The Cornhill Magazine (July, 1875), p.101.
28. The Cornhill Magazine (July, 1875), p.96. Cf. his remark in The Cornhill Magazine (January, 1881), p.41: '. . . I measure the worth of a book by the worth of the friend whom it reveals to me.' In the passage quoted above, Stephen is probably referring to Shelley's comment in 'A Defence of Poetry' (1821) that, 'Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds'. Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism,

Stephen consequently concludes: 'The aesthetic judgment includes far more than the strictly moral judgment; but the moral judgment coincides, so far as it goes, with the aesthetic.'²⁹ Thus, Stephen contributed much to the enlargement of concepts of the edifying function of literature and the novel by insisting on the essential quality of sympathy, spontaneity over purpose, a broader view of the idea of morality (as opposed to didacticism), and the importance of the creative mind revealed.

Many of George Eliot's ideas on the edifying function of the novel were very similar to those of Leslie Stephen. She, too, opposed the notion of didacticism in the novel and would have agreed with Stephen that the morality of a work of art should permeate its 'whole structure and substance'. In 1873, she wrote to John Blackwood:

I have always exercised a severe watch against anything that could be called preaching, and if I have ever allowed myself in dissertation or in dialogue [anything] which is not part of the structure³⁰ of my books, I have there sinned against my own laws.

Nor did she restrict herself to a narrow view of what constitutes morality in the novel. Writing to Blackwood about Bulwer-Lytton's objections to Maggie Tulliver's relations with Stephen Guest, she said:

ed. John Shawcross (London, 1909), p.154. This emphasis on the moral, emotional, and intellectual health of the creating mind was, of course, no new idea and could find precedent in many writers, including Longinus and Milton. See David Daiches, Critical Approaches to Literature (London, 1956), pp.48-9. This idea was to find more exponents in the nineteenth century and Henry James was one who would apply it to the mind of the novelist in his 1881 preface to The Portrait of a Lady. The Art of the Novel (1907; rpt. London, 1962), pp.45-7.

29. The Cornhill Magazine (January, 1881), p.44.

30. The George Eliot Letters, Volume V, ed. Gordon S. Haight (London, 1956), p.459.

If the ethics of art do not admit the truthful presentation of a character essentially noble but liable to great error--error that is anguish to its own nobleness--then, it seems to me, the ethics of art are too narrow, and must be widened to correspond with a widening psychology.³¹

And, like Stephen, she insisted upon the health of the creating mind:

Don't you agree with me that much superfluous stuff is written on all sides about purpose in art? A nasty mind makes nasty art, whether for art or any other sake. And a meagre mind will bring forth what is meagre. And some effect in determining other minds there must be according to the degree of nobleness or meanness in the selection made by the artist's soul.³²

George Eliot's major contribution to the refinement of concepts of the edifying function of the novel was her emphasis on the potential the novel had for enlarging man's sympathies. For Eliot, a novel's morality depended upon its power of creating empathy in the reader. In her essay, 'The Natural History of German Life' (1856), she wrote:

The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. . . . a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment. . . . more is done towards linking the higher classes with the lower, towards obliterating the vulgarity of exclusiveness, than by hundreds of sermons and philosophical dissertations. Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot.³³

George Eliot was not the first to make such statements concerning the potential of art. This notion of sympathy had been the basis of many of Wordsworth's comments and poems, especially of the idea expressed in the 1800 preface to Lyrical Ballads--

31. The George Eliot Letters, Volume III, ed. Gordon S. Haight (London, 1954), p.318.

32. The George Eliot Letters, Volume V, p.391.

33. Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book, pp.235-6. Cf. The George Eliot Letters, Volume III, p.111.

In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time--

and of Shelley's concept of the sympathetic imagination outlined in his 'A Defence of Poetry'.³⁴ George Eliot, however, applied this important ideal of sympathy to the functions of the novel. Leslie Stephen touched on this idea in his two essays but, with George Eliot, it became pervasive, as revealed in her critical remarks and as manifested in her novels.

Leslie Stephen and George Eliot were perhaps the most influential writers in combatting crude notions of the edifying function of the novel, but other critics were also making their contributions. Edward Dowden, for instance, helped to propagate George Eliot's enlarged concepts of the ethical function of the novel in an article devoted to her work:

. . . the novels of George Eliot are not didactic treatises. They are primarily works of art, and George Eliot herself is artist as much as she is teacher. . . . if we separate the moral soul of any complete work of hers from its artistic medium, if we murder to dissect, we lose far more than we gain. When a work of art can be understood only by enjoying it, the art is of a high kind. . . . There is not a hard kernel of dogma at the centre of her art, and around it a sheath or envelope which we break and throw away; the moral significance coalesces with the narrative, and lives through the characters.³⁵

Most critics would agree upon the necessity of the complete fusion of any ethical value, intentional or unintentional, with the narrative and Dowden's notion that 'the moral significance coalesces with the narrative, and lives through the characters'

34. Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, ed. W.J.B. Owen (London and Boston, 1974), p.81; Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism, pp.130-2.

35. Edward Dowden, 'George Eliot', The Contemporary Review, 20 (August, 1872), p.404.

was, as will be seen in chapters which follow, repeated and interpreted in various ways throughout the next few decades. There was obviously an acute awareness of the differences between didacticism and morality in art, differences which, not only Stephen and George Eliot, but many others were to stress.

Implicit in most these comments is the notion of some intuitive 'moral sense' possessed by the reader, a variation on the idea of sympathy suggested by George Eliot in her reference to the 'moral sentiment' in her essay on 'The Natural History of German Life'. It is to this 'moral sense' that the artist, if he be of healthy mind, will appeal. Kenneth Graham remarks: 'Discussions of audience-effect constantly refer to some such faculty as the "moral sense", or to the close relation between the imaginative faculty and man's moral nature.'³⁶ Vernon Lee suggested this type of appeal in her analysis of 'The Moral Teaching of Zola':

. . . the true moral teachings of a book are not necessarily those which the author has deliberately set forth, nor even those which he has unintentionally implied. They are the teachings inherent in the work because it is a great one; they are the thoughts suggested to the reader by every faithful representation of life, by every strong imaginative or emotional summing up of any of life's realities. . . . A novel may be, intentionally or unintentionally, a sermon; but it is primarily a representation of things seen, an expression of things felt. And it is as such that Zola's work possesses a true ethical interest. It gives us knowledge of life by showing how life has impressed one peculiarly gifted mind; and the peculiarities which this impression owes to the mind that receives it, increase, rather than diminish, its value as a human document.³⁷

Here Vernon Lee was also aiming at a distinction such as had

36. English Criticism of the Novel, p.79.

37. Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), 'The Moral Teaching of Zola', The Contemporary Review, 63 (February, 1893), pp.197-8. Another excellent example of this idea is found in 'Art. II.--Mr. Howells' Novels', The Westminster Review, 66 (October, 1884), p.357, partially quoted by Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, p.75.

been made by Leslie Stephen between a definitive purpose and a more general pervasive sense of morality or, as Stephen had termed it, 'infinite morals'. Hardy would concur, not only with this distinction, but also with the idea that the novel, as a work of art, made an appeal different from that of other disciplines:

Our true object is a lesson in life, mental enlargement from elements essential to the narratives themselves and from the reflections they engender. . . .

A representation is less susceptible of error than a disquisition; the teaching, depending as it does upon intuitive conviction, and not upon logical reasoning, is not likely to lend itself to sophistry. If endowed with ordinary intelligence, the reader can discern, in delineative art professing to be natural, any stroke greatly at variance with nature, which, in the form of moral essay, pensée, or epigram, may be so wrapped up as to escape him.³⁸

These writers agreed that the novel possessed some type of morality, but the term 'morality' was being used in a broader sense than mere didacticism or the propagation of some rigid code of ethics; furthermore, they agreed that a novel made a unique kind of appeal, an appeal different from that of either the preacher or teacher.

Discussions of the novel's morality in the criticism of the latter half of the nineteenth century were also characterized by a plea for greater freedom in choice of subject matter. This was largely the result of distinctions being made between the inherent suitability of some subjects for art and the manner in which they were treated. Again, a remark made by George Eliot, and related by John Blackwood to George Lewes, well typifies this tendency:

What he says of the treatment of a subject being the essence of art is very true and a more elegant rendering of my constant reply to fellows sending lists of subjects for articles, 'that any subject being suitable entirely depends upon how it is handled'. I shall steal his ex-

38. Personal Writings, p.114.

pression the next time I wish to choke off any anxious enquirer as to the probable acceptability of his proposed 'little paper'.³⁹

Thus, throughout the later years of the nineteenth century, a definite advance was made in the refinement of concepts of the edifying function of the novel. Ideas concerning the appeal to sympathy or to an intuitive moral sense, distinctions made between inartistic didacticism and a pervasive moral atmosphere permeating the work of art, distinctions made between narrow moral purpose and a more general morality, the emphasis placed on the quality of the creating mind, and the insistence upon the importance of treatment, all substantially contributed to this refinement.

During these years, similar refinements were being made in attitudes towards the novel's instructive function. A leading spokesman against the assumption that the novel could perform the same function as a handbook, providing certain forms of instruction, was George Saintsbury. In an 1887 essay, he argued:

The novel has nothing to do with any beliefs, with any convictions, with any thoughts in the strict sense, except as mere garnishings. Its substance must always be life not thought, conduct not belief, the passions not the intellect, manners and morals not creeds and theories. Its material, its bottom, must always be either the abiding qualities or the fleeting appearances of social existence . . .⁴⁰

39. The George Eliot Letters, Volume II, ed. Gordon S. Haight (London, 1954), p.447. Cf. George Eliot's notation in her journal, recorded by Haight in this volume of the letters, 'I refused to tell my story [Adam Bede] beforehand, on the ground that I would not have it judged apart from my treatment, which alone determines the moral quality of art . . .' (pp.503-4). Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.91-222, and Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.93-6, discuss the trend towards a demand for greater freedom in choice of subject matter.
40. George Saintsbury, 'The Present State of the Novel', The Fortnightly Review, 42, No.249 (September 1, 1887), p.416.

This assertion was not, however, a denial of the ambitious and serious purport of the novel as a genre; it was simply a claim that the novel must concern itself with different aspects of life and must operate in a different way from other disciplines. Again, some critics viewed this distinction as a difference in the kind of appeal made--the novel appealed to some deeply-seated intuitive, as opposed to logical, faculty. The British Quarterly Review made this distinction:

. . . the novel, as the highest minds deal with it, can have some of the noblest attributes of poetry. It does not need that it should enforce truth by logic, that it should teach like a philosophical treatise, still less like a sermon. It may be true to its object of giving us the external aspects of human life, of setting forth those moral and social phenomena we have spoken of; may delight us with characters so painted that fiction becomes reality; and may yet attune our minds to the music of the spheres. . . . Writing as one who aims always at discerning and being true to the deeper, underlying truth of things, he [the novelist] will show you the meaning of those phenomena; he will reflect not only the thought of the age,⁴¹ but will prepare our minds for the thought of the future.

Other critics warned of the dangers accompanying the new seriousness in fiction. A writer for The Cornhill Magazine in 1870 who used the pseudonym 'A Cynic', if not Leslie Stephen himself, anticipated Stephen's remarks of 1875 and 1881 concerning the hampering of spontaneity when an artist attempted to make of his novel a 'sermon' or a 'professor's lecture'.⁴² Julia Wedgwood wrote that fiction 'has grown more ambitious than it was', that 'it has more of the interest of the essay, and less of the interest of the story', but regarded this

41. The British Quarterly Review (April 1, 1879), pp.412-3.

For the reference to 'those moral and social phenomena we have spoken of', see quotation on p.24 of this study.

42. A Cynic, 'Literary Exhaustion', The Cornhill Magazine, 22, No.129 (September, 1870), pp.285-96 (see, especially, pp. 290, 294-5).

change 'with mixed feelings':

The notion that ideas and thoughts which give interest to real experience lose that interest when they enter on the domain of fiction is a strange superstition, less potent than it has been, but it is a dangerous temptation to a clever writer to suppose that this interest can stand alone.⁴³

Lionel Johnson was also aware of this danger:

The aim of a novel, as of all artistic works, is pleasure: but pleasure is not another name for amusement, although it be clearly not another name for instruction. . . . Tasteless levity, if you will, and, beyond question, silly seriousness! between these⁴⁴ horrid extremes must the novelist find his golden mean.

Major advances were made during these years in attempts to confront the issue of the utilitarian value of the novel. While analyzing this 'golden mean' between 'tasteless levity' and 'silly seriousness', of which Johnson spoke, critics greatly modified and refined their concepts of the functions of the novel for providing pleasure and for providing moral and intellectual profit.

There was another quality of the novel which had to be taken into consideration in any evaluation of either the pleasure afforded or the moral and intellectual profit gained by novel reading--the representational quality of the novel. The representational potential of literature, particularly of the drama, was no new idea; the discussions of Aristotle and Plato had provoked many interpretations and misinterpretations down through the ages and this representational element had, consequently, always been a contentious subject. Nevertheless, as the representational element of the novel was emphasized and

43. Julia Wedgwood, 'Contemporary Records. II.--Fiction', The Contemporary Review, 47 (May, 1885), pp.747-8.

44. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (London, 1894), p.43.

as this element was associated with other functions, the novel came to be more and more valued as a legitimate genre, deemed worthy of the serious critical consideration granted to the other arts.⁴⁵

Because novels were primarily occupied with common life, some critics placed great value on the pleasure to be obtained from perceiving the resemblance between the life of the novel and life in general. Representation, whether of particulars or of general types, was seen, by many, to be a worthwhile end in itself and the pleasure obtained from this representation to be of a higher order than mere amusement or diversion.⁴⁶ Rigid adherence to this criterion is most in evidence when a novel failed to fulfil this demand for representation and became an object of censure. So, for instance, a critic of The Return of the Native for The Saturday Review, while conceding that this novel was 'of the highest art', found, because of its consummate artistry and careful craftsmanship, that 'it has impressed more than delighted us'. The reason for this lack of delight, he argued, was that Hardy 'would seem to be steadily subordinating interest to the rules by which he regulates his art' and that this resulted in a high degree of artificiality:

We are in England all the time, but in a world of which we seem to be absolutely ignorant; even a vague uncertainty hangs over the chronology. Every one of the people we meet is worked in as more or less of 'a character';

45. This representational element will be only broadly outlined here. Its facets are too numerous and its implications too extensive to summarize. The next two chapters will examine many of these facets and implications which complement and expound the remarks made here.
46. This criterion could find a precedent in the discussions of Aristotle. See, The Poetics of Aristotle. Edited with Critical Notes and a Translation By S.H. Butcher (1895; rpt. London, 1922), p.15.

and such a coincidence of 'originals', under conditions more or less fantastic, must inevitably be repugnant to our sense of the probable. Originality may very easily be overdone, especially when it is often more apparent than genuine.⁴⁷

Many critics were as quick to praise novels which met this requirement for representation and to censure those which failed to do so as this reviewer of The Return of the Native; others, however, were aware of the problems which arose when a novel adhered too closely to the demands for representation of common life. There was a growing awareness, throughout these years, of the difficulty of arousing interest and giving pleasure without deviating from the depiction of ordinary or common life. Hardy himself was extremely conscious of this difficulty and, in an important notation made by him, one aspect of the problem was stated thus:

The real, if unavowed, purpose of fiction is to give pleasure by gratifying the love of the uncommon in human experience, mental or corporeal.

This is done all the more perfectly in proportion as the reader is illuded to believe the personages true and real like himself.

Solely to this latter end a work of fiction should be a precise transcript of ordinary life: but,

The uncommon would be absent and the interest lost. Hence,

The writer's problem is, how to strike the balance between the uncommon and the ordinary so as on the one hand to give interest, on the other to give reality.⁴⁸

George Eliot, who was the major advocate of 'the faithful representing of commonplace things', was also fully aware of this difficulty of reconciling the common and the uncommon as is evidenced by her remarks in The Mill on the Floss concerning

47. 'The Return of the Native', The Saturday Review, 47 (January 4, 1879), p.23.

48. Life, p.150. Miriam Allott's discussion and examples in her section entitled 'The Novel and the Marvellous' provide further illustrations of this concern. Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel (1959; rpt. London, 1973), pp.3-20, 41-58.

the 'oppressive feeling' which may have 'weighed upon' the reader because of her strict adherence to the depiction of 'the most prosaic form of human life' in her presentation of the 'emmet-like Dodsons and Tullivers'.⁴⁹ She resolved this problem, in her own mind, by insisting upon the Wordsworthian principle of 'a unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest' and by appealing to 'the secret of deep human sympathy'.⁵⁰

Even though George Eliot was able, in her own art, to solve successfully this problem--and her movement away from the representation of 'commonplace things' in Romola and Daniel Deronda would suggest that even she felt this ideal to be somewhat restrictive--other novelists and critics still believed it to be a major problem. For some, the problem was defined in terms of the legitimacy of introducing what George Lewes called 'striking incidents' into material solely concerned with the ordinary affairs of everyday life:

Now it should be borne in mind that 'striking incidents' are only useful as regards the reader because they interest him, and as regards Art, because they serve to bring into a focus the diffused rays of character and emotion. If the reader can be interested by any other means, the end is attained so far as he is concerned. If the incidents do not bring the rays into a focus, but produce a sense of artifice and intrusion, their employment has been an artistic error.⁵¹

Romance writers, such as Robert Louis Stevenson, could simply insist that the satisfaction of the demand for 'fit and strik-

49. George Eliot, Adam Bede (1906; rpt. London, 1966), p.174; George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss (1908; rpt. London, 1966), p.254.

50. The Mill on the Floss, p.255; Adam Bede, p.174. Cf. George Eliot, 'The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton', Scenes of Clerical Life (1973; rpt. Middlesex, 1975), pp.80-1.

51. G.H. Lewes, 'Farewell Causerie', The Fortnightly Review, 6, No.37 (December 1, 1866), pp.893-4.

ing incident' should take priority over any demand for representation, that 'to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader and to obey the ideal laws of the daydream' were the most important functions of the creative writer.⁵² Other critics and writers, especially those who clung more tenaciously to realist tenets, were not persuaded that the difficulty of reconciling the demand for truthfully representing everyday life and the demand for creating and sustaining interest in this material could be so easily overcome.

Leslie Stephen defined this problem in a different way. He placed emphasis on the conflict between representation and the necessity of the artist to introduce some 'ideal element'. In his essay on Nathaniel Hawthorne, he wrote:

How is the novelist who, by the inevitable conditions of his style, is bound to come into the closest possible contact with facts, who has to give us the details of his hero's clothes, to tell us what he had for breakfast, and what is the state of the balance at his banker's-- how is he to introduce the ideal element which must, in some degree, be present in all genuine art? What precisely is meant by 'ideal' is a question which for the moment I pretermit. Anyhow a mere photographic reproduction of this muddy, money-making, bread-and-butter-eating world would be intolerable.⁵³

This 'ideal element', as will be more fully demonstrated in the next two chapters, was interpreted in various ways. George Eliot, for example, acknowledged the necessity of some degree of idealization in any faithful representation because of the unavoidable subjective element. Discussing why she has faithfully represented Mr. Irwine, instead of making him conform to some readers' demands for him to be a source of edification,

52. Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Gossip on Romance', Longman's Magazine, 1, No.1 (November, 1882), p.72.

53. Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library. Volume I (London, 1899), p.169.

she says:

. . . I might refashion life and character entirely after my own liking; I might select the most unexceptionable type of clergyman, and put my own admirable opinions into his mouth on all occasions. But it happens, on the contrary, that my strongest effort is to avoid any such arbitrary picture, and to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflection faint or confused; but I feel as much bound to tell you as precisely as I can what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath.⁵⁴

In this passage, George Eliot also touched upon another aspect of the difficulty of reconciling the demands for representation and for the introduction of an 'ideal element', that is, the incompatibility of the representation of things as they are and the representation of things as they could or ought to be. For some critics, this was the long-standing conflict between the representational element and the utilitarian value of the novel, a conflict illustrated by the remarks of the critic for Temple Bar quoted earlier who felt the life to which the novel must confine itself to be incompatible with the higher aims of art.⁵⁵ The belief that there was an inherent conflict between representation and any utilitarian value was largely the result of narrow concepts of both elements and, as there was an enlargement of these concepts, the sense of incompatibility diminished.

Critics were also troubled by artists' introduction of the unpleasant and painful aspects of life into their truthful representations of life. Condemnation of this was often the result of a confusion between life and art and between life's experiences, pleasurable or painful, and the aesthetic experience. Such confusion was not confined to minor critics. Matthew

54. Adam Bede, p.171.

55. See quotations on pp.22-3 of this study.

Arnold, for instance, attempted to make some distinction between life's experience and the poetic experience in his explanation of why he excluded 'Empedocles on Etna' from his 1853 collection of poems, but it is evident that a confusion between the two still existed:

What then are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate; no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also.⁵⁶

Not all nineteenth-century critics, however, made the mistake of confusing life and art. Walter Pater, although never attaining anything like the distinction between the experiences of life and art that T.S. Eliot made,⁵⁷ did make some advance in this direction. That he did differentiate between various kinds of experience and pleasure is made evident in the preface to The Renaissance:

The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind. . . . And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced.⁵⁸

56. Matthew Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold. 1840-1867 (1913; rpt. London, 1937), pp.2-3.
57. In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), T.S. Eliot emphasized: 'The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art.' Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot, ed. Frank Kermode (London, 1975), p.41.
58. Walter Pater, The Renaissance (1873; rpt. London, 1904), p.ix.

Although T.S. Eliot disparaged the contribution that Pater made to criticism in distinguishing between the experiences of life and art,⁵⁹ Pater's influence was undeniable; if he failed to make the complete distinction which Eliot demanded, he at least laid the foundation for those who followed and contributed to the re-opening of a controversial issue. Discussions of the distinctions between life and art, as will be seen in the following chapters, were a major part of the controversy over realism and idealism and, as such matters as selection, essence, types, the universal or general, intensity, probability, illusion, and the intrusion of the artist's personality and temperament were debated and analyzed, greater discrimination was revealed in distinctions made between the life of the novel and the life outside the novel which served as its material.

Discussions of the novel's aesthetics were not confined to distinctions between life and art and their differing kinds of pleasure. There was a growing tendency to emphasize form and technique, to recognize that a more formal, artistic approach to the novel, and literature in general, was a legitimate approach. Richard Stang begins his survey of English novel theory during the period 1850 to 1870 with the comment:

One of the most persistent clichés of the history of modern literature, especially the history of the English novel, is that criticism of the novel and discussions of the theory of the novel somehow began ex nihilo with Flaubert in France, and that England remained remarkably insulated from these theories until infected or fertilized (depending on one's point of view) by either Henry James or George Moore in the eighties. Until that decade, or for some writers until the late seventies, the English novelist did not consider himself an artist at all; he was merely a popular entertainer.

Stang claims that, 'In this period, any study of the theory of

59. T.S. Eliot, 'The Place of Pater', The Eighteen-Eighties, ed. Walter de la Mare (London, 1930), p.102.

the novel, or, for that matter, of the theory of poetry, cannot limit itself, as it could in the succeeding period 1870-1914, merely to matters of technique and form', but his various discussions in the second part of his survey on 'The Craft of Fiction' illustrate that, even in this earlier period, an examination of form and technique could not be totally disregarded.⁶⁰ In the following years, there was an even greater concern for form and technique. As Kenneth Graham, who has examined the theory of the novel during the period 1865 to 1900, emphasizes:

The idea that the novel, like any art, has a technique did not spring full-blown from the head of Jove--or of James. Miriam Allott's belief that Victorian criticism was interested only in verisimilitude, morality, and correctness of style, and that 'the conception of artistic structure' belongs exclusively to the years after Percy Lubbock, is hardly justified even for an earlier period of the nineteenth century, as Richard Stang has shown, and it is certainly not true for the years after 1865. A concern for workmanship and form can be found everywhere, from the short notice in the weekly to the mammoth review-article in the quarterly. There is always a risk of over-emphasizing, through hindsight, the 'modern' tendencies in such criticism; but even when viewed with caution, the Victorian critics of fiction were simply too voluble in their awareness of craft to be ignored or disparaged.⁶¹

Thus, to disregard technical and formal matters, in any examination of novel criticism during the last decades of the nineteenth century, is to see it out of proportion: it is a failure to recognize an essential aspect of criticism at this time.

The major general influence towards a greater interest in form and technique was French. The great French novelists--particularly Flaubert and Balzac--and the interest that French critics exhibited in technical and formal matters were held up

60. The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.ix, xi, 91-135.

61. English Criticism of the Novel, p.97. The belief of Allott to which Graham refers is to be found in her Novelists on the Novel, p.162.

as examples by those advocating a redirection of English critical interests and a greater concern on the part of novelists for these matters. Nevertheless, although some writers lamented the lack of a novel tradition to which English novelists could refer in formal and technical matters,⁶² the English novel was not without its exponents and advocates of the importance of craftsmanship. This is not to suggest that there was any fully articulated or highly sophisticated theory of the art of the novel, either collectively or by a single critic or novelist, before the time of Henry James's critical works; but there were, throughout the later years of the century, those who did insist upon the paramount importance of intrinsic artistic values.

In an 1859 article, George Lewes wrote:

Individual tastes do not admit of dispute. . . . Only when a question of Art comes to be discussed, it must not be confounded with a matter of individual feeling; and it requires a distinct reference to absolute standards. The art of novel-writing, like the art of painting, is founded on general principles, which, because they have their psychological justification, because they are derived from tendencies of the human mind, and not, as absurdly supposed, derived from 'models of composition', are of universal application. . . . Individual tastes will always differ; but the laws of the human mind are universal.⁶³

Much later in the century, D.F. Hannigan was still arguing,

It is idle to say that the criticism of a work of fiction is a mere matter of personal feeling. There is a

62. For examples of critics who praised the attention given to form and technique by the French and criticized the English for their disregard of such matters, see E.A.B. (possibly Ernest Albert Baker), 'English and French Fiction in the 19th Century', The Academy, 62, No.1552 (February 1, 1902), pp.117-9, and No.1553 (February 8, 1902), pp.147-9, and Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), 'Of Hardy and Meredith', The Westminster Gazette, 26, No.3829 (July 20, 1905), p.1.
63. G.H. Lewes, 'The Novels of Jane Austen', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 86, No.525 (July, 1859), p.108.

standard of judgment for a novel as well as for pictures or musical compositions.⁶⁴

Henry James was not the first, nor would he be the last, critic to contribute to an artistic and formal approach to the novel. Nor were contributions confined to such prominent figures as George Lewes, George Eliot, Walter Besant, Robert Louis Stevenson, George Saintsbury, and Hardy himself; as will be illustrated throughout this study, numerous lesser known critics made invaluable contributions in matters concerning the criticism of form and technique and in defining some reference points, some 'general principles', if not 'absolute standards', by which these matters could be discussed, analyzed, and evaluated. With these changes, the status of the novel and the status of novel criticism were considerably elevated. The period into which Hardy introduced his novels was not static; it was a time of transition, a time when old critical approaches to the novel were being modified, some almost beyond recognition, and new critical approaches were being initiated and practised.

64. D.F. Hannigan, 'The Latest Development of English Fiction', The Westminster Review, 138 (December, 1892), p. 656.

Chapter III

Concepts of Representation in Assessments of Hardy's Fiction: The Mirror and Its Distortions

As was indicated in the last chapter, representation and realism became, during the latter years of the nineteenth century, essential considerations in any discussion of the novel. For many critics, 'truth to life' and realism were standards of assessment, indispensable criteria, when analyzing and evaluating a novel. Most critics, however, placed certain qualifications and modifications upon the criteria of rigid representationalism and realism, recognizing that a novel could not be assessed by the same standards as those genres--painting, sculpture, and the drama, for instance--which had the potential to be more imitative or representational. Whereas some critics did view Hardy as a strict representationalist or realist and, consequently, proceeded to examine and judge his novels according to realistic tenets and their biases in favour or disfavour of these tenets, the prevalent tendency in Hardy criticism reflected the general tendency at this time which looked with varying degrees of suspicion upon the tenets of absolute representation and realism. Most Hardy critics would have agreed with him that "'realism" is not Art',¹ but their reasons for so doing were many and varied.

The criticism of Hardy's novels must be viewed in conjunction with some important tendencies and controversies of the last half of the nineteenth century. Discussion of 'truth to life' and its implications was, especially in the earlier criticism of Hardy's novels, part of the intensified interest in

1. Life, p.229. Cf. Life, pp.163, 216; Personal Writings, p.136.

the always acknowledged representational quality of the novel. Later criticism, during the 1880's and early 1890's, reflected the heated controversy over realism and idealism in the novel, a controversy which was the result of two divergent movements in the novel--the rise of the 'realist' school, associated primarily with French writers and with analytical novelists such as Henry James and William Dean Howells, and the revival of the romance as revealed in the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard, and Hall Caine, and in the critical writings of their chief spokesman, Andrew Lang. Critics responded to these divergent movements with a renewed interest in the representational quality of the novel and an intensive re-examination of 'realism', 'idealism', and 'romance' ensued. Despite this active critical interest in the subject of realism, no essentially original suggestions were made throughout the course of these controversies. During these years, the tone of criticism became more argumentative, insistent, and, with some critics, more absolute in the standards they were advocating. After the 1890's, most rigid stances were relaxed and the tone of criticism tended to be less polemical. It was during these later years that a more definite interest in the symbolic value of Hardy's fiction evolved, an interest which had, nevertheless, been prepared for and anticipated by many previous interests. Thus essentially the same ideas concerning representation were repeated in the criticism of Hardy's novels throughout the years 1871 to 1912. This is not to suggest, however, that criticism was static. Although there was no real pattern of development, change, or re-evaluation by the introduction of any original ideas, this criticism was kept alive by variations on old ideas and by new emphases

placed on old ideas, certain ideas coming to be stressed and others rejected. These critics were, to use T.S. Eliot's terminology, the 'private minds' operating with and on the larger and more significant mind of 'tradition'.

Although Hardy made several comments that might suggest he adhered to a simplistic view of the representational quality of fiction and of the criterion of 'truth to life' in evaluating novels,² his view was actually far more complex. Florence Hardy notes that in December of 1924 Hardy recorded the following quotation in his notebook:

In every representation of Nature which is a work of art there is to be found, as Professor Courthope said, something which is not to be found in the aspect of Nature which it represents; and what that something else is has been a matter of dispute from the earliest days of criticism.

This notation may be applied to Hardy's general conception of representation of life in art. 'What that something else is' was interpreted in various ways by Hardy throughout his writing career. The diverse considerations which greatly modified both Hardy's and his critics' conception of representation and 'truth to life' in the novel and which led them to conclude that exact representation or reproduction of life was impossible will be examined throughout this and the next chapter. This is not to deny that Hardy and his critics saw 'truth to life' as an essential element in a novel but, rather, to suggest that their notion of 'truth to life' needs much qualification and explanation; generally, theirs was not a simple representational view of fiction.

2. See, Life, p.40 (rpt. with slight variations, Collected Letters, Volume One, p.5); Personal Writings, pp.4, 44-6.
3. Life, p.427. Cf. Life, p.216; Personal Writings, p.135.

Some of Hardy's critics, however, did not get beyond a simplistic representational view of art and did not recognize that he was attempting something more in his novels than exact reproduction of life. Consequently, an essential criterion in many evaluations was the truthfulness of the characters.

Kenneth Graham comments upon this general tendency:

Truth to human nature is one of the most widespread and durable critical principles of the age. 'Not true-to-life', 'blurred', 'indistinct', and 'caricatures' are perpetually recurrent phrases of condemnation; and 'mixed' or 'well-rounded' characters become a reviewers' fetish. . . . And 'life' is judged among such critics simply by how the character conforms to the normal patterns and motivations of everyday life.

Hardy's characters were, for the most part, deemed to be 'true to life'; this is especially true of his women and his rustics. Although there was some hesitation because of moral objections to Hardy's truthful depiction of women, most critics would have emulated the commendatory tone of a reviewer in 1895 who astutely remarked that Hardy 'is one of the very few novelists . . . who dares to endow his attractive heroines with real live faults, not only magnificent and interesting vices'.⁵ So, for instance, most critics felt that Anne Garland's preference of Bob over John was an uncomfortable touch, but wholly justified as a truthful depiction of woman.⁶ A comment made by

4. English Criticism of the Novel, pp.22-3.

5. 'Novel Notes', The Bookman, 8, No.44 (May, 1895), p.55. There were very few critics who pronounced Hardy's men more 'true to life' than his women. M.M. Turnbull was an exception. He was impressed by Hardy's 'fine specimens of true manhood'--particularly Oak, Venn, John Loveday, Winterborne, and Henchard--but not by the 'caprice and fickleness' of his heroines. Thus he concluded that 'Hardy's women hardly appear to me so convincing as his men'. This critic was obviously equating goodness with truthfulness. M.M. Turnbull, 'Two Delineators of Wessex', The Gentleman's Magazine, 295, No.2075 (November, 1903), p.475.

6. See, for examples, 'New Novels', The Graphic, 22, No.574

James Stanley Little on Tess is worth noting because of its conformity with some remarks made by Hardy. Defending Tess's return to Alec, Little argued:

That she fell short of the heroic in doing this, is of course unquestionable, but Mr. Hardy is not painting a Lucretia, he is painting a true woman, pure in mind, though extremely unfortunate in circumstances.⁷

Such a remark reveals that there were critics who considered truthfulness of character presentation to be more valuable than the creation of perfect characters upon whom the reader could model himself.

Nor was there much dissent as to the truthfulness of Hardy's rustics except, as will be seen, in their conversations.⁸ From the beginning, most reviews devoted some space to the praise of Hardy's accurate depiction of the rustic mind and life and it was not long before full-length criticisms began to appear which were solely concerned with this subject. An 1876 article in The Examiner was the first devoted entirely to Hardy's rustics. The author of this article praised Hardy's 'rare insight' into the Dorset character and argued that no one (not even George Eliot) had such intimate knowledge of the

(November 27, 1880), p.546; 'Novels', The Illustrated London News, 78, No.2183 (March 19, 1881), p.278.

7. James Stanley Little, "'Culture and Anarchy": A Reply', The Literary World, 45 (May 13, 1892), p.460. Cf. Hardy's remarks in Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.33, 250. Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel, pp.277-9, cites examples of novelists who contended that truthfulness should take precedence over any demand for 'pictures of perfection'.
8. A reviewer of Bertram Windle's The Wessex of Thomas Hardy wrote: 'There will always be some difference of opinion as to Mr. Hardy's power to represent faithfully the English yokel as he lives and, above all, talks; his touch of the fantastic, here, now and again, leads Mr. Hardy astray.' 'The Wessex of Thomas Hardy', The Nation, New York, 73, No.1899 (November 21, 1901), p.402.

rustic or depicted him so faithfully.⁹ At times, the insistence upon the truthfulness of Hardy's rustics was taken to extreme lengths. James Purves, in 1885, also believed Hardy's truthful depiction of the rustics to be superior to that of other writers, but he naively viewed this depiction as 'a kind of artistic photography, with point after point of realism'.¹⁰

Critics tended to reserve censure, from the point of view of 'truth to life', for those characters who were not essentially outgrowths of the Wessex environment. Wilkinson Sherren reflected this tendency when he claimed that 'the heroes who are architects, and the conventional London folks, fail to convey the sense of reality that inspires the finer rustic creations'.¹¹ This attitude led to the questioning of the naturalness of certain characters being in the Wessex environment. The Woodlanders was considered to be a novel which conformed closely to the criterion of 'truth to life' and, consequently, Mrs. Charmond and Fitzpiers especially fell victim to such criticism. 'Dr. Fitzpiers', wrote the reviewer for The Times, 'is an artificial creation, not, indeed, in himself untrue to nature; but the presence of such a man in Little Hintock at all is hardly natural; and the same may be said of Mrs. Charmond', a criticism which was again voiced by Edward Wright in 1904:

Mrs. Charmond and Fitzpiers are society representatives of Eustacia Vye and Wildeve, but they look somewhat unreal

9. 'The Wessex Labourer', The Examiner, No.3572 (July 15, 1876), pp.793-4. Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy, pp.117-8, 374-5 (note 5), attributes this article to C. Kegan Paul.
10. James Purves, 'Mr. Thomas Hardy's Rustics', Time: A Monthly Magazine of Current Topics, Literature & Art, n.s.1, No.6 (June, 1885), pp.715, 720. Henry MacArthur, Realism and Romance (Edinburgh, 1897), p.12, followed in the same strain as these two earlier critics.
11. Wilkinson Sherren, The Wessex of Romance (London, 1902), p.66.

in comparison when they emerge into the bright clear air of Wessex.¹²

The criterion of 'truth to life' naturally led to the discussion of characters as if they were actual people, a criterion which, as Kenneth Graham aptly remarks, goes 'directly against the whole bias of modern criticism in favour of the autonomy of art', although this 'reaction does at least reflect what modern formalists often omit, man's valid search in literature for his own image'.¹³ The effusive commendation bestowed on Hardy's characters for becoming as familiar to the reader as friends and neighbours reveals that his novels were often evaluated by this criterion.¹⁴ Not all Hardy critics were so enthusiastic about his characters. The notorious attack by Andrew Lang on Tess, which perhaps made the most blatant use of this criterion, found Tess herself 'very unlike most rural maids' and her behaviour very unlike what Lang deemed that of 'a pure woman' to be. Furthermore, Lang went on,

The villain Alec and the prig Angel Clare seem to me equally unnatural, incredible, and out of the course of

12. 'Recent Novels', The Times, No.32,057 (April 27, 1887), p. 16; Edward Wright, 'Art.VII.--The Novels of Thomas Hardy', The Quarterly Review, 199, No.398 (April, 1904), p.511.
13. English Criticism of the Novel, p.25. Graham cites examples, pp.23-5.
14. Hardy's early novels, especially Under the Greenwood Tree, tended to provoke this kind of response. See, for examples, 'Literature', The Evening Standard, No.14,952 (July 2, 1872), p.8; 'The Contributors' Club', The Atlantic Monthly, Boston, 43 (February, 1879), p.260 (probably by Harriet Waters Preston); C. Kegan Paul, 'Art.IV.--Mr. Hardy's Novels', The British Quarterly Review, 73 (April 1, 1881), p.342. Using the same criterion, R.H. Hutton found The Hand of Ethelberta wanting: '. . . we do not know that there is a single figure in it from beginning to end of which we should say, as we do of some few of Dickens's, many of Mr. Trollope's, and most of George Eliot's, that we know them as well as we do most of our own personal acquaintances.' R.H. Hutton, 'Books. The Hand of Ethelberta', The Spectator, 49 (April 22, 1876), p.530.

experience. But that may only prove one's experience to be fortunately limited. When all these persons, whose conduct and conversation are so far from plausible, combine in a tale of which the whole management is, to one's own taste, unnatural and 'forbidding', how can one pretend to believe or to admire without reserve?¹⁵

Lang displayed a decided lack of critical acumen in his insistence upon evaluating the characters of Tess in reference to life as he thought he knew it rather than to the life of the novel.

'Life' was not, however, always the only touchstone used by critics when evaluating characters. Some critics were careful to make clear that, when they referred to a character as 'true to life', they were using the term in an artistic sense. A reviewer of The Trumpet-Major obviously was trying to make such a distinction in his discussion of the novel's heroine:

Anne Garland, the heroine, belongs to a class of women whom we always meet in Mr. Hardy's novels, and nowhere else, either in literature or in actual life. When we read of them we feel certain they do exist,¹⁶ and we accept them and are impatient to know them . . .

Similarly, William Howells, while acknowledging the unique qualities of characters and their conduct in Jude, insisted that,

The old conventional personifications seem drolly factitious in their reference to the vital reality of this strange book. I suppose it can be called morbid, and I do not deny that it is. But I have not been able to find it untrue, while I know that the world is full of truth that contradicts it. . . . the author makes me believe

15. Andrew Lang, 'At the Sign of the Ship', Longman's Magazine, 21 (November, 1892), pp.103-4. Lang did not always evaluate characters of fiction by comparing them with those of life. He could be more discriminating when he was sympathetic towards an author. This is revealed by his discussion of Dickens's Sairey Gamp in 'At the Sign of the Ship', Longman's Magazine, 32, No.191 (September, 1898), pp.468-9.
16. 'Editor's Literary Record', Harper's New Monthly Magazine (European Edition), 1, No.370 (March, 1881), p.632. Again, a reviewer of A Laodicean suggested this distinction when he remarked that Hardy 'has invented an entirely new heroine, and has made her act very consistently with herself, if very unlike ordinary mortals'. 'Recent Fiction', The Globe, No.27,065 (February 17, 1882), p.3.

that all he says to the contrary [of 'common experience'] inevitably happened.¹⁷

Even if these critics failed to make a complete distinction between fictitious characters and those of life, even if they did not wholly discern the autonomy of art which Graham notes as being characteristic of modern criticism, they at least made a considerable advance upon those critics who were content to evaluate characters simply as friends and acquaintances.

The criterion of 'truth to life' was also applied to dialogue and dialect. Critics using the standard of phonographic accuracy as a means of assessment could reach no agreement either as regards the truthfulness of the dialogue and dialect in Hardy's novels or as regards the desirability of truthfulness. The most important remarks, by those who believed Hardy was attempting accurate reproduction of dialogue and dialect, questioned the artistic validity of such accuracy. James Little, for instance, was uncertain whether 'the modern system of writing disjointed, spasmodic dialogue, which Hardy and Meredith in fiction, and Ibsen in drama, have seen fit to introduce' was artistically justified:

It is a moot question whether this new convention, in satisfying the cravings after naturalism, does not violate aesthetic canons. Undoubtedly the expression, 'I do now, dearest Tessy mine', has an extremely unpleasant savour; but, after all, so egregious an ass as Angel Clare would have been the man to use it.¹⁸

Many critics were not so discriminating and did not con-

17. William Dean Howells, 'Life and Letters', Harper's Weekly, New York, 39, No.2033 (December 7, 1895), p.1156.
18. The Literary World (May 13, 1892), p.460. George Saintsbury, 'New Novels', The Academy, 18 (December 11, 1880), p.420, also criticized, on artistic grounds, the truthful reproduction of speech. Another major concern in objections to truthfulness of speech was propriety. See, for example, Arthur Barker, 'New Novels, Etc.', The Academy, 21 (January 7, 1882), p.5.

sider the artistic implications of the criterion they were using. There was an almost equal division between those who praised Hardy for accuracy¹⁹ and those who censured him for inaccuracy. In the late 1870's, with The Hand of Ethelberta and The Return of the Native, criticism became especially censorious of Hardy's failure to make his dialogue and dialect 'true to life'. This is well exemplified by The Athenaeum in its review of the latter of these two novels:

People talk as no people ever talked before, or perhaps we should rather say as no people ever talk now. The language of his peasants may be Elizabethan, but it can hardly be Victorian. Such phrases as 'being a man of the mournfullest make, I was scared a little', or 'he always had his great indignation ready against anything underhand', are surprising in the mouth of the modern rustic. Indeed, the talk seems pitched throughout in too high a key to suit the talkers.²⁰

The next week, there appeared in The Athenaeum Hardy's response to this criticism, explaining his stance towards the

19. Throughout these years, Hardy was applauded for his phonographic accuracy. See, as examples, 'Culture and Progress', Scribner's Monthly, New York, 9, No.5 (March, 1875), p. 637; Herbert Paul, 'The Apotheosis of the Novel under Queen Victoria', The Nineteenth Century, 41 (May, 1897), p.788; William Francis Collier, A History of English Literature (London, 1910), p.685.
20. 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.2665 (November 23, 1878), p.654. For other condemnations of the dialogue and dialect of this novel, see William Ernest Henley, 'New Novels', The Academy, 14 (November 30, 1878), p.517; 'Recent Novels', The Times, No.29,430 (December 5, 1878), p.3; R.H. Hutton, 'Books. The Return of the Native', The Spectator, 52 (February 8, 1879), p.181; 'Contemporary Literature. IV. Novelists', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 125 (March, 1879), p.338. For criticism of the dialogue and dialect in The Hand of Ethelberta, see 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.2529 (April 15, 1876), p.523; 'Culture and Progress', Scribner's Monthly, New York, 13, No.1 (November, 1876), p.135; 'The Hand of Ethelberta', The Saturday Review, 41 (May 6, 1876), p.593; George Saintsbury, 'New Novels', The Academy, 9 (May 13, 1876), p.453. Although censure of this aspect continued intermittently throughout Hardy criticism, it never again reached these heights of condemnation until, in 1892, Andrew Lang criticized the speech in Tess. Longman's Magazine (November, 1892), pp.104-5.

use of dialect in the novel and insisting that it was not 'the precise accents of a rustic speaker', but 'the spirit of intelligent peasant talk' which an author should endeavour to convey. In so doing, the author contributes to his aim of depicting 'men and their natures rather than their dialect forms'.²¹ A more sophisticated attitude towards Hardy's use of dialogue and dialect was revealed by critics who did not use phonographic accuracy as their standard of evaluation and realized that Hardy was not attempting exact reproduction of speech, but rather was trying to convey its 'spirit'. As early as 1879, one discerning reviewer of The Return of the Native wrote:

To us he seems not so much to have borrowed [from Shakespeare] as to have evolved out of one of his own quaint theories that racy and antiquated mode of speech which is so amusing in the mouths of his country-folk . . .²²

Later, critics began to discuss the conventionalizing of conversation in art and to insist that Hardy only gave 'the quintessential part' of 'the homely speech of the country-folk'.²³ Thus, not all critics based their evaluations of Hardy's dialogue and dialect on rigid copyist principles; there were some who discerned that Hardy was attempting something very different from mere phonographic reproduction in his novels and who criticized him in accordance with his own standards.

It is in assessments of the 'truth to life' of Hardy's

21. Personal Writings, p.91. Cf. Personal Writings, pp.92-3.

22. 'The Return of the Native, and Other Novels', The Atlantic Monthly, Boston, 43 (April, 1879), p.500 (possibly by Harriet Waters Preston).

23. See, 'Modern Men. Thomas Hardy', The National Observer, 5, No.116 (February 7, 1891), p.301; William Sharp, 'Thomas Hardy and His Novels', The Forum, New York, 13 (July, 1892), p.585. Lionel Johnson was, perhaps, the most emphatic and understanding about this aspect of Hardy's novels. See, The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), p.177.

plots that the most divergent responses are revealed. This is primarily because 'truth' was often taken more in its moral and philosophical than in its representational sense. When the aspect of representation was considered, the elements of 'probability' and 'possibility' were, as will be seen, the criteria employed. The most revealing comments for discerning the general tenor of Hardy criticism are those made during the battle which was waged over the truthfulness of the plot of Tess.

Hardy himself inadvertently provoked this controversy by his remark in the 1891 'Explanatory Note to the First Edition' of the novel that 'the story is sent out in all sincerity of purpose, as an attempt to give artistic form to a true sequence of things . . .'.²⁴ With this call to battle, critics ranged themselves on either side. A critic who stands out as a defender of the plot of Tess is D.F. Hannigan. He began his defence with an attack on Andrew Lang's criticism:

If the novel is to be a faithful picture of actual life, and not a mere romantic narrative intended mainly to amuse young persons in their hours of leisure, the hackneyed moralisings of such critics as Mr. Andrew Lang must be disregarded as utterly beside the question--What is the proper sphere of fiction?

He continued, stressing the truthfulness of the novel: 'It is a monumental work. It marks a distinct epoch in English fiction. From beginning to end it bears the hall-mark of Truth on every page of it.'²⁵ The major critics for the offensive were Andrew Lang, Mowbray Morris, and the reviewers for The Saturday

24. Personal Writings, p.25.

25. The Westminster Review (December, 1892), pp.655, 657. James Little, who as was seen defended the truthfulness of Tess as a character, also defended the truthfulness of the plot. See, especially, James Stanley Little, 'Some Aspects and Tendencies of Current Fiction', The Library Review, 1, No.2 (April, 1892), pp.62-71.

Review, The Novel Review, and The Literary World. Their most hostile remarks were directed towards Tess's return to Alec, best represented by the comments of The Saturday Review:

It matters much less what a story is about than how that story is told, and Mr. Hardy, it must be conceded, tells an unpleasant story in a very unpleasant way. He says that it 'represents, on the whole, a true sequence of events'; but does it? The impression of most readers will be that Tess, never having cared for D'Urberville even in her early days, hating him as the cause of her ruin, and, more so, as the cause of her separation from Clare, whom she madly loved, would have died by the roadside sooner than go back and live with him and be decked out with fine clothes.²⁶

Generally, there was no consensus of opinion as to Hardy's ability to create truthful plots. For the most part, this whole dilemma arose from attempts to correlate the life of a novel with the material of life itself, a dilemma which, as will be illustrated when the various aspects modifying views of 'truth to life' are discussed, was partially resolved when other criteria for evaluating the truthfulness of a novel were considered.

If there was dissent over the truthfulness of Hardy's plots, there was no disagreement over the 'truth to life' of his settings and scenery. Critic after critic lauded the truthfulness of Hardy's depiction of village and agrarian settings, of general landscapes and the minuter aspects of nature. In the later years of the nineteenth century, critics began to place greater emphasis on the universal and symbolic qualities of Hardy's settings and scenery rather than on the local and representational qualities, but even with these critics it was

26. 'Novels', The Saturday Review, 73 (January 16, 1892), p. 74. Cf. Andrew Lang, Longman's Magazine (November, 1892), p.103; Mowbray Morris, 'Art.II.--Culture and Anarchy', The Quarterly Review, 174, No.348 (April, 1892), pp.322-3; 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles', The Literary World, Boston, 23, No.12 (June 4, 1892), p.192; 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles.--A Depreciation', The Novel Review, No.34 (March, 1892), p.292.

rare to find anyone questioning their fidelity or 'truth to life'. This tendency resulted in an approach which became very common with writers on Hardy in the late 1890's and the early years of the twentieth century--the identification of locations in Hardy's novels. While there were a few early attempts to discover the actual location of a fictitious place (it was, for instance, generally agreed that 'Casterbridge' was Dorchester), this practice only became frequent after the publication of Tess, a novel which seemed to invite curiosity concerning its locations. This led to the lucrative business of writing articles concerned solely with the identification of locations and the writing of guidebooks to the Wessex countryside.²⁷

Although this identification of locations in the Hardy novels is perhaps only interesting and useful to the tourist of southwestern England, it does underscore several other areas of consideration. The first of these considerations is the extent of an author's reliance upon life and actual experience for the material of his novels. The commendations of Hardy's powers of observation and the instances of critics insisting that Hardy drew directly from life and actual experience for his settings, characters, conversations, plots, and incidents are numerous. It is possible that Hardy himself unconsciously encouraged this type of approach to his novels when, in letters, interviews, and prefaces, he admitted that he modelled certain characters on people he knew, that he used legends, traditions, and actual occurrences from Dorset history

27. It would be futile to attempt to enumerate examples of this approach. The most important are included in the bibliography.

and his own experience as the basis for plots and incidents, that his novels were well researched and documented, and that certain places in his novels could be identified with actual locations.²⁸ He often did this, of course, naively, as a defence against charges of unreality in his novels, believing that by claiming actual or factual foundation he could parry such charges. Moreover, Hardy was usually very careful to insist that actual life was suggestive or that it provided an inspiration, rather than a direct source, for his fiction and he always insisted upon the necessity of transforming the material of actual life into art.

It is surprising that so few critics considered the role of memory as a modification of this strictly mimetic approach to the novel, that so few recalled Wordsworth's attribution to the poet of 'a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present' and his definition of poetry as

. . . the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contempla-

28. See, for examples, Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.27, 31, 35, 61, 97, 103, 103-4, 168, 175, 196, 237, 239-40, 258; Personal Writings, pp.4, 8, 8-10, 13, 13-5, 17, 20-1, 22-3, 24, 30-1, 46-8; Raymond Blathwayt, 'A Chat with the Author of "Tess"', Black and White, 4 (August 27, 1892), p.239; 'Representative Men at Home. Mr. Thomas Hardy at Max Gate, Dorchester', Cassell's Saturday Journal, 10, No. 456 (June 25, 1892), pp.944-5; Frederick Dolman, The Young Man (March, 1894), p.78; William Archer, 'Real Conversations', The Pall Mall Magazine, 23 (April, 1901), p. 528. Many of these comments, plus additional ones, are to be found in the Life. See, Life, pp.25, 30, 64, 73-4, 92-3, 96, 97, 99, 103, 122, 128, 206, 274, 278-9, 420. Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel, pp.112-20, 125-43, 198-201, 279-91, discusses and cites examples of novelists' interest in this subject.

tion, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind.²⁹

Although several critics did acknowledge the important part that memory played in Hardy's creativity, it was simply to stress the reality of his representations, rather than to suggest the powerful part that memory could and did play in transforming the material of life into the material of art in Hardy's fiction. A typical remark is that of Alexander Japp in 1895:

What is creation? We say of one novel-writer that he is a great creator, and of another that he merely paints what he sees. But the seeing is the point of the whole matter. When we say that a man creates, we only mean, in the last resource, that he sees at once keenly and widely, and sympathetically interprets or re-presents what he sees. Goethe . . . said well, after a lifetime's experience and study, that the highest art was anything but a spinning out of the fancy, as a spider spins its web from its inside, but a re-presentation of something lovingly and faithfully remembered. How³⁰ well this seems to apply to the novels of Thomas Hardy.

William Dawson, taking a less conventional, a more modern view of what constitutes memory, also intimated that it was an essential aspect of Hardy's creativity:

Art expresses best what is normal to the artist. Scenery has to be felt, and slowly absorbed, before it can be truly described. The secret of Hardy's unique power in rendering rural scenes, is that they are essential to himself. They are a part of his own blood and fibre. They belong to his heritage as peasant and woodlander, and are expressive of his temperament.³¹

29. Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, pp.78, 85. For Hardy's acknowledgement of the importance of memory, see, Life, p.378; Personal Writings, pp.22.
30. Alexander H. Japp, 'Two Pairs of Novelists', Cassell's Family Magazine, 31 (June, 1895), p.530. The reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd for Scribner's Monthly, New York (March, 1875), p.637, and R.R. Bowker, 'London as a Literary Centre', Harper's New Monthly Magazine (European Edition), 16, No.457 (June, 1888), pp.8-9, made similar observations.
31. William James Dawson, The Makers of English Fiction (London, 1905), p.202.

Except for these few critics, however, no one observed the important part played by memory in Hardy's creativity.

Another consideration which arose from commendations of Hardy's powers of observation and the insistence that he was drawing directly from life was the assumption, partially justified, that when Hardy left the Wessex environment and characters which he knew so well, he was bound to fail. This quite naturally became a concern with the publication of The Hand of Ethelberta. A writer for The Saturday Review, for instance, believed Hardy's 'original force' was 'misapplied' in this novel:

. . . we have long entertained, that Mr. Hardy is capable of making himself a place in the first rank of novelists. Only to do that he must, it seems to us, abandon such out-of-the-way subjects as he has chosen in the Hand of Ethelberta. Mr. Hardy has rare qualities--a keen observation of nature, a knowledge of country life and its ways that George Sand might envy, and, as he proved in his last book, a tragic force which few writers possess. We cannot but think that the Hand of Ethelberta, amusing as it is, is hardly worthy of its author's powers.³²

Although such criticism again became this emphatic only with the publication of A Laodicean and Two on a Tower (and, to a lesser degree, with The Well-Beloved), it was a recurring theme in Hardy criticism that Hardy's genius failed him in urban situations and with 'society' characters.³³ From this notion, there evolved the tacit assumption, on the part of some critics,

32. The Saturday Review (May 6, 1876), p.593. Cf. Scribner's Monthly, New York (November, 1876), p.135; 'New Novels', The Graphic, 13, No.335 (April 29, 1876), p.419; 'The Hand of Ethelberta', The Literary World, Boston, 7 (June, 1876), p.4; 'Recent Novels', The Times, No.28,647 (June 5, 1876), p.5.

33. See, as examples, J.M. Barrie, 'Thomas Hardy: The Historian of Wessex', The Contemporary Review, 56 (July, 1889), pp.58, 60; Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.61-3; W.P. Trent, 'Mr. Thomas Hardy', The Citizen, Philadelphia, 1 (February, 1896), pp.284-5; George Douglas, 'The Wessex Novels', The Bookman, 17 (January, 1900), p.111.

that Hardy inevitably would have failed as a novelist had he not had the Dorset environment and characters to draw upon and, in 1906, a critic for The Atlantic Monthly, Mary Moss, felt compelled to contend that 'had Hardy been born at Whitechapel, India, or Iowa, he would still have written imperishable records of men and women':

. . . this local aspect of his work has been dwelt on rather to the damage of larger and deeper appreciation. The quite external fact that his books cover a small geographical field, that he is a trustworthy antiquarian, historian, and naturalist, has somewhat obscured the greater field illumined by his genius. Thus, whimsically, the most universal English writer since Shakespeare is often treated as a limited specialist, because every one of his rare and delightful products comes from the tender, sympathetic cultivation of one small garden plot.³⁴

Thus, among those examining Hardy's fiction, there were critics who were using criteria other than 'truth to life' and the skillful assimilation of observation and experience into the material of a novel.

The tendency to judge by 'truth to life' and all this implies was, nevertheless, common, not only in Hardy criticism, but in general criticism of the time. There was certainly nothing very original in this concern for the representational quality of the novel, although a definite intensification of interest in the phenomenon of representation in the novel is apparent.³⁵ Nor was the tendency to insist upon the importance of the experiential basis of a novel unique to Hardy

34. Mary Moss, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy', The Atlantic Monthly, Boston, 98, No.3 (September, 1906), pp.366, 355.

35. See the examples cited by Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.139-51. Jerome Buckley, The Victorian Temper (London, 1952), pp.131-8, has a good account of the increased interest in representation by the Victorians after the middle of the century. Cf. Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.20-8.

criticism.³⁶ In much of this criticism, a confusion between life and art can be detected. From the earliest point of his novel-writing career, the submission of The Poor Man and the Lady to Macmillan, this confusion presented a problem for Hardy's readers, as Florence Hardy records:

This naive realism in circumstantial details that were pure inventions was so well assumed that both Macmillan and Morley had been perhaps a little, or more than a little, deceived by its seeming actuality; to Hardy's surprise, when he thought the matter over in later years, that his inexperienced imagination should have created figments that could win credence from such experienced heads.³⁷

Later, in his conversation with Archer, Hardy insisted that, 'Perhaps some of what you take for my knowledge may be "only my artfulness"'.³⁸ Not all critics, however, adhered to a strict representational view of fiction and, consequently, not all were victims of such a confusion. Many perceived that there were alternative ways of viewing fiction which tended to counteract a rigid representational view and this led to greater distinctions being made between life in general and the life of a novel. There were critics who recognized that art did not simply mirror life, but that art was the process of distorting it.

One concern which modified a purely representational view of fiction was an interest in illusion. In many instances, 'life' was still the touchstone in evaluating a novel, but it

36. One of the chief spokesmen for the necessity of writing from experience was Walter Besant. See his The Art of Fiction (1884), pp.15-6. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.171-2, cites some relevant passages from articles by G.H. Lewes.

37. Life, p.61. Cf. Life, p.392, for a similar account of confusion between life and art on the part of readers of Jude the Obscure.

38. The Pall Mall Magazine (April, 1901), p.529.

was, nevertheless, one step removed from the demand for 'truth to life'. The concern with illusion was especially important for the novel which could not, as could drama, painting, or sculpture, present an exact and precise mirror image of the material of life. When the notion of illusion was introduced into criticism, the concern was no longer with the quality of 'truth to life' itself. With such criticism, the keywords became the 'air' or 'semblance' of reality, 'verisimilitude', 'vraisemblance', and 'dramatic reality' and the concern was with the means by which this illusion of 'truth to life' was attained.

Hardy himself was interested in the art of creating illusion and several times referred to Defoe as the master.³⁹ Moreover, Hardy believed, as his remark to Archer indicates, that a great amount of art was necessary to create the illusion of reality. Thus he said in reference to Turner's paintings:

He first recognizes the impossibility of really reproducing on canvas all that is in a landscape; then gives for that which cannot be reproduced a something else which shall have upon the spectator an approximative effect to that of the real. . . . Hence, one may say, Art is the secret of how to produce by a false thing the effect of a true.⁴⁰

Many of Hardy's critics were aware of the artfulness which went into his creation of the illusion of 'truth to life' and concentrated upon various aspects of his novels which he used to create a semblance of truth. The technique of time divisions in Desperate Remedies and the inclusion of a map in The Return

39. See, Thomas Hardy, The Hand of Ethelberta (London, 1975), p.132; cf. his references to Defoe in Life, pp.61, 391.

40. Life, p.216. In this passage as a whole, Hardy is taking up an almost Jamesian position on the integration of imagination and realism, a matter which will be discussed in the next chapter.

of the Native were singled out by critics as successful means of creating illusion.⁴¹ A more important aspect of the creation of illusion was suggested by a reviewer of The Return of the Native, after remarking that the map prefixed to the novel 'gives an air of apparent reality to the narrative':

It is not, however, a device which we can commend to an inferior artist; and our vivid conception of the locality to which the native returned is due, not so much to this unusual frontispiece⁴² as to the descriptive power of the novelist.

Later critics not only commended Hardy's descriptive powers in creating an illusion of reality of setting and scenery, but also commended the 'air of verisimilitude' created by the scenic continuity of all the novels, an aspect which several likened to the work of Thackeray and Balzac.⁴³ These were, however, all secondary considerations and other critics were far more concerned with integral aspects of character and plot that contributed to the art of creating illusion or, as Hardy said,

. . . whether the story forms a regular structure of incident, accompanied by an equally regular development of character--a composition based on faithful imagination,⁴⁴ less the transcript than the similitude of material fact.

Just as criticism of Tess of the d'Urbervilles well represents the division of opinion over Hardy's ability to create plots which are 'true to life', so it well represents the division of opinion over Hardy's ability to create the illusion of

41. See, 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.2266 (April 1, 1871), p.399; 'The Book Market', The Daily Telegraph, No.7332 (December 3, 1878), p.3; 'The Return of the Native', The Literary World, Boston, 10 (February 1, 1879), p.37.

42. 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', John Bull, 58, No.3025 (November 30, 1878), p.776.

43. For examples, Bertram Windle, The Wessex of Thomas Hardy (1901; rpt. London, 1906), pp.4-5; William Dawson, The Makers of English Fiction (1905), pp.202-3.

44. Personal Writings, p.116.

truth. On the one hand, there were those critics who believed Hardy failed or came very near to failing. For instance, Richard le Gallienne enumerated examples of 'sudden moments of self-consciousness in the midst of his creative flow', moments of artificiality in style and eccentricity in the language of the characters (one example being Angel's notorious comment at the climactic moment in the confession scene--'"How can forgiveness meet such a grotesque prestidigitation as that?"), and concluded:

Don't let anyone say that these are small matters. The more beautiful the rest of the work the more jarring such defects as these. Why, one of such words is as destructive as an ounce of dynamite in any dream-world, more especially so in Mr. Hardy's 'Sicilian Vales'. . . . They could not more potently destroy our illusion if they were steam-whistles, and this they are constantly doing . . .⁴⁵

Other critics were less concerned with style and more concerned with construction. Edward Wright reflects this concern:

. . . Mr. Hardy's defect is artificiality. Too much machinery is employed in 'Tess' to bring about the catastrophe; and, in the latter part of the tale especially, disaster follows disaster in so close and yet so disconnected a manner that all sense of verisimilitude is destroyed. There is an analogous defect in his characterisation. . . . Having conceived a strangely immaculate heroine, who, from no impulse of her own, proceeded from fornication to adultery, and ended in murder, he had first to make her life such a succession of unmerited troubles, misfortunes, and disasters, as dispels the credulity of the most sympathetic reader; and next to encompass her about with so many persons of nefarious or brutal, vicious, weak, or scornful natures . . . that verisimilitude in the characterisation, as well as verisimilitude in the fable, is sacrificed to pathetic effect.⁴⁶

Most critics, however, were more inclined to criticize artificiality and creaking machinery in the minor novels--'The Hand of Ethelberta, A Laodicean, Two on a Tower, and The Well-Beloved

45. Richard le Gallienne, 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The Star, No.1212 (December 23, 1891), p.4.

46. The Quarterly Review (April, 1904), pp.517-8.

impress us more with the clever involvements of the plot than by a convincing illusion of reality'--and to praise the sense of inevitability, the successful creation of illusion, in the major novels:

We do not, however, carry away from the novels a sense of artifice. It is this very faculty for selection and design which makes Mr. Hardy's narrative convincingly realistic. . . . It is one of the most distinguishing features of Mr. Hardy's work that we feel the development of the plot, the sequence of the incidents, to be inevitable. We cannot imagine the course of the narrative running in any other direction. The tragedy of Tess, the degeneration of Michael Henchard, the story of Clym Yeobright and Eustacia Vye, when once told we see to be an inexorable evolution of circumstance. And thus to compel the assent of the reader's imagination is, perhaps, the highest achievement of the novelist.⁴⁷

The inevitableness of Hardy's plots, especially of his tragic novels, was, as will be seen in later chapters, always of great interest to critics and the bestowal of praise or censure often depended on whether a critic believed Hardy to have successfully created an illusion of truth.

With the concern over illusion and the insistence upon artistic or dramatic truth, a major advance was made in perceiving distinctions between actual life and the life of a novel. This is especially marked as regards character. Earlier, examples were cited of critics who would concur with a reviewer of The Trumpet-Major for The Spectator that,

The heroine, Anne Garland, belongs to a class of women who are found nowhere else in literature than in Mr. Hardy's novels; whether they also exist in real life, we do not undertake to say, but after reading about them, we cannot help believing that they do.⁴⁸

47. Harold Herbert Williams, Two Centuries of the English Novel (London, 1911), pp.288, 302-3.

48. 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The Spectator, 53 (December 18, 1880), p.1628. John Hutton, in an unpublished letter of January 17, 1881, in the Dorset County Museum's collection, attributed this review to Julian Hawthorne, the son of the novelist. For the other examples mentioned, see pp.61-2 of this study.

Francis Thompson, the poet, well expressed this distinction between 'truth to life' and the illusion of 'truth to life' in his comments on the character of Tess:

Tess, divinest of milkmaids, supremest of country lasses, seems to have come straight from the plough, the hayfield, the lonely homestead. Mr. Hardy may be all wrong--the rural type may be something very different from what he pictures; but literature is the art of illusion, and this is conveyed to perfection. His study of a woman starts from the canvas and clothes itself with warm flesh and blood as we gaze. It is not given to more than one man in a generation to paint with such richness of hue, such warmth of tone; but the result is nothing less than Titianesque.

The whole question of illusion was inextricably bound up with considerations of probability and possibility. In most cases, critics, although often using the terms 'probability' and 'possibility' indiscriminately and interchangeably, adhered to Aristotle's statement that 'the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities',⁵⁰ which meant that they reserved censure for inconsistencies in characters and their actions and the intervention of inartistic machinery to direct or complicate the plot rather than for the unlikelihood of a character's existence and conduct or of certain events occurring in actual life. David Daiches, discussing Aristotle's principle, notes the important implications to which it gives rise:

As soon as one denies that the poet is a passive imitator and proceeds to raise the whole question of formal probability, literary criticism is on another level. Two new notions are involved. First, there is the notion that a historical falsehood may be an ideal truth, that a 'probable impossibility' may reflect a more profound reality than an 'improbable possibility'; and, second, there is the perception that a literary artist produces a work which has a unity and a formal perfection of its own, a

49. Francis Thompson, [No title] The Daily Chronicle, No.9295 (December 26, 1891), p.4.

50. The Poetics of Aristotle, p.95.

work which thus creates its own world of probability within which truth can be recognized and appreciated.⁵¹

The notion of probability was not a new concept in the history of novel criticism, dating back at least to Henry Fielding who gave his interpretation of probability and possibility in Tom Jones.⁵² Nevertheless, by the middle of the nineteenth century, it was being applied with new interest and greater consistency.

'Truth', wrote a critic in 1866, 'is not always probable. And it is probability which is required in a novel.'⁵³ Most of Hardy's critics would have concurred with this remark and, consequently, assessed his novels by the criterion of consistency of character and action rather than by likelihood. The Hand of Ethelberta proved to be of great interest to critics from the point of view of probability because, while most could not concede that Ethelberta and the situation in which she was placed were possible, yet they could not deny that she had a certain living quality and the novel a certain dramatic reality. In the 1895 Preface to this novel, Hardy argued:

A high degree of probability was not attempted in the arrangement of the incidents, and there was expected of the reader a certain lightness of mood, which should inform him with a good-natured willingness to accept the production in the spirit in which it was offered. The characters themselves, however, were meant to be consistent and human.⁵⁴

Some reviewers agreed with the former part of this statement, but disagreed with the latter, and criticized Hardy on both

51. Critical Approaches to Literature, p.38.

52. Henry Fielding, The History of Tom Jones, Volume One (1909; rpt. London, 1957), pp.315-21.

53. 'Belles Lettres', The Westminster Review, 29, No.2 (April 1, 1866), p.584. Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.45-6, cites further examples of concern with this matter.

54. Personal Writings, p.11.

accounts. The reviewer for The Graphic, for example, wrote:

This book is unquestionably the work of a true artist and humourist, and yet both the art and the humour somehow miss their effect. The art is employed in building up and developing a situation, or rather series of situations, which strike us as well-nigh extravagantly improbable, the actors in which are for the most part unreal beings whom we neither understand nor fully believe in . . .

Other critics, however, did 'accept the production in the spirit in which it was offered'. The reviewer for The Athenaeum referred to Hardy as a 'modern-romantic' and argued that, although Hardy 'makes his characters do things, and puts them into positions, which, if not impossible, would at least be thought very remarkable', this form of fiction, 'in the hands of a master, who is capable of seeing how people might probably act and speak in improbable circumstances . . . is by no means unsatisfactory'.⁵⁶ A few critics did use the criterion of likelihood rather than consistency in their evaluations of The Hand of Ethelberta, but Hardy's claim that 'the chief objection' to this novel seemed 'to be that it was "impossible"'.⁵⁷ is not justified; the greater tendency was to object to its 'improbability' and, even with this stricture, a large amount of flexibility was revealed in some assessments of the plot.

Most critics of Hardy's novels adhered more strictly to demands for probability of plot than the allowances granted to The Hand of Ethelberta. Consistency of character and of the

55. The Graphic (April 29, 1876), p.419. Cf. The Saturday Review (May 6, 1876), pp.592-3.

56. The Athenaeum (April 15, 1876), p.523. Cf. 'Poetry, Fiction, and Belles Lettres', The British Quarterly Review, 64 (July 1, 1876), pp.234-5; 'The Hand of Ethelberta', The Examiner, No.3563 (May 13, 1876), pp.544-6; 'Our Wednesday Book-Box', The World, 4, No.94 (April 19, 1876), p.20.

57. Life, p.108. For an example of a reviewer who used the criterion of likelihood, see, R.H. Hutton, The Spectator (April 22, 1876), pp.530-2.

plot that evolved from their actions were very often a prime consideration in assessments of a novel. In the earliest general review of Hardy's fiction, Alexandra Orr argued:

No one of his books condemns itself either by his choice of characters, or his mode of working them out. . . . each character is possible, and in the given surroundings its experiences are not only possible but necessary.⁵⁸

Generally, Hardy's critics granted that his novels met the requirements of probability. Of the novels prior to Tess and Jude, only A Pair of Blue Eyes and Two on a Tower provoked an inordinate amount of censure for use of awkward machinery in the contrivance of plot, for 'the improbabilities into which [Hardy's] consistent love of the audacious has sometimes betrayed him', as one critic remarked.⁵⁹ The following critics would definitely disagree with Hardy's comment that 'it is not improbabilities of incident but improbabilities of character that matter'.⁶⁰ For these critics, 'improbabilities of incident' did matter. The first critic to comment upon inartistic machinery in Hardy's plots was The Times's reviewer of A Pair of Blue Eyes. He was able to accept the 'extraordinary folly

58. Alexandra Leighton Orr, 'Mr. Hardy's Novels', The New Quarterly Magazine, n.s.2 (October, 1879), p.416. Other reviews which demonstrated a definite interest in the sense of probability attained through consistency of plot and character and which suggested Hardy's novels were successful in this respect included 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.2769 (November 20, 1880), p.672, and 'Recent Novels', The Daily News, No.10,792 (November 18, 1880), p.2 (reviews of The Trumpet-Major); 'Books. A Laodicean', The Spectator, 55 (March 4, 1882), p.296; 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.3057 (May 29, 1886), p.711, and No.3100 (March 26, 1887), p.414 (reviews of The Mayor of Casterbridge and The Woodlanders, respectively); 'Fiction', The Speaker, 3, No.75 (June 6, 1891), p.683 (a review of A Group of Noble Dames).

59. Dan Godfrey with Olga Nethersole, 'Mr. Thomas Hardy', The Cabinet Portrait Gallery, Fifth Series (June, 1894), p.67.

60. Life, p.176. Cf. Life, p.150 (quoted on p.45 of this study).

and extraordinary deceit' in Elfride's conduct which contributed to bringing the catastrophe down upon her, but he could not accept Mrs. Jethway's role, particularly the 'magic power' she had in divining 'the object of the stealthy and abortive Plymouth expedition'.⁶¹ Two on a Tower was also vulnerable to such criticism. The reviewer for The Spectator was exceptionally caustic in his comments. He criticized the appearance upon the scene of 'a deus ex machina, in the shape of a brother . . . and also a bishop, who, coming to confirm the villagers, falls in love with the supposed widow, Lady Viviette'. 'There is not', he continued, intermixing his comments on probability with moralistic biases,

. . . from beginning to end, a single gleam of probability in the plot, and what good end can be served by violating all natural motives in order to produce such unpleasant results we are at a loss to see. . . . It is melodramatic without strength, extravagant without object, and objectionable without truth.⁶²

Not all critics censured Hardy for his failure to pay strict attention to probability of incidents. Harriet Preston, for instance, made extensive comments upon Hardy's disregard for probability and his use of the grotesque, comments which anticipate some twentieth-century interpretations of his novels. Her remarks on Far from the Madding Crowd are particularly suggestive. She noted that, 'Alone, almost, among modern writ-

61. 'Recent Novels', The Times, No.27,790 (September 9, 1873), p.4. Later, Havelock Ellis also found fault with the 'series of impossible coincidences and situations' in this novel. Havelock Ellis, 'Art.II.--Thomas Hardy's Novels', The Westminster Review, 63 (April, 1883), p.343.
62. 'Books. Two on a Tower', The Spectator, 56, No.2849 (February 3, 1883), p.154 (possibly by Harry Quilter). For an example of a review which made the same objections to Two on a Tower, but was more moderate and flexible, see, 'Novels of the Quarter', The British Quarterly Review, 77 (January, 1883), p.219.

ers outside of Russia, Hardy has an easy mastery of the true grotesque', and that, in Far from the Madding Crowd, Hardy 'began to show us the full measure of his remarkable power of devising new, strange, and intensely dramatic incident; untoward situations, almost oppressive in their significance; chance moments, half revealed in passing as very ganglionic centers of fate', as exemplified in scenes which dramatized 'the irony of accident'. She then continued:

The catastrophe of 'Far from the Madding Crowd' was, I remember, stigmatized at the time as 'too sensational' . . . the censure points to an undeniable artistic fault, an error of disproportion or incongruity, an incident too big for the canvas, too black for the general scheme of color. The painful infatuation of Boldwood, for example, his open assassination of Troy, and the fatal sanity of his subsequent self-surrender to justice, belong to the class of incidents usually described as high tragedy; and the too prompt critics of 'Far from the Madding Crowd' made the mistake of supposing that Mr. Hardy's muse was bound to decline such themes, and that . . . he had intended to portray the supposed regular association of virgin innocence of soul with agricultural simplicity of manners. What he really did intend, we now know very well, was to illustrate the solemn unity of human fate; the momentous fact that the organic instincts and primitive passions of men, and emphatically also of women, are the same in all ranks and on every stage, and that the prophetic 'besom of destruction' is an instrument far too thoroughly wielded for any neglect of the world's out-of-the-way corners.⁶³

Such criticism was rare and most critics did not attempt to come to any understanding of Hardy's use of the grotesque nor did they generally grant Hardy this freedom of improbability of in-

63. Harriet Waters Preston, 'Thomas Hardy', The Century Magazine, New York, 46 (July, 1893), pp.354-5. Another critic who attempted to account for the element of the grotesque in Hardy's fiction was a reviewer who signed himself 'Chelifer'. He described Hardy's novels as 'not so much . . . mere narratives in which a concatenation of deeds is linked, as . . . a succession of emotions', likening his art to music in this respect and concluding: 'Music is a truthful recounter of emotions, but it cannot narrate deeds.' Chelifer, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy', Godey's Magazine, New York, 131 (December, 1895), p.658. The very few other critics who remarked upon this element in Hardy's fiction will be noted in other contexts.

cidents.

Some critics did revert to the criterion of possibility or likelihood, but such an approach was surprisingly, when the stress placed on 'truth to life' is taken into consideration, uncommon. While this occurred most frequently in assessments of the intensified humour of Hardy's rustics,⁶⁴ it was in the controversies which arose over Tess and Jude that distinctions between 'probability' and 'possibility' became most confused. This is particularly in evidence in the criticism of those hostile towards Tess. Andrew Lang, as was seen earlier, used the criterion of 'truth to life' to assess Tess and found it wanting. He also, logically enough, used the criterion of likeliness, the most blatant example occurring in an earlier review in his condemnation of the resolution: 'The conclusion of Tess is rather improbable in this age of halfpenny newspapers and appeals to the British public. The black flag would never have been hoisted, as in the final page.'⁶⁵ The review in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, usually attributed to Mrs. Oliphant, perhaps best exemplifies the confusion over 'possibility' and 'probability' in analyses of Tess. Point after point betrays that this critic, while asserting that a cha-

64. See, for example, the quotation from The Saturday Review (January 4, 1879), p.23, on pp.44-5 of this study. Cf. 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.2873 (November 18, 1882), p.658, which argued: 'The rustics are as Shakespearean as ever; but we must still take leave to doubt whether one Dorsetshire village ever produced quite so many Touchstones at one and the same time.' Commentary on the matrimonial relations of Hardy's characters also sometimes reverted to this criterion. See, as examples, 'Contemporary Literary Chronicles. III.--Essays, Novels, Poetry, &c.', The Contemporary Review, 34 (December, 1878), p.206; 'Recent Fiction', The Critic, New York, 6 (July 3, 1886), p.5.

65. Andrew Lang, 'Literature and the Drama', The New Review, 6, No.33 (February, 1892), p.248.

racter's conduct or a certain scene was inconsistent, was using the criterion of likelihood and, notably, how it was deemed likely 'a pure woman' would act. The seduction scene, Tess's 'moralisings' after the death of her baby, and the fact that 'no whisper' of Tess's history ever reached Talbothays were all criticized in accordance with the premise of likelihood. Again, this critic, as others were to do, concluded that Tess's return to Alec and the subsequent murder of him were impossible for Tess as 'a pure woman': 'It is no use making men and women for us, and then forcing them to do the last thing possible to their nature.'⁶⁶ For such critics, the objection was obviously that Tess did not conduct herself in the way that they believed it likely 'a pure woman' would conduct herself. Whether Tess's conduct in the latter part of the novel is consistent with her character as previously given, all questions of likelihood aside, is, of course, a dilemma which has confronted critics to the present day and is well represented by the remarks of Robert Shindler in 1902:

Mr. Hardy does not really make us feel that things must have happened as he described them. One or two of the critical incidents in the story seem rather improbable, and we cannot help feeling that it is not the 'President of the Immortals' but only Mr. Hardy who is treating poor Tess so badly.⁶⁷

Fewer critics, probably because of the tightness of the plot, questioned whether Jude was convincing. Nevertheless,

66. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (March, 1892), pp.467, 468-9, 472, 474. Cf. other examples cited on p.66 of this study. Another excellent example of confusion between probability and possibility is Francis Adams, 'Some Recent Novels', The Fortnightly Review, 52 (July 1, 1892), pp.20-1, who was extremely adamant in his condemnation.
67. Robert Shindler, On Certain Aspects of Recent English Literature (Leipzig, 1902), p.69. Cf. 'Editor's Study', Harper's New Monthly Magazine (European Edition), 24 (June, 1892), pp.152-3.

the very tightness of the plot led some critics to question its probability. The criticism of Harry Peck, although permeated with moralistic hostilities, did make a point which was to trouble many critics in the future: 'It sacrifices the probabilities everywhere to the exigencies of the plot.'⁶⁸ Once the immediate controversy had quieted, critics were able to analyze more calmly, less hysterically, where they thought the flaws of the novel lay and this criticism was repeated. Wilfred Durrant, writing in 1909, well summarized this attitude:

. . . Hardy is a slave to the Unity of Action. For Art aims first and last to create an effect; and to heap disaster upon disaster until it is the ingenuity of the author, rather than circumstance fairly handled, that seems to be working towards the consummation of the plot, is to risk defeating the intended effect. . . . In brief, the dice are too obviously loaded against the victim. This is to be regretted; for although it is quite legitimate for the action of a story to be remotely possible or even impossible, it must never in any degree be allowed to seem improbable. The stricture applies to the plot rather than to detail. With the latter, it is Hardy's great merit that he keeps close to Nature; and it is his great achievement to have built up a record of English life such as no other novelist has ever attempted.⁶⁹

When Aristotle wrote that 'the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities', he was, of course, suggesting something more than that consistency should be preferred to likelihood. He was also referring to the general and universal qualities which a work of art should possess. Victorian critics were interested, not only in the Aristotelian theory, but in the numerous implications to which such a theory gives rise.⁷⁰ Hardy was of special interest to critics in this

68. Harry Thurston Peck, 'A Novel of Lubricity', The Bookman, New York, 2, No.5 (January, 1896), p.429.

69. Wilfred S. Durrant, 'The Disciple of Destiny', The Fortnightly Review, 85, No.510 (June 1, 1909), p.1122.

70. For examples from general Victorian criticism of the concerns which will be delineated in the following pages, see,

respect because, while he made great use of details and while his novels were intensely localized and his characters highly individualized, there was a definite universal quality to his fiction.

A major implication of Aristotle's principle, for Hardy's critics, is suggested by the well-known tenet laid down by Dr. Johnson's Imlac: "The business of a poet . . . is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances: he does not number the streaks of the tulip . . .".⁷¹ Early critics of Hardy's novels, especially those of Under the Greenwood Tree, paid no heed to this idea and there were high commendations--encouraged by Hardy's subtitle, 'A Rural Painting of the Dutch School', and probably by the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites--of his ability to paint the minuter aspects of nature, man, and rural life.⁷² This tendency was short-lived and, with reviews of Far from the Madding Crowd, the first indications of two divergent responses to this facet of Hardy's fiction are noticeable. First, some critics simply criticized his use of detail, making no effort to discover if he were attempting anything more than merely to "number the streaks of the tulip". Although Hardy's mastery of rendering detail was still praised, signs of discontent are apparent. The critic for Harper's New Monthly Magazine wrote:

Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.4-5, 9, 27-8, 52-3, 88, 154-5, 162, 172-5, and Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.38-43, 102-7, 116.

71. Samuel Johnson, The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia (Middlesex, 1976), pp.61-2.
72. See, for examples, Horace M. Moule, 'Under the Greenwood Tree', The Saturday Review, 34 (September 28, 1872), p. 417; 'Some New Books', The Echo, No.1197 (October 11, 1872), p.2; 'Current Literature: Under the Greenwood Tree', The Spectator, 45 (November 2, 1872), p.1403.

There is a minute attention to detail, too, which is possibly commendable, but which accompanies a singular ignorance of or indifference to the relative importance of the objects in the scenes,⁷³ which are painted, so to speak, without perspective.

By the time of The Return of the Native, some reviewers were becoming even more censorious of Hardy's use of detail. One reviewer, while conceding that Hardy created 'very original and very striking' scenes, contended that they were 'cumbered with an excess of detail', particularly in his use of 'certain rustic superstitions and rustic customs', and asserted that the novel 'resolves itself . . . into an unconnected collection of studies' which have 'a wearying' rather than 'a stimulating effect' on 'the interest of the narrative'.⁷⁴ The Trumpet-Major also presented a problem for critics. The minute descriptions in certain scenes some critics found appealing, but others were more chary of giving their praise. Julian Hawthorne, for instance, criticized Hardy for 'magnifying and elaborating trifles' which resulted in 'an impression of thinness' and in his workmanship often becoming 'fantastic and whimsical'.⁷⁵

The hostility towards Hardy's abundant use of detail culminated in Lindsay Garrett's absurd attack in 1907 on what he

73. 'Editor's Literary Record', Harper's New Monthly Magazine, New York, 50, No.298 (March, 1875), p.598. This review would be by either H.M. Alden or W.D. Howells.
74. 'Novels', The Illustrated London News, 73, No.2061 (December 14, 1878), p.562.
75. The Spectator (December 18, 1880), pp.1627-8. For reviewers who praised Hardy's minute descriptions in this novel, see, The Athenaeum (November 20, 1880), p.672, and The Illustrated London News (March 19, 1881), p.278. The Woodlanders also received a mixed response. One reviewer--'"The Woodlanders"', The Pall Mall Gazette, 45, No.6917 (May 19, 1887), p.5--praised Hardy's 'microscopic fidelity', whereas another--'Pages in Waiting', The World, 26, No.668 (April 20, 1887), p.22 (signed 'Q.')--remarked that 'the picture is rather lost in the elaboration of its details'.

considered to be Hardy's 'misuse' of 'realism'. Using Far from the Madding Crowd as his primary example, he began by criticizing the 'overloaded description of background' in the opening scene which 'initiates a series of descriptive digressions so numerous and so bulky as repeatedly to syncopate the narrative'. Furthermore, Garrett went on,

In his treatment of Nature as a whole a prosaic thoroughness mars artistic effect. The theory of the impartiality of art is here misapplied. A faithful reproduction of Nature as she strikes the observer must include the subjective element. The human soul is not a microscope: it is a sensorium of poetic impression. Hence, a few luminous periods conceived with poetic largeness that scorns mere descriptive exactitude, bringing the reader into communion with the spirit of Nature rather than with its body would have better fulfilled the mission of art. As it is, Mr. Hardy's descriptions are truthful inventories of all that the eye can see in a given area, rather than faithful memorials of what the soul collects and harbours.

His totally inept attack on what he called Hardy's 'futile realism' continued in the same vein.⁷⁶

A critic for The New York Times responded to this review. His response exemplifies the other approach to Hardy's use of detail: a recognition that Hardy was not simply content to "number the streaks of the tulip", but was using detail to gain broad and, very often, symbolic effects. This critic insisted upon the relevancy of Hardy's descriptive passages and the contribution that these passages made to the 'toning of the atmosphere' and to creating 'the very mood that answers to the action about to take place'.⁷⁷ Wilfrid Randell, although he laid greater stress upon the symbolic value of Hardy's descriptions, defended Hardy's fiction against Garrett's accusations

76. Lindsay S. Garrett, 'The Essence of Hardyism', The Monthly Review, 27, No.81 (June, 1907), pp.59-67; the quotations are taken from pp.59-61.

77. 'Thomas Hardy', The New York Times Saturday Review of Books, 56, No.18,074 (July 20, 1907), p.454.

in a similar fashion:

As in old Greek drama the chorus addressed the audience at set intervals, so does Mr. Hardy allow aspects of Nature . . . to appear at certain moments with a vital bearing upon the progress of the story, although for a brief space its action be held in leash. They create the atmosphere . . . through which the characters move; they, as it were, set the key to which the music throughout the whole book must return after many enchanting changes It is in these pauses of intimate description, when the very heart of Nature seems to beat in human fashion, to throb in joy, sorrow, passion, defiance, or pain with those who live and love so near to it, that the power and relentless grip of Mr. Hardy's work chiefly lie. No other writer has ever used description with such absolute skill to elicit and represent the moods of the human mind.⁷⁸

These two critics were not, however, the first to comment, in a more sophisticated way, upon Hardy's use of detail. William Minto was one of the first to discriminate between the use of detail in Hardy's earliest novels and the 'more mature and powerful' use of it in Far from the Madding Crowd:

Both 'Under the Greenwood Tree' and 'A Pair of Blue Eyes' are very remarkable novels, which no one could read without admiring the close and penetrating observation, and pictorial and narrative power of the writer. But 'Far from the Madding Crowd' is not only an advance upon them in freedom and firmness of handling, but it excels them also in concentration of interest, and in spacious breadth and solid truth of proportion.⁷⁹

Minto realized that it would not suffice to praise Hardy simply for his minute rendering of physical and surface details. In fact, most critics would have disagreed with Hardy's comment, especially when applied to his fiction, that: 'In architecture, men who are clever in details are bunglers in generalities. So

78. Wilfrid L. Randell, 'The Hardy Critic', The Academy, 73, No.1835 (July 6, 1907), p.656.
79. William Minto, 'Far from the Madding Crowd', The Examiner (December 5, 1874), p.1329. 'Contemporary Literature: Poetry, Fiction, and Belles Lettres', The British Quarterly Review, 61 (January 1, 1875), p.247, also commented upon Hardy's forceful use of minutely detailed descriptions in this novel. Hardy himself suggested, in his 1912 Preface to Under the Greenwood Tree, that in this early novel he had not put his material to a very sophisticated use. Personal Writings, p.6.

it is in everything whatsoever.⁸⁰ The description of the Heath in The Return of the Native was especially praised for the fusion of minute and broad effects. The reviewer for Scribner's Monthly, as an example, wrote:

The landscape painter is abroad in Thomas Hardy's work. He describes Egdon Heath . . . with the breadth of view we find in the French landscapists, and, not content with that, speaks of the minute things which compose the landscape of the Heath with some of the circumstance of a Pre-Raphaelite.⁸¹

Hardy's ability to depict scenery with the minute particularity of the Pre-Raphaelites, yet with the breadth of the French landscapists, became an important theme in the criticism which followed.⁸² Even critics who took advantage of the trend to write guide-book descriptions of Hardy's settings and scenery were usually careful to insist that Hardy was an interpreter of the 'spirit' and 'heart', as well as the 'face' of Wessex, that his landscapes became 'living personalities', and that he had an acute 'perception of the essential element in places'.⁸³ It was Lionel Johnson, however, who was most emphatic in

80. Life, p.48. Cf. Life, p.55.

81. 'Culture and Progress', Scribner's Monthly, New York, 17; No.6 (April, 1879), p.910. 'Novels of the Quarter', The British Quarterly Review, 69 (January 1, 1879), p.242, was also perceptive in its recognition of Hardy's ability to fuse various elements into a cohesive and effective whole.

82. See, for examples, Alexandra Orr, The New Quarterly Magazine (October, 1879), p.412; 'Literature. New Books and New Editions', The Scotsman, Edinburgh, No.11,652 (November 19, 1880), p.3; Havelock Ellis, The Westminster Review (April, 1883), p.345; Janetta Newton-Robinson, 'A Study of Mr. Thomas Hardy', The Westminster Review, 137, No.2 (February, 1892), p.155; Edward Wright, The Quarterly Review (April, 1904), pp.518-9; Joshua Harris, 'Writers of To-day.X.--Thomas Hardy', T.P.'s Weekly, 11, No.283 (April 10, 1908), p.471.

83. 'Thomas Hardy's Wessex', The Bookman, 1 (October, 1891), p.26; Annie Macdonell, Thomas Hardy (London, 1894), p.155; Herbert H. Sturmer, 'In Hardy's Wessex.--Wareham', The Speaker, 3, No.53 (October 6, 1900), p.8.

stressing that,

. . . Mr. Hardy has not pledged himself to the literal fidelity of a guidebook. Nothing is gained, by a minute comparison of the real places, with their imagined counterparts: it is better, to dwell upon the general characteristics of the county, which Mr. Hardy reproduces, than to linger upon the details, which he combines, transposes, and employs, to suit his immediate ends.⁸⁴

It was this stress on the general aspect of Hardy's settings and scenery which led to more symbolic interpretations of Wessex and of the part played by nature in his novels. Furthermore, these critics would have agreed with Hardy's stress upon the importance of the artist perceiving in small things, in the details of nature and everyday life, their greater and more general significance and with his stress upon the necessity of the artist seeing into the heart of nature, rather than confining himself to its externalities.⁸⁵

Hardy voiced similar ideas concerning the delineation of character. Early in his novel-writing career, he expressed the fear that, as a novelist, he would 'have to look for material in manners--in ordinary social and fashionable life as other novelists did. Yet he took no interest in manners, but in the substance of life only'. He constantly expressed dislike for the type of novel which, he deemed, was concerned simply with the depiction of manners and insisted that he had rejected this type and 'had mostly aimed at keeping his narratives close to natural life . . .'.⁸⁶ Hardy's most extensive comments on these concerns are to be found in the two essays, 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' and 'The Science of Fiction'. In the

84. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.95-6.

85. See, Life, pp.147, 171, 185, 248.

86. Life, pp.104, 291. Cf. Life, p.211. Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel, pp.197-8, 201-8, 275-7, discusses and gives examples of novelists' concern for this matter.

former, he emphasized that,

To distinguish truths which are temporary from truths which are eternal, the accidental from the essential, accuracies as to custom and ceremony from accuracies as to the perennial procedure of humanity, is of vital importance in our attempts to read for something more than amusement. There are certain novels, both among the works of living and the works of deceased writers, which give convincing proof of much exceptional fidelity, and yet they do not rank as great productions; for what they are faithful in is life garniture and not life. . . . In aiming at the trivial and the ephemeral they have almost surely missed better things.

He was quick to add, however, that 'attention to accessories has its virtues when the nature of its regard does not involve blindness to higher things; still more when it conduces to the elucidation of higher things'. In the later essay, as will be discussed in the next chapter, he outlined the importance of the nature of the artist's perceiving faculties in dictating his ability to render these 'higher things'.⁸⁷

Hardy's critics were equally concerned with whether he simply delineated the outer appearances and manners of men or whether he captured something much more essential to human nature. Most recognized that his primary interest was with 'the substance of life' rather than 'manners', with 'life' rather than 'life garniture'. This is well exemplified by critics who emphasized Hardy's psychological interest in his characters, his interest in their inner life rather than in their externalities. So, for example, a critic of The Return of the Native in The Westminster Review commented that 'he has a keen eye not merely for the surface; he probes the feelings' and, in 1891, William Minto wrote that, 'Beneath the skin of the story-teller there is a psychologist', and that 'it is with the

87: Personal Writings, pp.118-9; for the remarks in 'The Science of Fiction', see, especially, p.137. Cf. his remarks in 'Why I Don't Write Plays', Personal Writings, p. 139.

inner life that he mainly occupies himself . . .'.⁸⁸ Even The Hand of Ethelberta prompted one reviewer to lay stress upon Hardy's psychological interest in the motives of his heroine, a characteristic which he believed differentiated this novel from 'comedies of manners' such as Anthony Trollope produced; for this reviewer, The Hand of Ethelberta was an 'ideal comedy'.⁸⁹

This recognition of Hardy's concern with the inner life of his characters naturally led to commentary upon his choice of natural characters who were freed from the trammels of civilized or, as Hardy and many of his critics would call it, artificial life. In 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', Hardy outlined, in Wordsworthian fashion, his reasons for preferring more natural characters:

With regard to what may be termed the minor key of action and speech--the unemotional, every-day doings of men--social refinement operates upon character in a way which is oftener than not prejudicial to vigorous portraiture, by making the exteriors of men their screen rather than their index, as with untutored mankind. Contrasts are disguised by the crust of conventionality, picturesqueness obliterated, and a subjective system of description necessitated for the differentiation of character. In the one case the author's word has to be taken as to the nerves and muscles of his figures; in the other they can be seen as in an écorché.⁹⁰

Alexandra Orr, in 1879, was one of the first critics to emphasize the natural quality of Hardy's characters:

. . . Mr. Hardy's genius strikes us as gothic in expression, but largely pagan in spirit. It tends always to a primitive conception of human life and character. Man seems to impress him as a natural, rather than social, or at least, socialised being; capricious rather than com-

88. 'Belles Lettres', The Westminster Review, 55 (January, 1879), p.280; William Minto, 'The Work of Thomas Hardy', The Bookman, 1 (December, 1891), pp.100, 101.

89. The Examiner (May 13, 1876), p.545.

90. Personal Writings, pp.124-5. Cf. Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, p.71.

plex; possessing the power of growth, and free from innate obligation to grow into any given form; and in this view society presents itself as an arrangement rather than an organism, and social tradition as a mechanical agent rather than a vital fact.⁹¹

Two years later, Kegan Paul also observed that Hardy selected characters who were natural, as opposed to 'socialised', beings and pointed out that, in so doing, he 'takes life where it changes least, and considers it in its most simply human aspects'.⁹² Alexandra Orr and Kegan Paul anticipated the two main emphases of those critics who discerned that Hardy was more concerned with the inner substance of life than with manners: the elemental quality of Hardy's characters and, because of this elemental quality, the representativeness of his characters of the more permanent, continuous elements in human nature.

The elemental quality of Hardy's characters, particularly of his heroines and rustics, was noted by numerous critics. In 1881, Kegan Paul referred to Hardy's women as 'Undines of the earth'⁹³ and this was to become a key idea in future analyses of his women. Havelock Ellis, in 1883, in his remarks on both the women and the rustics, although his general interest in psychology made him a more perceptive critic of the psychology of Hardy's characters than others, well articulated the general attitude which would be taken towards them. He used such epithets as 'instinct-led', 'subtle simplicity', 'fascinating and incalculable vivacity', 'half ethereal and

91. The New Quarterly Magazine (October, 1879), p.414.

92. The British Quarterly Review (April 1, 1881), pp.344-5. Cf. C. Kegan Paul, 'The Rustic of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy', Merry England, 1 (May, 1883), pp.43-4.

93. The British Quarterly Review (April 1, 1881), p.352.

half homely', 'something elemental, something demonic', and 'they have no souls' to describe the naturalness and elemental quality of Hardy's women, concluding:

In their ever-varying and delicate moods and caprices, which are never untouched by the elemental purity of nature, in their tenderness, in their unconscious selfishness; Fancy, Elfride, Eustacia, Lizzie, Anne, they are all Undines. And few, probably, will care to say that they are, for that, less women.

Of Hardy's rustics, he wrote that they are 'racy of the earth . . . They seem to be born of the earth in a more special sense than her other children'.⁹⁴ This conception of Hardy's heroines and rustics predominated and critics continued to stress and commend Hardy's knowledge of 'the nature of the eternal woman' and the Saxon, the 'quintessentially English', quality of his Wessex characters.⁹⁵ This emphasis resulted in commentary on the similarity of all human nature, despite social distinctions. Thus, for example, a reviewer of The Woodlanders wrote:

. . . though the manners and customs of the denizens of this district are, so far as their daily and yearly routine is concerned, somewhat different to our own . . . yet the charm of his writing in a great measure consists in showing us that in spite of the differences of externals, human nature is very much the same in whatever position of life it is placed.⁹⁶

All these critics revealed an understanding of Hardy's belief

94. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.336-7, 335-6.

95. Anna McClure Sholl, 'Thomas Hardy', Library of the World's Best Literature. Ancient and Modern. Volume 12, ed. Charles Dudley Warner (New York, 1897), p.6935; Stephen Gwynn, 'Literature Portraits.--IX. Mr. Thomas Hardy', Literature, 9, No.194 (July 6, 1901), p.4. Cf. 'Mr. Hardy's New Book', The Times, No.34,225 (March 30, 1894), p.14; John Bell Henneman, 'The Dramatic Novel. George Meredith and Thomas Hardy', The Reader Magazine, Indianapolis, 8 (November, 1906), p.685.

96. 'The Paper-knife', The Cambridge Review, 8, No.199 (May 4, 1887), p.299.

that 'in the portraiture of scenes in any way emotional or dramatic--the highest province of fiction--the peer and the peasant stand on much the same level'⁹⁷ and of his statement, quoted earlier, that the artificialities of life screen the essential elements of human nature whereas, with the characters he chose to portray, the inner life was reflected directly by their words and deeds.

Perceiving this elemental quality of Hardy's characters, critics were quick to suggest that Hardy was concerned with the more abiding aspects of human nature, with what Dr. Johnson called 'common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find' and with 'those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion'.⁹⁸ The accusation that Hardy's rustics were drawn from the pages of Shakespeare, that they were more Elizabethan than Victorian, became, for some, the instigation of the more constructive argument that the rustic and his ways had changed little from these earlier days and that, consequently, there was a similarity between Shakespeare's and Hardy's rustics.⁹⁹ Later, critics were to broaden this perspective and to suggest that it was a certain quality of Hardy's genius, rather than his mere imitative ability, which gave to his characters their enduring qualities and that with all his characters, not simply with his rustics, Hardy was concerned with the abiding characteristics of man.

97. Personal Writings, p.124.

98. Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. Walter Raleigh (London, 1908), p.12.

99. See, for examples, C. Kegan Paul, Merry England (May, 1883), pp.41-2, and 'Selected Books of the Quarter', The New Quarterly Magazine, n.s.1 (January, 1879), p.237.

William Mallock, writing in 1901, well represents this attitude. He wrote that Hardy had 'an insight into human nature which has enabled him to give a universal significance to characters and incidents which at first sight seem narrow in their marked provincialism', that 'though locally and socially the limits of his province may seem narrow, the universalising quality of his genius has made this province a kingdom', and that he dealt 'with what is permanent in life, as opposed to what is temporary and transitional . . .'.¹⁰⁰

From consideration of the elemental and abiding qualities of Hardy's characters, there naturally arose concern with how these qualities pertained to his themes. With the novels published before 1890, there was a tendency, for those critics who recognized that Hardy was concerned with elemental and abiding passions and emotions, to recognize also that his themes were not simply those of a novelist concerned primarily with manners. Lionel Johnson, with his classicist's preferences, perhaps best illustrates this tendency. In an 1898 article on Hardy, which better summarizes his stance than any passage from his book would do and which, as well, gives his opinions on Tess and Jude, he contended that Hardy's genius is 'more rich, profound, and universal' than that of 'a mere painter of country life' or of 'a propagandist of social theories and ethical speculations'. He insisted that, although Hardy's genius was universal and although he was concerned with the abiding elements in human nature, he always worked through the particular and individual and never became merely abstract. He also spoke of what he be-

100. William Hurrell Mallock, 'Art.XI.--The Popular Novel', The Quarterly Review, 194, No.387 (July, 1901), pp.251, 252, 270.

lieved to be an essential difference between the novels published before 1890 and the two major novels of the 1890's:

In confident defiance of those judges, who find in Tess and Jude his masterpieces, by reason of their dealings with social ethics in a 'fearless' and latter-day manner, we would assign the place of honour to The Return of the Native, and, with no long interval, to The Woodlanders and The Mayor of Casterbridge. Life's 'large ironies' are in these, its heights and depths of sorrow, joy, love, hate; the great elemental things of humanity, which are dateless and from everlasting, presented with a noble largeness of handling, and set to superb accompaniments of inanimate nature. . . .

Next, for dignity of theme might come A Pair of Blue Eyes and Far from the Madding Crowd; and Under the Greenwood Tree . . . the creator of Marty South and Winterborne, of Yeobright and his mother, and Eustacia, of Henchard, moves with an absolute security upon the higher plane, where passions clash and emotions meet, and spirits are finely or fiercely touched.¹⁰¹

Lionel Johnson's comments reveal a problem which confronted critics of Tess and Jude. Because of the contemporary elements in them, some believed that they were more closely allied with the minor fiction of the day which, as one critic stated,

. . . lowers itself to baser influences, and concerns itself merely with amusement, or with the reflection of the accidentals and passing emotions of the day And it is just these accidentals, this feverish desire for novelty, this surface life with its morbid psychology and ill-digested ethics, which forms the constantly recurring theme of modern Fiction.¹⁰²

Nevertheless, there were critics who recognized immediately that Tess and Jude, despite their modern concerns, were, as the earlier novels, primarily concerned with the more enduring qualities of life or, to quote Hardy, had made a successful 'ad-

101. Lionel Johnson, 'Academy Portraits. Mr. Thomas Hardy', The Academy, 55 (November 12, 1898), pp.251-2.

102. E.G. Wheelwright, 'A Claim for the Art of Fiction', The Westminster Review, 146, No.2 (August, 1896), p.211. An excellent example of a reviewer who argued that Hardy no longer concerned himself with 'some of the deepest elements of life' in his later novels is William Leonard Courtney, 'Books of the Day', The Daily Telegraph, No. 13,057 (March 17, 1897), p.9.

justment of things 'unusual to things eternal and universal'.¹⁰³

So, for instance, the reviewer of Tess for The Pall Mall Gazette wrote:

The art of the tale-writer who can take a simple history like that of Tess Durbeyfield . . . and turn it over, and shape it, and interpret it to so profound an ethical and aesthetical result--giving it all the modern significancy you please, and yet never losing sight of the permanent, in the casual, effect . . . is not, indeed, to be easily reduced to terms of criticism.¹⁰⁴

Richard le Gallienne, taking a philosophical approach to Jude, insisted that it had greater significance than those novels merely concerned with externalities and passing contemporary issues:

Too many reviewers have treated Jude as a polemic against marriage. Nothing could be more unjust. It is true that the tragedy of Jude and Sue was partly brought about by the marriage laws, but their own weakness of character was mainly responsible for it; and Mr. Hardy's novel, in so far as it is an indictment, is an indictment of much older and crueller laws than those relating to marriage, the laws of the universe. It is a Promethean indictment of that power, which, in Omar's words,

'with pitfall and with gin,

Beset the path we were to wander in',
and to conceive it merely as a criticism of marriage is to miss its far more universal tragic significance.¹⁰⁵

Lionel Johnson's comments also suggest another concern of Hardy's critics--how a writer was to present typical characters, yet make them highly individualized, and how, by extension, a writer was to extract general significance from particularized situations, 'the general principle in the particular case'.¹⁰⁶

Again, Alexandra Orr, in 1879, anticipated commentary on the

103. Life, p.252. Cf. Hardy's remark about the marriage theme in Jude, that it was 'a presentation of particulars containing a good deal that was universal . . .'. Personal Writings, p.34.

104. 'Mr. Thomas Hardy's New Novel', The Pall Mall Gazette, 53, No.8355 (December 31, 1891), p.3.

105. Richard le Gallienne, 'Wanderings in Bookland', The Idler Magazine, 9 (February, 1896), p.115.

106. Personal Writings, p.115.

former part of this concern in regard to Hardy's rustics when she commended his 'skill which has maintained the due balance between the individual and the type where it was so difficult not to develop the one at the expense of the other'.¹⁰⁷ Alexander Japp, in 1895, was more expansive in his remarks and conjectured how this effect was achieved:

They [the rustics] are, so far as their individual pictures are concerned, the truest photographs of peasant life in Dorsetshire and round about it. If you went there, you might find the very types he has portrayed; what belongs to the whole, beyond that, is due to the realising imagination. Not only are they separately true portraits, but, viewed in relation to each other, they give the sense of a whole--a unity such as only a mind like Mr. Hardy's can discern in the tangled and broken threads of the actual, everyday life as found there.¹⁰⁸

Most critics would have interpreted Hardy's 'realising imagination' as a 'universalizing' one. There was no recognition, by these critics, that the universalized quality of Hardy's fiction was, at least in part, achieved through certain techniques such as, for instance, the use of myth, Biblical imagery, and ballad traditions; critics who did recognize the universality of Hardy's themes, and there were many who did, attributed it solely to Hardy's choice of elemental characters and natural settings and to the 'universalizing' genius which informed the work and gave to it a higher significance. This, as was seen, was Lionel Johnson's approach and it was the approach of many critics. As a critic for The Academy wrote, in 1909,

. . . in all the novels we have that sublimation of the general into the typical, that expression of the type in the conversation and actions of a few, which is only possible in the careful and tireless hands of a literary master.¹⁰⁹

107. The New Quarterly Magazine (October, 1879), p.427.

108. Cassell's Family Magazine (June, 1895), p.530.

109. 'Thomas Hardy', The Academy, 76, No.1921 (February 27, 1909), p.824.

In the early years of the twentieth century, a few critics began to emphasize the universal and abstract qualities, the symbolic value, of Hardy's fiction over its localized and particularized qualities. Vernon Lee's 1905 article represents an extreme example of such an approach. She claimed that, in Hardy's fiction, 'the value is the same as in the great poets' and 'all that attempts to be objectively given, deliberately arranged for the sake of illusion . . . is thin, unreal, sometimes absurd', this being especially so in Tess: the peasants 'are not of any country or time', but are 'the vague forms' into which elements of nature 'have gathered themselves'; the 'important action' is not the 'human' but the symbolic one and the episodes 'are incidents whose importance exists only for the passionate fancy which the writer communicates to the reader'; and 'even the human passions in "Tess" are unreal in their unalloyed and, so to speak, musical intensity'.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, most critics took a more moderate stance, stressing Hardy's successful adjustment of the local and the universal, the individual and the type, the particular and the general. This attitude towards Hardy's fiction is perhaps best represented by an article in The Times Literary Supplement, in 1911, which discussed Hardy's contribution to the evolution of the novel and contended that 'he has shown [the novel] how to be a thing of poetry' and, consequently, brought to it 'its sense of vastness, of universality' by choosing 'for his theme simple things, things primal and elemental, the eternal things in which poetry is most at home' and by accomplishing 'the union of the inward and the outward':

110. The Westminster Gazette (July 20, 1905), pp.1-2.

For him art deals with eternal elements in humanity which are little affected by any changes in economic or political conditions. . . . if the future is to carry the development still further, it is certain that novelists must return to Mr. Hardy's methods and give us human beings instead of politicians, poetry instead of argument, the individual instead of the class, the whole of human nature, including the human heart, instead of a distorted fraction of it made up of the senses and the intellect.¹¹¹

Approaches such as this reveal that criticism has digressed greatly from the tendency to assess Hardy's novels simply by their truthful reproduction of various elements of life; but concern with the symbolic value of his fiction did not arise suddenly. As has been illustrated, earlier discussions of the general, the type, and the universal anticipated this interest and prepared the way for even greater refinements and complexity in the interpretations to be given to Hardy's novels in the twentieth century.

111. 'The English Novel and Mr. Hardy', The Times Literary Supplement, No.499 (August 3, 1911), p.282. Lascelles Abercrombie's Thomas Hardy (London, 1912) is also relevant in this context but, because of the highly individualistic interpretation given by him, discussion of his ideas is reserved for the sixth chapter.

Chapter IV

The Controversy over Realism and Idealism in the Criticism of Hardy's Novels

From an early point in Hardy criticism, writers expressed an interest in how Hardy transformed the material of everyday life--material commonplace, prosaic, and very often ugly--into the material of art--material intensified, poetic, and very often beautiful--how, in effect, Hardy combined both realistic and idealistic elements in his novels. Although the controversy which arose over the terms 'realism' and 'idealism' did not actually become heated until the later years of the 1880's, the ideas which informed this controversy were being debated for many years previously.¹ Hardy was of particular interest to critics because most realized that he could not be classified simply as either a 'realist' or an 'idealist'. In 1879, Alexandra Orr wrote:

. . . whatever superficial resemblances may connect Mr. Hardy with other writers of fiction, he is, in the main, as consistently unlike any other as he is consistently like himself; and . . . he not only cannot be compared with other writers, but cannot² be classified under any known formula of literary art.

1. During the 1850's, the term 'realism' began to be applied to literature both in France and England, although it had been used earlier in art criticism. Not until the 1880's, however, were the works of French and Russian writers commonly termed 'realistic' brought to the attention of a large segment of the English public through translations and articles on their works. For discussions of the development of the concept of realism in criticism, see, Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.148-9; Documents of Modern Literary Realism, ed. George Becker (Princeton, 1963), pp.7, 15; René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism, Volume 4 (London, 1966), pp.1-3.
2. The New Quarterly Magazine (October, 1879), p.412. A year earlier, a reviewer of The Return of the Native had commented, in passing, that: 'His art is a thing by itself, and will not stand labelling with the name of school or master.' 'Books to Read, and Others, Vanity Fair, 20, No.526 (November 30, 1878), p.293.

Fifteen years later, after the controversy over realism and idealism had been debated so vociferously and was already on the wane, most critics were still stressing that Hardy belonged to no school. Annie Macdonell, in 1894, insisted that Hardy was 'a writer that cannot be labelled. Ready-made theories about realism, naturalism, and romanticism, are misfits as applied to him: his methods are as wayward as the loves of his heroines'.³

There were, of course, always some critics who considered the terms 'realism' and 'idealism' to be antithetical and who, consequently, attempted to label Hardy as either an 'idealist' or a 'realist'. A few critics, especially those who regarded Wessex as an idyllic land peopled with idyllic rustics, emphasized the romantic or idealistic elements of Hardy's fiction over its realistic elements. Nevertheless, to assign Hardy the label 'idealist', with no qualifications, was rare in the earlier criticism and rarer still in the later criticism; when, in 1911, a writer claimed that Hardy was the 'mighty master of English romance' and that 'Wessex had been for me always fairyland, enchanted, holy soil',⁴ this was a definite

3. Thomas Hardy (1894), p.5. Cf. Dan Godfrey, The Cabinet Portrait Gallery (June, 1894), p.65. Several critics even suggested that Hardy was an 'inventor of an original sort of novel'. See, Arnold Bennett, 'My Literary Heresies. III.--Concerning the Living', T.P.'s Weekly, 4, No.98 (September 23, 1904), p.392. Cf. Laurence Hutton, 'Literary Notes', Harper's New Monthly Magazine, New York, 92 (December, 1895), p.2 (Supplement).
4. Arthur Machen, 'De Omnibus Rebus. The Dorchester Players', The Academy, 81, No.2064 (November 25, 1911), p.657. For other reviewers who emphasized the romantic and idyllic qualities of Hardy's novels, see, as examples, Kegan Paul, Merry England (May, 1883), pp.50-1 (Paul was not, however, consistent in this attitude); 'Two Two-Volume Novels', The Pall Mall Gazette, 44, No.6650 (July 9, 1886), p.5 (a review of The Mayor of Casterbridge); The Graphic (May 7, 1887), p.490 (a review of The Woodlanders).

anomaly. ⁶⁰

Among those critics who did insist upon classifying Hardy, it was to the 'realist' school that he was more frequently relegated. This tendency became most prevalent with the publication of Tess and Jude when some critics began to assert that Hardy had allied himself with the realistic writers of France. Some critics, it will be seen in the next chapter, became quite hysterically moralistic in articulating their prejudices or biases, as was also the case with some critics of the French novel.⁵ Despite the vehemence of such critics, most would have agreed with Haldane MacFall that the attacks on Tess and Jude were 'childish' and, indeed, most would have supported Cecil Brown in his contention that: 'The typical English realists are perhaps George Moore and Gissing; Thomas Hardy has some of the characteristics of the realists, but he is not one of them.'⁶ For most, what made Hardy 'not one of them' was a successful fusion of realistic and non-realistic or idealistic elements, a fusion which made him a writer incapable of being classified. Those qualities of Hardy's fiction which distinguished it from the realistic fiction of the day were interpreted variously. The qualities which have already

5. William Payne, in a review of The Woodlanders, is one of the earliest examples of a reviewer who relegated Hardy to the realist school and displayed moralistic objections to this purported realism. William Morton Payne, 'Recent Fiction', The Dial, Chicago, 8, No.87 (July, 1887), p.68. A good late example of this tendency is Julian W. Abernethy, 'The Invasion of Realism', Education, Boston, 21 (April, 1901), pp.469-74.
6. Haldane MacFall, 'Literary Portraits.II.--Thomas Hardy', The Canadian Magazine, Toronto, 23, No.2 (June, 1904), pp. 107-8 (This article must also have been printed in a British magazine. It was included by Hardy in his personal scrapbooks and annotated, 'The Western Daily Mercury. 12. 4. 1904. '); Cecil Brown, 'Realism', The Westminster Review, 158, No.3 (September, 1902), p.339.

been noted in conjunction with Hardy's deviations from simple 'truth to life'--illusion, probability, universality, and so forth--were applicable in this connection, but these were also characteristics which could be applied to many who were writing in a more definite realistic strain. There were yet other qualities of Hardy's fiction which critics believed separated him even further from such writers, qualities which, while noted early in Hardy criticism, became essential in discussions of the synthesis of realistic and idealistic tendencies in his fiction.

A prominent characteristic of Hardy's fiction, which earlier critics realized deflected his novels from mere 'truth to life' and which later critics saw as distinguishing him from many of the realists, was the intensity of his art. Some of the earliest comments on the intensity of his art occurred in discussions of the cliff scene in A Pair of Blue Eyes. The description in this scene was recognized as being eminently realistic, and even scientific, but it was seen as realism that was inseparable from the very intensity.⁷ By the time of Far from the Madding Crowd and The Return of the Native, disagreement had arisen as to whether Hardy's use of realistic detail contributed or failed to contribute to the intensity of his novels. Henry James's censure of the diffuseness and, hence, lack of concentration of Far from the Madding Crowd is the most noteworthy negative criticism.⁸ Other critics, however, would

7. See, for examples, John Hutton, 'Books. A Pair of Blue Eyes', The Spectator, 46 (June 28, 1873), p.832; W.H. Browne, 'Reviews', The Southern Magazine, Baltimore, 13 (September, 1873), p.370; 'A Pair of Blue Eyes', The Saturday Review, 36 (August 2, 1873), p.158 (probably by Horace Moule).

8. After criticizing Far from the Madding Crowd for being 'in-

have challenged James's strictures. William Minto, for instance, observed that the 'concentration of interest' of Far from the Madding Crowd distinguished it from Hardy's previous novels. He further remarked on aspects of the novel which made it so powerful:

And it is in following the dark ways of tragic passion that Mr. Hardy's power makes itself most unquestionably felt. Bathsheba is conquered by one Sergeant Troy With their union the tragedy begins--a story of the simplest kind, but told with wonderful power. . . . The strength of the deadly conflict shines out all the more luridly from the quiet of the rural background. . . . In these limits [of a review] it is not easy to follow Mr. Hardy's delineation of character and passion in sufficient detail, and thus give an adequate idea of its subtlety and force. His descriptions of natural phenomena also want special consideration.

The earliest critics tended to be primarily concerned with the contribution that realistic detail made to the intensity of Hardy's novels. With The Return of the Native, critics began to take a different perspective and to emphasize how Hardy deviated from realistic tenets in his use of detail in order to attain intensity in his novels. At first, critics believed this deviation from strict realism to be a fault in his fiction. An early example is William Henley's objection to 'a strong touch of what may be called Victor-Hugoism' in The Return of the Native:

ordinately diffuse', a result of 'the infusion of a large amount of conversational and descriptive padding and the use of an ingeniously verbose and redundant style', James went on to suggest that the novel failed to attain the intensity which others acclaimed it to possess: 'This is Mr. Hardy's trouble; he rarely gets beyond ambitious artifices--the mechanical simulation of heat and depth and wisdom that are absent.' Henry James, 'Far from the Madding Crowd', The Nation, New York, 19, No.495 (December 24, 1874), pp. 423-4. Cf. 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The World, 1, No.22 (December 2, 1874), p.16.

9. The Examiner (December 5, 1874), p.1330. See pp.89-90 of this study for further examples from reviews of both Far from the Madding Crowd and The Return of the Native.

. . . there is the same extraordinary apprehension of the significance of nature as a whole and in detail [as in Hugo], the same power of cumulative poetry, the same fine habit of observant imagination, and withal the same aptitude to spoil, by the introduction of exaggerated circumstances, of an offensive personality, of an inopportune conceit, the effect aimed at and striven for with all seriousness and all strength. This note of theatricality is painfully distinct in Hardy's work, and is perhaps its greatest defect.¹⁰

It soon became apparent to critics that such deviations were an essential aspect of Hardy's art and that criteria other than 'realism' were needed to assess them. Several considerations were of particular importance in analyses which concentrated on this aspect. The first involved Hardy's choice of a confined stage on which his characters enacted their dramas. As he said of Little Hintock in The Woodlanders:

It was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world . . . where, from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein.¹¹

Passages already quoted from William Minto's review of Far from the Madding Crowd and Harriet Preston's comments on Hardy's use of the grotesque illustrate an awareness of this aspect of Hardy's fiction.¹² Other critics not only emphasized that beneath the seeming repose of Wessex were uncalculated passions and that the very repose of the country heightened the intensity of the drama that was enacted, but also emphasized a certain intensity of Hardy's vision which dictated the choice of such scenes and which permeated the whole of his art. Thus, in

10. William Ernest Henley, 'The Book of the Week. "The Return of the Native"', London, 4, No.95 (November 23, 1878), p. 498.

11. Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders (1974; rpt. London, 1978), p.38.

12. See pp.81-2, 107 of this study. Cf. William Lyon Phelps, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy', The North American Review, New York, 190, No.647 (October, 1909), pp.508-9.

1892, Janetta Newton-Robinson wrote:

Beneath the repose of his rural scenes throbs a strong pulse of passion, a dramatic intensity of vision, which give significance to the most homely detail. . . .

The intensity of Mr. Hardy's mind, however, sometimes leads him astray, and tempts him to throw an unpleasant phosphorescent glow upon his pages, or to introduce some melodramatic incident or distasteful detail. . . . Mr. Hardy's love of the bizarre breaks forth repeatedly, and he is liable to fall into a vein of morbid fancifulness. A note of almost barbaric crudeness and harshness is struck from time to time, induced perhaps by an excessive strain after effect. The impression thus produced resembles that of some weird mediaeval grotesque, which fascinates by the force of the distorted imagination which gave it birth; for though this quality is not pleasing, it has nevertheless artistic value, as it helps to complete the picture of the bucolic mind, so prone to want of reticence and morbid imaginings.¹³

While numerous critics made general comments on how the intensity of Hardy's imagination affected his plots and style, very few considered how it affected his characterization. An approach was made towards an understanding of this aspect of Hardy's characterization in discussions of the elemental qualities of his rustics and heroines, but it was an area of consideration that was never developed. Only Robert Louis Stevenson and Vernon Lee--who, however, totally disregarded the realistic elements of Hardy's characterization--discerned how, at a heightened moment in a character's career, the character would become what Hardy referred to as a 'visible essence', a personification of some dominant abstract quality integral to their nature, the most obvious examples of this occurring with his female characters to express their essential womanliness.¹⁴

13. The Westminster Review (February, 1892), pp.153-5.

14. See Robert Louis Stevenson's discussion of 'the dramatic novel' (A Pair of Blue Eyes being one of his examples) in his article, 'A Humble Remonstrance', Longman's Magazine, 5 (December, 1884), pp.145-7, and Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), The Westminster Gazette (July 20, 1905), p.2. For Hardy's references to 'visible essences' and for his comments on his desire 'to intensify the expression of things . . . so

Because Hardy only uses this means of characterization sparingly and, for the most part, adheres to more conventional means of characterization and because his major characters never become mere abstractions, mere 'visible essences', but always retain a distinct individuality, it is an aspect of his characterization which has, even yet, failed to attract much response from his critics.

Intensity was a major concern for critics who perceived that Hardy could not simply be classified with those writers who adhered rigidly to realist principles. Another preoccupation of critics was with Hardy's transformation of the simple and commonplace material of life into a work of art which was not merely trivial or uninteresting. As was noted in the second chapter, critics became increasingly aware that there was a conflict between aesthetic interest or pleasure and the depiction of ordinary or common life. Well before the controversy over realism in the novel, critics demonstrated an awareness of this conflict and, by the 1890's, awareness had become even more acute, discussion usually concerning itself with those of the school called 'analytic', primarily represented by Henry James and William Dean Howells.¹⁵ Hardy expressed the senti-

that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible', see Life, p.177; The Return of the Native, p.93. Examples of this idea put into practice are to be found in Desperate Remedies (London, 1975), pp.152, 290; Tess of the d'Urbervilles (London, 1974), p.187. Cf. The Woodlanders, p.193.

15. For discussion of this matter, see pp.45-8 of this study. Henry Fielding, The History of Tom Jones, Volume One, p. 321, is an early example of a writer who observed this problem. By the middle of the century, it was a frequent theme in criticism, a theme to which writers like G.H. Lewes and Leslie Stephen constantly recurred. While discussion persisted throughout the second half of the century, it became intensified in discussions of 'analytical

What

ments of many when; in 1891, he wrote:

Howells and those of his school forget that a story must be striking enough to be worth telling. Therein lies the problem--to reconcile the average with that uncommonness which alone makes it natural that a tale or experience would dwell in the memory and induce repetition.¹⁶

Rarely did a critic not concede to Hardy a capacity for transforming the prosaic into the poetic, romantic, or tragic. When a critic did deny Hardy this capacity, his criticism was very often tinged with moralistic objections to, as one reviewer of The Trumpet-Major put it, Hardy's 'lack of elevation, a prosaic and almost self-assertive realism, and a dislike to look high in the field of motive . . .'.¹⁷ Only with Jude did the criticism become frequent that Hardy confined himself to 'a prosaic and almost self-assertive realism'. Edmund Gosse well expressed this attitude when he wrote:

Berkshire is an unpoetical county, 'meanly utilitarian', as Mr. Hardy confesses; the imagination hates its con-

writers'. See, as an example, William Simonds, An Introduction to the Study of English Fiction (London, 1895), pp.83-4. Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.51-2, notes further examples.

16. Life, p.239. Cf. Life, pp.252, 362; One Rare Fair Woman, pp.133-4. Hardy opens Desperate Remedies (p.39) with a remark that expresses a similar idea. Cf. his comment in The Return of the Native (p.192) concerning the heath-dwellers' attitude towards Clym's fortunes.
17. 'Contemporary Literature. Novels of the Quarter', The British Quarterly Review, 73 (January 1, 1881), p.228. William Morton Payne, 'Recent Fiction', The Dial, Chicago, 7, No.75 (July, 1886), pp.67-8, also criticized Hardy's 'uncompromising' realism and 'photographic' methods, his failure to invest his characters 'with a poetry and a pathos of the highest order', in The Mayor of Casterbridge, although, which was unusual for Payne, he did not express any overt moralistic objections. One of the other exceptions is partially quoted on p.2 of this study. This critic continued: 'All his life he has been drawing the English peasant, most unpoetical of peasants, with realism faithful to his stolidity, coarseness, and absence of any romance save that of destiny, which is present in all things ruled by Fate.' The Academy (January 14, 1899), p.43.

cave, loamy cornfields and dreary, hedgeless highways. . . . In choosing North Wessex as the scene of a novel Mr. Hardy wilfully deprives himself of a great element of his strength. Where there are no prehistoric monuments, no ancient buildings, no mossed and immemorial woodlands, he is Samson shorn.

Gosse was willing to grant, however, that 'this fortuitous absence of beauty being acknowledged, the novelist's hand shows no falling off in the vigour and reality of his description'.¹⁸

Few critics would have concurred with such criticism when applied to the novels prior to Jude and, even with Jude, many critics tended to see qualities in it which lifted it beyond mere prosaicness. Most recognized that, for Hardy, the life of simple people, engaged in everyday occupations, could be treated in such a way, infusing this raw material with such poetry, as to mould it into a work of art.¹⁹ From the earliest reviews of Hardy's novels, critics revealed an awareness of the poetry which permeated Hardy's prose and of his ability to distil romance from simple lives, commented upon how this heightened the simple and commonplace material with which he was working, and often compared him to George Eliot. 'Its aroma is so delicate', wrote a reviewer of Under the Greenwood Tree, 'that a brief table of its contents and meagre plot would only convey the idea of prose to what is essentially a poetic pastoral, not unworthy of George Eliot.'²⁰ Critics also per-

18. Edmund Gosse, 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', Cosmopolis, 1 (January, 1896), pp.62-3.

19. See, for examples, Hardy's comments on William Barnes's poetry, Personal Writings, pp.96-7, 104-5. With this he was in complete accord with Gustave Flaubert--'Yvetot donc vaut Constantinople' (quoted by George Becker, Documents of Modern Literary Realism, p.89)--and with remarks made by George Eliot in Scenes of Clerical Life, p.81, and Adam Bede, pp.173-5.

20. 'New Books', The Figaro, No.100 (February 1, 1873), p.5. Cf. 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.2329 (June 15,

ceived that, although Hardy was working with simple and commonplace material, he had wrought novels of great and significant tragic power. They revealed an understanding of Hardy's assertion that 'the domestic emotions have throbbled in Wessex nooks with as much intensity as in the palaces of Europe', and that 'an ample theme [is] the intense interests, passions, and strategy that throb through the commonest lives'.²¹ With Far from the Madding Crowd, reviewers began to remark that--

The lesson to be learned from his highly dramatic story would seem to be that, in these sequestered spots, great tragedies can be enacted, and strong loves and passions aroused, equally as much as in cities and in the busy haunts of men--

a comment anticipating that by Hardy in The Woodlanders.²²

There was also a recognition that it took a certain kind of genius to give to such 'domestic emotions' tragic power and significance. The Times's reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd, for example, remarked upon Hardy's ability to transform simple and commonplace material into tragic material:

In his new book . . . there is still further evidence of his possessing a certain vein of original thought, and a delicate perceptive faculty, which transforms, with skilful touch, the matter-of-fact prosaic details of every-day life into an idyl or a pastoral poem. . . . This idyllic or romantic element is never violent or forced, and is always kept within due bounds. Though the book is rich in fancy, imagination never gains an undue mastery over the writer; there is the comfortable sense all the time that Mr. Hardy has his subject well in hand, and, for all its

1872), p.748; 'A Pair of Blue Eyes', The Examiner, No. 3637 (October 13, 1877), p.1300.

21. Personal Writings, p.45; Life, p.153.

22. 'New Books', The Figaro, No.570 (January 16, 1875), p.11; cf. the passage from The Woodlanders, p.38, quoted on p. 108 of this study. The Return of the Native prompted similar comments. See, 'New Novels', The Graphic, 18, No. 471 (December 7, 1878), p.579; 'The Literary Movement in England, France and Germany. Recent English Books', The International Review, New York, 6 (February, 1879), p.212.

tragic tendencies, will never let it turn to ranting or pathos.²³

Later critics were more explicit about what exactly it was in Hardy's fiction that they believed created poetic, romantic, and tragic effects, how these effects were created, and how this distinguished him from writers of the realist school. It was to Hardy's sympathies with rustic life and to his love of nature that many critics attributed the inspiration to permeate his accounts of simple and commonplace life with poetry, romance, and tragedy. Sympathy was a quality seen to be wanting in many of the more strictly realistic writers, especially French authors. As Kenneth Graham remarks:

In particular, 'sympathy' is singled out as a quality of temperament essential to the artistic shaping of experience, and its lack is often named as the greatest single fault of the French realists. . . . The subjective element which these critics demand is essentially more than a mere colouring of sentiment. It can imply the²⁴ whole involvement of the artist in his creation . . .

An interview in 1892 quoted Hardy as saying: 'Yes, I have endeavoured to write from the point of view of the village people themselves instead of from that of the Hall or the Parsonage.'²⁵ It was this 'point of view' that many critics found so appealing. Leon Vincent well summarized this tendency in Hardy criticism when, in 1898, he wrote:

Hardy opens the eyes of the reader to the charm, the beauty, the mystery to be found in common life and in every-day objects. . . . He pours out the treasures of

23. 'Recent Novels', The Times, No.28,221 (January 25, 1875), p.4.
24. English Criticism of the Novel, p.37. The 'subjective element' in general will be discussed later in this chapter.
25. Cassell's Saturday Journal (June 25, 1892), p.944.

his observation in every chapter. He sees everything, feels everything, sympathizes with everything.²⁶

These comments reveal an understanding of an essential aspect of Hardy's fiction. For him, it was not enough that a writer be observant, scientific, or realistic: '. . . the true means towards the "Science" of Fiction' is 'a power of observation informed by a living heart'; 'The Poet takes note of nothing that he cannot feel emotively.'²⁷ Critics interpreted this 'power of observation informed by a living heart' in various ways. Louis Zangwill, for instance, in his review of Wessex Poems, suggested that 'the line between novelist and poet [is] a somewhat artificial one' because 'a man who has really felt life and nature and has given exquisite literary expression to his perceptions in one form, is surely able to express them in another if he is so minded'. In Hardy's poetry, as in his prose, Zangwill continued, 'there is a big sense of life, naked and unrelenting yet distinctively tinged' which he called 'poetic reality'.²⁸ Although for some critics, such as Gosse, this poetical quality was missing in Jude, for others, such as Stephen Gwynn, it was not:

. . . the poetry of his nature finds its best utterance in prose. It is a poet who renders to us the atmosphere of the Vale of Blackmoor, reeking with blue mists; a poet who renders to us Tess's thoughts about the stars; a poet

26. Leon Henry Vincent, The Bibliotaph and Other People (Boston, 1898), pp.86-7. Other excellent examples of this tendency include "'The Trumpet-Major"', The Pall Mall Gazette, 32, No.4915 (November 23, 1880), p.11; 'Literary Arrivals', The Leeds Mercury, 125, No.15,674 (July 2, 1888), p.8.
27. Personal Writings, p.138; Life, p.342.
28. Louis Zangwill, 'In the World of Art and Letters', The Cosmopolitan, New York, 26, No.5 (March, 1899), pp.582-3. Cf. Henry MacArthur's comments on Hardy's 'sympathetic realism'. Realism and Romance (1897), pp.12-3, 19.

who renders Jude's half mystical idealization of the University which had no place for such as him; a poet who throughout his work feels and makes us feel the filaments that draw nature together, the quivering joy of the earth under the rain, of the tree at the mounting of the sap, of bodies that meet and mingle, and of souls that at last surrender to each other. By a poet I mean a man whose work is informed by the larger imagination; and such a man, whether for his comfort or discomfort, and for ours, is undoubtedly Mr. Thomas Hardy.²⁹

As these remarks indicate, critics also concentrated on the suggestiveness of Hardy's novels which created a poetical or romantic atmosphere. This is most in evidence with critics who stressed the mood or atmosphere, rather than the literal fidelity, of his fiction. Janetta Newton-Robinson made some of the most perceptive remarks on the suggestiveness of Hardy's landscapes, particularly of Egdon Heath:

. . . in the Return of the Native we are transported into a new world, the microcosm of Egdon Heath, and are made to feel that no one of the characters would be appropriate or even possible elsewhere. The poetical atmosphere of the book is due to this intimate relation of animate to inanimate existence. Each personage seems, as it were, to typify some mood of the great rugged heath. The rebellious, undisciplined Eustacia might stand for its stormy grandeur, Clym for its steadfastness, Mrs. Yeobright for its forbidding sternness or grim tenderness, while Thomasin represents its more smiling and genial aspects, and Grandfer and Christian Cantle, with the chorus of 'natives', afford relief and local colour. In any case, between these figures and their setting there is a subtle harmony. The sentiment of the wild heathland around them permeates and colours their every word and action.

Later in her essay, she remarked that Hardy's 'mingling of poetry and realism, of imagination and precision, of wayward bizar-
rerie and winning grace is strangely fascinating . . .'.³⁰ Some critics were more explicit in their remarks on how this poetic

29. Literature (July 6, 1901), p.6.

30. The Westminster Review (February, 1892), pp.158, 164. Another excellent example of a critic who stressed the mood and atmosphere of Hardy's fiction is George Douglas, 'An Itinerary of "Wessex"', The Bookman, 21, No.122 (November, 1901), p.59.

quality underscored the deeper significance of Hardy's fiction. Such was the approach of Arthur Symons. Discussing why Hardy was one of those novelists who could be re-read, he asked: 'Is it on account of that concealed poetry, never absent though often unseen, which gives to these fantastic or real histories a meaning beyond the meaning of the facts, beneath it like an under-current, around it like an atmosphere?' He answered this question in the affirmative, but emphasized that the poetic quality did not interfere with Hardy being

. . . a story-teller of the good old kind, a story-teller whose plot is enough to hold his readers. . . . I am inclined to question if any novelist has been more truly a poet without ceasing to be in the true sense a novelist. The poetry of Hardy's novels is a poetry of roots, and it is a voice of the earth.³¹

Most critics acknowledged that it was never 'an artificial Arcadia' that Hardy depicted, that 'he knows how to poetise without sacrificing truth'.³² Consequently, it became a predominant theme in Hardy criticism that he synthesized realism and idealism, truth and beauty, the prosaic and the poetic in his fiction. This is well demonstrated by those who revealed an understanding of Hardy's notion that the poetry and romance of a novel should be derived from the events and not from any uncommonness or idealization of the characters.³³ As The Times's reviewer of Wessex Tales wrote:

31. Arthur Symons, 'A Note on the Genius of Thomas Hardy', The Saturday Review, 102, No.2657 (September 29, 1906), p.391.
32. 'Recent Novels', The Morning Post, No.36,169 (May 21, 1888), p.6. Cf. 'Belles Lettres', The Westminster Review, 130 (July, 1888), p.115; John Alexander Steuart, Letters to Living Authors (London, 1890), pp.101-16.
33. Life, pp.150, 176. See quotations on pp.45, 80 of this study.

Lizzie Newberry . . . is of the stamp of heroine chiefly affected by Mr. Hardy, to whom it might be objected that he has but two types of woman, and that in neither (if that is a fault) is the romantic element predominant. One type is masculine, the other patient and uncomplaining, and both are cast in that practical mould which corresponds most fully to the facts of peasant life. Nevertheless, the romance is there; only it is not in the women themselves, but in the story which weaves itself round them.³⁴

Mary Moss attributed the poetry and romance to the beauty of Hardy's style which raised his narratives and characters above the commonplace. She believed that Hardy's

. . . chief original service to English fiction has been the same as Tennyson's to English verse. He bridges over the gulf between poetry and science. He holds fast to romance without slurring or ignoring the facts of actual life.

In Under the Greenwood Tree, 'the drollery of his style banishes dullness, the pervading beauty lifts it above the commonplace'; throughout Far from the Madding Crowd, 'there is such a marvel of lyrical prose, expressing such tender and perfect vision, that not Maeterlinck himself has cast more beauty upon simple and common things'; and, in The Mayor of Casterbridge, 'apart from Michael Henchard, the characters are only saved from commonplace by the sheer charm of the narrative . . .'.³⁵

Several of these comments reveal that there was an understanding, by some critics, of Hardy's Aristotelian contention that,

. . . despite the claims of realism . . . the best fiction, like the highest artistic expression in other modes, is more true, so to put it, than history or nature can be. . . . To take an example from sculpture: no real gladiator ever died in such perfect harmony with normal nature

34. 'Recent Novels', The Times, No. 32,402 (June 2, 1888), p. 18. Cf. Joseph William Gleeson White, Letters to Eminent Hands (Derby, 1892), p. 65.

35. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (September, 1906), pp. 366, 356, 358, 363.

as is represented in the well-known Capitoline marble.
 . . . What is called the idealization of character is³⁶
 in truth, the making of them too real to be possible.

James Little demonstrated the greatest awareness of this aspect of Hardy's fiction. He differentiated between 'romancers', such writers as Scott and Bulwer Lytton, and 'romanticists', such writers as George Eliot, Thackeray, Meredith, and, to a lesser degree, Dickens. He believed Hardy to be 'the most accomplished romanticist in fiction England has ever seen . . .'.

Little defined this 'romanticism' as

. . . not only the return to nature, but the renascence of art, for the nearer we get to nature in our art, the more there is of cunning and trick in the art itself; nature needs to be all the more tightly compressed, all the more artfully simulated, so that its true-seemingness may be so true that no test, however fine, can prove it false.

For Little, Tess possessed 'infinitely greater' 'historical value' than 'any novel dealing with the past'. In explaining his reasons for this opinion, he showed close affinity to many of Hardy's ideas:

I maintain that a purer and more restful art is that which constructs from what we know and what we can prove, that which we do not know but which to our inner consciousness we can prove to be true from what we actually know. . . .

I take it, then, that the highest possible achievement in fiction, as in art, lies in the direction of romanticism; in other words, poeticised naturalism. And I will go further and say that, in greater or less degree, it is this aim, that the most powerful novelists of to-day have set before them.³⁷

36. Personal Writings, pp.117-8. Cf. The Poetics of Aristotle, p.35.

37. James Stanley Little, 'Some Aspects and Tendencies of Current Fiction', The Library Review, 1, No.1 (March, 1892), pp.10-2. He was using the term 'naturalism' simply in the sense of 'a study of man in his environment' (p.13). For other examples of reviewers who revealed an awareness of this aspect of Hardy's fiction, see, 'Literature. New Books and New Editions', The Leeds Mercury, 124, No.15,328 (May 25, 1887), p.3; 'Literature. "The Dynasts"', The Times Literary Supplement, No.214 (February 16, 1906), p.50.

His notion of the 'true-seemingness' produced by such fiction and his notion that fiction appeals to an 'inner consciousness' to test its truth suggest close affinity to Hardy's ideas. Such commentary also reveals that critics realized that 'truth' and 'realism' must be interpreted in a special way when being used as criteria to evaluate Hardy's fiction.

It was suggested earlier that most critics realized that, in Hardy's fiction, the poetry and romance were derived from the narrative rather than from any idealization of the characters. Nevertheless, few critics would have concurred with The British Quarterly Review's critic of The Trumpet-Major, previously quoted, who censured Hardy for not looking 'high in the field of motive'. The general tendency was to recognize that Hardy's characters did not, for the most part, represent either extreme. Several essential elements were involved in such considerations. The first is suggested by William Minto when, in 1891, he commented that Hardy was 'capable . . . of disentangling the heroic from the commonplace',³⁸ Lionel Johnson wrote well on this aspect, particularly on Hardy's ability to give poetry and dignity to his characters through their occupations. He acknowledged the value of writers 'who find their happiness in the recital of conspicuous and shining deeds', but he found 'the greater beauty, and the greater strength, in the writers, who meditate more common things: things of no stir and show, the old and wonted experiences of men'. He went on to say that a man's business, which has a great influence upon his character and life, was, regrettably, often neglected by novelists to concentrate on his 'sudden storms of passion'. In Tess, Adam Bede, and Wuthering Heights, however,

38. The Bookman (December, 1891), p.101.

. . . the trivialities, businesses, experiences, set before us with so skilful a choice, have made the eventful tragic acts, an hundredfold more tragic. The stroke of sentiment, the touch upon the nerves of sensibility, how easily are these effected! But the gradual evolution of a tragedy, by dwelling with art upon the forces and necessities, which surround the actors in their daily life, demands of the artist a deeper mind. . . . Mr. Hardy and the novelists resembling him, undeterred by any look of triviality or of insignificance, discern dominant emotions and potent passions, behind the use and wont of every day.

In that 'it is through the homely features of his pastoral scenes, that he makes his most poignant emotions felt', Johnson said, Hardy resembles Homer and, more particularly, Virgil.³⁹

Another essential element in considerations of Hardy's avoidance of the extremes of realism and idealism in characterization was a recognition of what Hardy stated in 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction':

The higher passions must ever rank above the inferior--intellectual tendencies above animal, and moral above intellectual--whatever the treatment, realistic or ideal. Any system of inversion which should attach more importance to the delineation of man's appetites than to the delineation of his aspirations, affections, or humors, would condemn the old masters of imaginative creation from Aeschylus to Shakespeare. . . . The finer manifestations must precede in importance the meaner, without such a radical change in human nature as we can hardly conceive as pertaining to an even remote future of decline, and certainly do not recognize now.⁴⁰

A few critics did believe that Hardy was simply concentrating on the meaner, more sordid aspects of human nature, to the exclusion of 'the higher passions' and the nobler aspects. Such criticism was usually rigidly moralistic or religious in its attitude. Although there were a few early examples of this

39. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.112-5. Earlier critics who commented upon this aspect of Hardy's novels include The Times (April 27, 1887), p.16; 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The Times, No.33,533 (January 13, 1892), p.13.

40. Personal Writings, pp.114-5. Cf. Life, p.251; One Rare Fair Woman, pp.63, 130.

Strephon'.⁴⁴ Even with critics who did not grant Hardy's characters any nobility, many felt that their fascination compensated for this lack. This was especially the case with his women. Such, for example, was the attitude of a reviewer of The Woodlanders in his discussion of the 'infinite verisimilitude of character' in this novel:

The two heroines are drawn with a touch both fine and strong. The one, simple, loving, staunch, profound, remains, owing to an extrinsic roughness, an unpolished superior, scarcely detected by the reader to the end. The other, borrowing from superior education, from youth and freshness, an adventitious grace, wields over not only her fellow characters but over the reader of the story a compelling charm. We admire, we reverence, we honor, we follow, and yet in every essential of the soul this woman is as mean and common, as uninspired and acquiescent as Marty South is original and great.⁴⁵

Discussions of lack of elevation were not confined to characterization, but were extended to considerations of the general purport of Hardy's fiction. Although, as Kenneth Graham observes, there was 'in the last two decades of the century the theory that what is unpleasant or ugly in life must remain so in art, and consequently must be shunned by novelists',⁴⁶ there were many critics who did realize that the 'unpleasant or ugly in life' could be transformed, in a work of art, into something of great beauty. For such critics, 'truth' and

44. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), p.134. Cf. 'Books. A Group of Noble Dames', The Spectator, 67, No.3292 (August 1, 1891), p.163, on Hardy's heroes and Marty South; 'Thomas Hardy', The Daily Chronicle, No.9990 (March 16, 1894), p.3; Richard Eugene Burton, Masters of the English Novel (New York, 1909), pp.275-6; E.P. Dawson, 'Thomas Hardy--The Modern Greek', The Yale Literary Magazine, New Haven, Connecticut, 75, No.7 (April, 1910), pp.356-8.

45. A.M.F.R., 'A Letter from England', The Literary World, Boston, 18, No.12 (June 11, 1887), p.185. Cf. The Literary World, Boston (February 1, 1879), p.37, on The Return of the Native.

46. English Criticism of the Novel, p.30.

'beauty', 'realism' and 'idealism', were not necessarily inimical, a belief with which Hardy was in complete accord.⁴⁷

Again, not all critics believed that Hardy was successful in attaining any degree of beauty in his novels; they believed that they were simply unrelieved and unredeemed squalidness, ugliness, or painfulness. Such criticism became most prevalent and vehement with Tess and Jude; earlier examples tended to be more concerned with objectionable details than with the general import of a novel.⁴⁸ Critics of Tess and Jude did not confine themselves to censure of details. Edmund Gosse's 1895 review of Jude well typifies and summarizes the main objections made to Hardy's last two major novels. He began his review with the comment: 'It is a very gloomy, it is even a grimy, story that Mr. Hardy has at last presented to his admirers.' He called attention to 'the sordid phases of failure through which he drags us' and continued:

. . . we have been accustomed to find him more sensible to beauty than he shows himself in 'Jude the Obscure'. There were sorrows enough, and the disappointment of hopes, and the frustration of natural wishes, in 'The Woodlanders'; but, at least, there was in that wonderful romance a setting of exquisite natural beauty. But in his new book Mr. Hardy concentrates his observation on the sordid and painful side of life and nature. We

47. See, for examples, Life, pp.114, 120-1, 171, 213; Friends of a Lifetime, ed. Viola Meynell (London, 1940), p.311. Into his notebooks, he copied twice a quotation from Matthew Arnold's essay on Joubert: 'Fiction has no business to exist unless it is more beautiful than reality.' The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy. Volume I, ed. Lennart A. Björk (Göteborg, 1974), pp.111, 135 (Text). Björk (p.336, Notes) also notes 'Hardy's comment from 1901 in "Literary Notes II" [unpublished] on Shaw and a literary critic who commend Ibsen: "But neither writer dwells sufficiently on the fact that Ibsen's defect is a lack of the essentiality of beauty to art, T.H."'
48. See, for example, The Pall Mall Gazette (November 23, 1880), pp.11-2, on The Trumpet-Major.

rise from the perusal of it stunned with a sense of the hollowness of existence.

He acknowledged the beauty in the earlier chapters concerned with Jude's 'ecstatic vision of Oxford', but found such passages all too rare and 'presently they cease altogether, drowned in the ugly fate of Jude and Sue'. He, as many critics, also lamented the disappearance of 'delicious bucolic humour' in Jude. Despite these initial objections, Gosse did go on to find much in the novel to respect--'a great solidity of workmanship, a marvellous exactitude and coherency of observation'--and concluded that Jude was 'the very remarkable work of almost the greatest of living novelists'.⁴⁹ In the review of the following year, Gosse fancifully expressed the sentiments of many critics of Jude when he wrote:

On the day of his [Hardy's] birth, during a brief absence of his nurse, there slipped into the room an ethereal creature, known as the Spirit of Plastic Beauty. Bending over the cradle she scattered roses on it, and as she strewed them she blessed the babe. . . . while the nurse still delayed, a withered termagant glided into the room. From her apron she dropped toads among the rose-leaves, and she whispered: 'I am the genius of False Rhetoric, and led by me he shall say things ugly and coarse, not recognising them to be so, and shall get into a rage about matters that call for philosophic calm, and shall spoil some of his best passages with pedantry and incoherency. . . .' So saying, she put out her snaky tongue at the unoffending babe, and ever since, his imagination, noble as it is, and attuned to the great harmonies of nature, is liable at a moment's notice to give a shriek of discord. The worst, however, which any honest critic can say of 'Jude the Obscure' is that the fairy godmother seems, for the moment, to have relaxed her guardianship a little unduly.⁵⁰

Only with Jude was there any great division of opinion as

49. Edmund Gosse, 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The St. James's Gazette, 31, No.4797 (November 8, 1895), p.4.
50. Cosmopolis (January, 1896), pp.68-9. Other reviewers of Jude were not so temperate. See, for example, 'Novels', The Guardian, 50, No.2606 (November 13, 1895), p.1770. Cf. 'Art.VIII.--On Ugliness in Fiction', The Edinburgh Review, 207, No.424 (April, 1908), pp.448-52.

to whether Hardy's imagination was inspired by 'the Spirit of Plastic Beauty' or 'the genius of False Rhetoric'. Most critics of the novels prior to Jude would have concurred with James Barrie who differentiated Hardy from those 'clever novelists', who 'give us the sentimental aspect of country life', as well as from those 'professional realists of these times, who wear a giant's robe and stumble in it' and who 'see only the seamy side of life'. Hardy, Barrie believed, was not of this latter group because 'they only see the crack in the cup, while he sees the cup with the crack in it'.⁵¹ In 1892, William Sharp expressed the same idea slightly differently when he remarked, contrasting Zola and Hardy: 'One writer is a man who can see things only at his feet or else afar, the other a man whose clear and serene gaze takes in all, in just proportions.'⁵²

Critics distinguished and emphasized several qualities of Hardy's fiction differentiating it from more strictly realistic work which, it was believed, was concerned only with 'the seamy side of life' and which did not reveal a successful transformation of such material into art. William Sharp, quoted above, was more flexible in his attitude towards Zola than most critics were inclined to be. Nevertheless, he believed that in two qualities--beauty of language and artistry--Hardy was superior to Zola.⁵³ This beauty of language was one of the major concerns for those critics who contended that Hardy's narratives were not mere unrelieved painfulness or squalor. George Douglas, for instance, writing in 1900 on The Return of the Native--

51. The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), p.59.

52. The Forum, New York (July, 1892), p.593.

53. The Forum, New York (July, 1892), p.593.

which he believed to be 'probably the grandest, certainly the most artistically perfect, of the products of his tragic inspiration' and for which 'a claim may well be put forward that it is the finest novel in the language'--concentrated on the beauty which alleviated its painfulness:

It is a tragedy of purely pagan inspiration--conceived, indeed, after the old classic model of Aeschylus and Sophocles--its motive being to exhibit the contrast between the power of Circumstance, with the impassive permanence of Nature, and the fleeting ineffectual character of the suffering race of mortals. But, as in the old Greek dramatists, the harshness of this gloomy and terrible theme is tempered and softened by the beauty with which it is exhibited--a beauty, in Hardy, of a somewhat bizarre cast, and perhaps the more fascinating upon that account . . . ⁵⁴

Other critics concentrated on what is perhaps best described as the reticence in Hardy's fiction. George St. George, for example, in a review of Life's Little Ironies, made some observations applicable to Hardy's fiction in general:

The restraint in the story-teller's manner applies to matter rather than to words, to feeling rather than to expression. The number of things that this author contrives to leave unsaid, and yet by some subtle influence to convey to the reader's mind, is fairly astonishing. . . . A pathetic or a tragic situation is put before the reader with the utmost realism, and if he be endowed with eyes to see, heart to feel, and imagination to interpret, he may be acutely conscious of its force of appeal. Such a treatment is essentially artistic . . . but the road to popularity lies in another direction. The average novel-reader has a weakness for melodrama, and Mr. Hardy does not countenance this weakness. His bill of fare comprises good tragedy, good pathos, and good humour. Hysterics are rigorously excluded. ⁵⁵

One has only to think of Hardy's indirect method of exposition at certain critical moments in his narratives--Eustacia's drowning at the weir, Henchard's death in the hovel, and, in Tess,

54. The Bookman (January, 1900), p.111.

55. George St. George, 'Life's Little Ironies', The Literary World, 49, No.1273 (March 23, 1894), p.259. Cf. 'Literature', The Athenaeum, No.3465 (March 24, 1894), p.367.

the scene at The Chase, the murder of Alec, and the closing chapter--a method equivalent to the 'off-stage' murders and deaths of the great tragic dramatists, to see that St. George recognized an essential aspect of Hardy's means of alleviating painfulness, avoiding sensationalism, and contributing to the suggestiveness of his narratives.

Among some critics there was an awareness that the word 'beauty' had often to be reconsidered when applied to Hardy's fiction. In the famous opening chapter of The Return of the Native, Hardy suggests that the mystery of Nature and life should be of far more concern to the artist than any conventional picturesqueness or charm, an idea which partially explains his use of the grotesque.⁵⁶ A reviewer of The Return of the Native for The Atlantic Monthly--perhaps Harriet Preston who, as was seen earlier, in 1893 made astute observations about Hardy's use of the grotesque--was the first critic to note that to discuss 'beauty' in reference to Hardy's novels required special qualifications:

The delineation of Egdon Heath, with which the Native opens, is so solemn and scrupulous that it seems levity to call it picturesque. It is simply one of the most tremendous pieces of verbal realization in the language.⁵⁷

56. See, especially, The Return of the Native, p.34. Cf. Life, p.185; Tess of the d'Urbervilles, p.357. Hardy's ideas on beauty were not essentially new as is suggested by the many points of resemblance to remarks made by Eneas Sweetland Dallas, The Gay Science. Volume II (London, 1866), pp.138-9.
57. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (April, 1879), p.501. Some general remarks on Hardy's descriptions of scenery made in The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (February, 1879), p.261, were very similar to those quoted above and, again, were perhaps the work of Harriet Preston: 'They are not in the least poetic; nothing could be farther from what is known as "beautiful writing". Here are no "pearly", "opaline", "amethyst" tints at all. He selects generally rather sober times and scenes, and then describes them so that we actually see them.' For Harriet Preston's remarks

Several years later, Havelock Ellis also suggested that the term 'picturesqueness' was inappropriate when applied to Hardy's descriptions. Discussing The Return of the Native, he observed 'with what fine appreciation he has entered into the meaning of that country whose general aspect is one of weird and silent gloom'. He suggested that such characteristics might recall Emily Brontë because 'there is the same instinct of Nature-worship, the same quality of freshness', but immediately pointed out the differences between these two writers:

. . . but Mr. Hardy's treatment, subtle rather than keen, has little in common with the direct glance of the wonderful Yorkshire girl. It has little in common, indeed, with that of any writer of the descriptive school. There is much excellent word-painting of Nature which very soon wearies. The reason partly is that it comes not so much from Nature's seers as from her showmen, and the continuous strain of admiration is hard to keep up. . . . We feel in his work not subtlety only, but a certain freshness of vision in looking both at Nature and at life, which is at once intensely original, and at its highest point altogether impersonal.⁵⁸

It was suggested earlier that Jude, too, had critics who realized that 'the genius of False Rhetoric' had not completely mastered 'the Spirit of Plastic Beauty'. These critics concentrated on the artistry, skill, and force of the novel. Edmund Gosse, in his 1896 review, well represents this attitude. He delineated

. . . two threads of action [which] seem to be intertwined in 'Jude the Obscure'. We have, first of all, the contrast between the ideal life the young peasant of scholarly instincts wished to lead, and the squalid real life

in 1893 on Hardy's use of the grotesque, see pp.81-2 of this study. George Douglas also implied that he had an awareness of the grotesque element in the passage quoted on p.127 of this study.

58. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.350-1. Cf. E.A.B., 'English and French Fiction in the 19th Century', The Academy, 62, No.1554 (February 15, 1902), p.174.

into which he was fated to sink. We have, secondly, the almost rectilinear puzzle of the sexual relations of the four principal characters. . . . Some collision is apparent between these aims; the first seems to demand a poet, the second a physician.

With the first thread, he believed that Hardy 'has woven a tissue of sombre colouring, indeed, and even of harsh threads, but a tapestry worthy of a great imaginative writer. It was straightforward poet's work in invention and observation, and he has executed it well'. With the second thread, however, 'the physician, the neuropathist, steps in, and takes the pen out of the poet's hand'. Nevertheless, even with this second thread, Gosse was willing to acknowledge its fascination:

To tell so squalid and so abnormal a story in an interesting way is in itself a feat, and this, it must be universally admitted, Mr. Hardy has achieved. 'Jude the Obscure' is an irresistible book; it is one of those novels into which we descend and are carried on by a steady impetus to the close, when we return, dazzled, to the light of common day.⁵⁹

One point which critics continually raised to dispute the possibility of a purely realistic depiction of life was that art involved selection. Although, as Henry James pointed out in his 1888 'The Art of Fiction', some critics equated selection with propriety, most did reveal an understanding of what James meant by, 'Art is essentially selection, but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive', or by what Hardy said in 'The Science of Fiction':

The most devoted apostle of realism, the sheerest naturalist, cannot escape, any more than the withered old gossip over her fire, the exercise of Art in his labour or pleasure of telling a tale. Not until he becomes an automatic reproducer of all impressions whatsoever can he be called

59. Cosmopolis (January, 1896), pp.64-7. Cf. Israel Zangwill, 'Without Prejudice', The Pall Mall Magazine, 8, No.34 (February, 1896), p.334; Geoffrey Mortimer, 'Jude the Obscure', The Free Review, 5 (January, 1896), p.401; Hal-dane MacFall, The Canadian Magazine, Toronto (June, 1904), p.108.

purely scientific, or even a manufacturer on scientific principles. If in the exercise of his reason he select or omit, with an eye to being more truthful than truth (the just aim of Art), he transforms himself into a technician at a move.⁶⁰

Critics concentrated on various aspects of Hardy's selection and omission which contributed to his fiction being 'more truthful than truth'. It was noted in the previous chapter that very few early critics realized the significance of Hardy's selection of exceptional rustic characters and that, consequently, his rustics tended to offend their desire for a narrow kind of 'truthfulness', especially in their speech.⁶¹ By the 1880's, however, Hardy's critics were inclined to be less rigid in their interpretation of 'truthfulness' and the exceptionalness of Hardy's rustics began to be accepted and understood. Thus one critic contended that, although Hardy's 'groups of shrewd, cynical, or humorous peasants' revealed 'a selection of the rarer and more exceptional ones from the whole village', this was not a fault: 'We do not wish, in a story, to be bored by the talk of totally common-place people, but to see into the minds of those who have minds to see into.'⁶² This critic realized that Hardy's selection involved an eye to the revelation of the inner life, rather than the mere externalities, of

60. The Art of Fiction and Other Essays by Henry James, ed. Morris Roberts (New York, 1948), pp.16-7--hereafter cited as The Art of Fiction; Personal Writings, p.134. Very few of Hardy's critics equated selection with propriety. Those who did so were John Barrow Allen, 'New Novels', The Academy, 49 (February 15, 1896), p.134; 'Art.V.--The Wessex Drama', The Edinburgh Review, 215, No.439 (January, 1912), pp.102-3.

61. See pp.58, 63, 83 of this study. Another excellent example of this is R.H. Hutton, 'Books. "Far from the Madding Crowd"', The Spectator, 47 (December 19, 1874), pp.1597-8.

62. 'Current Literature', The Spectator, 55, No.2808 (April 22, 1882), p.539.

his rustics. Other critics concentrated on different aspects of the necessity for selection. Henry MacArthur suggested some major concerns of critics when he insisted that the realistic writer

. . . must have the eye to see, the power of selection, arrangement, and combination, the faculty of separating the trivial from the essential. And in the conduct of the story, the fact that he must aim at keeping within the limits of the possible and normal course of things does not make imagination and dramatic insight unnecessary.⁶³

Most critics would have attributed to Hardy this 'power of selection, arrangement, and combination' and 'the faculty of separating the trivial from the essential'. Hardy's selective faculty in his creation of heroines was remarked upon by a reviewer of A Laodicean who praised his method of selecting characteristics from various women whom he had studied and insisted that, by so doing, he conveyed the sense 'that their living originals never really have existed, though still they might have done so . . .'.⁶⁴ Mary Moss emphasized the relevancy and significance that resulted from Hardy's faculty for selection. By the time of Under the Greenwood Tree, she wrote: 'He has gained power of elimination. What is needful for you to know is made quite plain, but irrelevant detail drops out of sight. . . . from this time on he knows exactly when to condense, when to linger.'⁶⁵ Harold Williams, speaking generally, stressed: 'It is this very faculty for selection and design which makes

63. Realism and Romance (1897), pp.7-8.

64. The Spectator (March 4, 1882), p.296. Hardy made very similar remarks in his interview with Archer, The Pall Mall Magazine (April, 1901), p.528. Cf. Vere Collins, Talks with Thomas Hardy, p.75.

65. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (September, 1906), p.357.

Mr. Hardy's narrative convincingly realistic.⁶⁶ For these critics, Hardy's selective faculty typified, generalized, poetized, intensified, in essence, made his narratives 'more truthful than truth'.

Discussions of selection naturally led to an interest in the nature of the creating mind. Max Beerbohm, discoursing upon why one does not like 'a dramatised version of a book which you love' (he was reviewing a dramatization of Tess) used the analogy of illustrations in a novel to explain this aversion. In so doing, he made some relevant observations concerning the connection between the faculty for selection and the intervention of the creating mind:

No embodiment, howsoever nearly accurate, of a mental image can ever satisfy me, can do anything but offend me. The mind's eye and the body's see too differently. The mind's eye sees many things which cannot appear in a picture. It sees things moving and in three dimensions. Also, it is blind to many trivialities of detail which cannot be omitted in an actual picture. It does not say 'There is no high-light on the toe of the hero's boots'; for the hero's boots do not occur to it. But in a picture the hero must wear boots, and there must, accordingly, be a high-light on the toe; else the eye of the body would be offended. And this high-light, these boots, do offend the mind's eye. To it they are a superfluity, an encumbrance.⁶⁷

These remarks have a close affinity to remarks made by Henry James in his 'The Art of Fiction' when discussing what was meant by writing from experience. For James, experience 'is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative--much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius--it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations'. He gave an example

66. Two Centuries of the English Novel (1911), pp.302-3.

67. Max Beerbohm, '"Tess" the Footlights and the O.U.D.S.', The Saturday Review, 89 (March 3, 1900), p.264.

of a woman who wrote on 'the nature and way of life of the French Protestant youth', her only experience of this having been a glimpse of some young French Protestants 'seated at table round a finished meal'. This novelist was, for James, "one of the people on whom nothing is lost":

. . . she was blessed with the faculty which when you give it an inch takes an ell, and which for the artist is a much greater source of strength than any accident of residence or of place in the social scale. The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it--this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions are experience, just as (have we not seen it?) they are the very air we breathe.

Moreover, both James's and Beerbohm's ideas would have been congenial to Hardy. He voiced very similar ideas in his discussion of perception. For Hardy, the 'science' of fiction was not 'the paying of a great regard to adventitious externals to the neglect of vital qualities, not a precision about the outside of the platter and an obtuseness to the contents'. He gave an example of 'an accomplished lady' who had the faculty for keen observation of minute physical details, but for Hardy, as for Beerbohm, the 'mind's eye' and the 'body's eye' operate differently and, consequently, this did not mean that this woman was 'a born novelist'. Hardy explained himself in a passage which, both in ideas and cadence, closely resembles the passage of James just quoted:

A sight for the finer qualities of existence, an ear for the 'still sad music of humanity', are not to be acquired by the outer senses alone, close as their powers in photography may be. What cannot be discerned by eye and ear, what may be apprehended only by the mental tactility that comes from a sympathetic appreciativeness of life in all

of its manifestations, this is the gift which renders its possessor a more accurate delineator of human nature than many another with twice his powers and means of external observation, but without that sympathy. To see in half and quarter views the whole picture, to catch from a few bars the whole tune, is the intuitive power that supplies the would-be⁶⁹ storywriter with the scientific bases for his pursuit.

The extracts from these three writers suggest various points which were essential to discussions of the intervention of the creating mind in any purportedly realistic representation of life: the role of the writer's temperament as revealed in the influence of his imagination, perception, and 'impression'.

Critics who objected to realism as a theory were quick to assail one of its major tenets--objectivity. The notion that absolute objectivity was impossible in art was continually used to discredit the French realists', particularly Zola's, concept of a scientific approach to literature.⁷⁰ The concern with temperament in art was not, however, simply the outcome of a reaction to a scientific approach to literature. There was a trend during the later years of the nineteenth century to emphasize personality or temperament in literature quite apart from any anti-realist considerations. The chief spokesmen of this trend were Walter Pater and, later and in a more extreme form, Oscar Wilde. Although most writers did not take such extreme positions as Pater or Wilde, the insistence upon the im-

69. Personal Writings, p.137.

70. For several, of numerous examples, see, John Addington Symonds, 'Realism and Idealism', The Fortnightly Review, 42, No.249 (September 1, 1887), pp.418-29; 'Naturalism', The Westminster Review, 132, No.2 (August, 1889), pp.185-9; George Moore, Impressions and Opinions (London, 1891), p.140; Paul Bourget, 'The Limits of Realism', The New Review, 8, No.45 (February, 1893), pp.201-5; Vernon Lee, The Contemporary Review (February, 1893), p.198 (quoted on p.39 of this study); Henry MacArthur, Realism and Romance (1897), p.6; Henry James, The Art of Fiction, p.8.

imagination as the faculty which discerns the higher truths of life and which is, consequently, responsible for creating a work of art 'more truthful than truth'; and, secondly, the notion that realism and imagination are not two conflicting properties, but rather operate together in a work of art to attain a sense of a higher truth or reality.⁷⁴ Hardy applied Arnold's term, 'the imaginative reason', to this faculty of the artist which, as William Hyde (1958) suggests, meant, for Hardy, 'this power of the artist to create reality out of actuality'.⁷⁵ In many respects, such a notion approximates Henry James's ideas on the integration of an 'author's vision' into a work of art to produce an illusion of reality.⁷⁶ Thus, neither James nor Hardy saw imagination, as many of their contemporaries saw it, as a faculty responsible simply for the fanciful or decorative qualities of a work of art; for them, imagination was responsible for the 'realism', but it was a realism of a higher and more significant order than mere mimetic accuracy.

Although most critics recognized and remarked upon the strong imaginative quality of Hardy's novels, there were no

74. See, especially, Life, pp.216, 228-9.

75. William J. Hyde, 'Hardy's View of Realism: A Key to the Rustic Characters', Victorian Studies, 2, No.1 (September, 1958), p.59. See Life, p.147. Further implications of Hardy's interpretation of the 'imaginative reason' will be discussed in the sixth chapter.

76. The Art of Fiction, p.10. This explains James's condemnation of Trollope (p.5) for conceding 'to the reader that he and this trusting friend are only "make believe"'. For James, this was 'a betrayal of a sacred office', 'a terrible crime', because the illusion of reality and the imaginative element should be thoroughly integrated in a novel. One of the few critics who did articulate a similar idea of the imagination as that of Hardy and James was The British Quarterly Review (April 1, 1879), p.414.

highly sophisticated or complex interpretations of imagination in this criticism. A typical notion of how the imagination operated in Hardy's fiction is exemplified by a critic in 1908 who described Hardy's 'poetical imagination' as a thing 'which clothes all Mr. Hardy's prose work with a shining garment, a sort of magic light shed upon common things, as in that game of cards in "The Return of the Native" played by the light of glow-worms'.⁷⁷ A few critics did suggest an awareness that, for Hardy, the imagination was not simply a faculty which cast a romantic or poetic atmosphere over his art but, instead, a faculty integral to a work of art, indispensable in creating an illusion of reality, which meant a reality truer or higher than that offered by life. Clive Holland perhaps implied this when, writing on Wessex, he remarked:

He has in reality set down what he has seen, heard, and felt concerning this region which he has embraced for the purposes of an incomparable (if in some cases unequal) series of romances. That he has tempered them with his own artistic instinct for colour, form, dramatic effect and poetic imagination is doubtless a fact, but all the same his 'effects' are true to life.⁷⁸

Holland's concern, however, was with the identification of locations and it is therefore doubtful if he actually possessed any understanding of Hardy's ideas on imagination. A critic for the New-York Tribune in 1896 revealed a greater understanding of this aspect of Hardy's fiction when he wrote:

Hardy is emphatically a teacher, and this not in any formal didactic sense, but as Thackeray and Balzac and

77. 'Art.VII.--Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts"', The Edinburgh Review, 207, No.424 (April, 1908), p.428.

78. Clive Holland (Charles James Hankinson), 'In Thomas Hardy's Country', Black and White, 22, No.549 (August 10, 1901), p.193.

Shakespeare are teachers, holding the mirror up to nature and clarifying the reflection through poetic imagination until the universal lesson emerges in majestic power.⁷⁹

These critics were, of course, primarily concerned with reviewing Hardy's novels and not with theorizing on the imagination so it is perfectly understandable that no critic attempted to develop any extensive or sophisticated concepts of the role of imagination in his fiction.

Critics were more astute and expansive in their remarks on perception and impression. Many critics discerned that Hardy had a unique way of looking at life and that this influenced everything that he wrote. Havelock Ellis was one of the first critics to emphasize the necessity of being aware of the aspect of perception in his fiction:

We feel in his work not subtlety only, but a certain freshness of vision in looking both at Nature and at life, which is at once intensely original, and at its highest point altogether impersonal. . . . It is largely on account of this quality--this freshness of insight into certain aspects of Nature and human character--that Mr. Hardy's work is so interesting.⁸⁰

Ellis mentioned several aspects of Hardy's freshness and originality of perception on which critics concentrated. The first was a concern with Hardy's 'distinctive way of looking at life and exhibiting its problems and its matter for laughter and tears . . .'.⁸¹ From an early point, critics realized, as a reviewer of The Hand of Ethelberta wrote, that Hardy's novels had their 'basis in a deep and consistent perception of life and its issues . . .'.⁸² The recognition of the moral, philos-

79. 'Thomas Hardy. His Genius in the Wessex Novels', New-York Tribune, 56, No.18,102 (June 7, 1896), p.26.

80. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), p.351.

81. William Minto, The Bookman (December, 1891), p.99.

82. The British Quarterly Review (July 1, 1876), p.235.

ophical, and tragic implications, the interpretative implications, of this perception will be discussed in later chapters. There was, also, an awareness of the representative or mimetic implications of Hardy's unique perceiving powers. Frederick Greenwood, for instance, discussing 'the peculiarity of Mr. Hardy's genius', wrote:

. . . it brings an eye of equal discernment to things that seem of the smallest significance and things that present an obvious burden of meaning to whosoever describes them. That is to say, an eye lensed like a microscope, though also lensed like yours and mine. . . . together with the microscopic perception . . . he is evidently blessed with a sensitive memory for whatever impressions it conveys to him, however slight, and for the similitudes that seem always ready to start up and accompany those impressions to their appointed place in his memory's keeping. . . . the possession of these qualities fills his mind with a broad and intense vision of whatever he is writing about--vision that calls out every detail accidentally pertaining to the story and the various scenes in which it is cast. . . . indeed, Mr. Hardy's intensity of vision is almost too busy, too curious and restless, to be always served by the descriptive pen, which is why some people find fault in him. But it is the faculty that marks the truly great novelist; abounding most in men like Balzac, for one example of a very few.⁸³

Frederick Greenwood's remarks on Hardy's microscopic perception and his 'sensitive memory for whatever impressions it conveys to him' linked him with the 'impressionistic' writers as described by Arthur Symons:

Impressionistic writing requires the union of several qualities; and to possess all these qualities except one, no matter which, is to fail in impressionistic writing. The first thing is to see, and with an eye which sees all, and as if one's only business were to see; and then to write, from a selecting memory, and as if one's only business were to write. It is the interesting heresy of a particular kind of art to seek truth before beauty; but in an impressionistic art concerned, as the art of painting is, with the revelation, the re-creation, of a coloured and harmonious world, which (they tell us) owes its very existence to the eyes which see it, truth

83. Frederick Greenwood, 'The Genius of Thomas Hardy', The Illustrated London News, 101 (October 1, 1892), p.431.

is a quality which can be attained only by him who seeks beauty before truth.

Symons later went on to say,

. . . we become weary of poets who see everything in the world but themselves, and who have no personal hold upon the universe without. Between the too narrowly personal and a too generalized impersonality, there remains, in France and in England, a little exquisite work, which is poetry.⁸⁴

It is in discussions of Hardy's unique and original perceptions of nature that critics reveal the greatest awareness of the importance of 'impressionism' in his fiction and of Hardy's contention that: 'The poetry of a scene varies with the minds of the perceivers. Indeed, it does not lie in the scene at all.'⁸⁵

Very early in Hardy criticism, critics began to talk in pictorial terms when discussing Hardy's visual rendering of nature, terms which underscored that the poetry of a scene was dependent upon the perceiver. Analogies were made with artists, Turner being a favourite because of the importance of atmospheric effects in Hardy's novels.⁸⁶ By the time of The Mayor of Casterbridge, the works of the Impressionists in France were well enough known outside their country for critics to begin making some comparisons between their methods of art and Hardy's methods of rendering a scene.⁸⁷ One reviewer of The

84. Critics of the 'Nineties, ed. Derek Stanford (London, 1970), pp.116, 119.

85. Life, p.50.

86. See, for examples, John Hutton, The Spectator (June 28, 1873), p.832; 'Recent Novels', The Nation, New York, 32, No.810 (January 6, 1881), p.17; Havelock Ellis, The Westminster Review (April, 1883), p.351; X., 'Novelists of To-day. Mr. Thomas Hardy', The Literary World, 63, No.1651 (June 21, 1901), p.588.

87. Alastair Smart, 'Pictorial Imagery in the Novels of Thomas Hardy', The Review of English Studies, 12, No.47 (1961), p.278, notes that 1886 was 'the year which saw the founda-

Mayor of Casterbridge, for instance, demonstrated an astute awareness of its 'impressionistic' quality. He remarked that: 'The book as a whole is no exception to Mr. Hardy's others . . . in casting new lights on some of those aspects of life which are so familiar as to seem to the unthinking unworthy of attention.' The terms which this critic employed to describe Hardy's means of 'casting new lights' upon these familiar aspects of life suggest that he associated Hardy with the Impressionist School:

In a greater degree than novelists of greater powers, Mr. Hardy has the capacity of producing an atmosphere and a medium of his own, which float his creations (as it were) and sustain certain characters and incidents that would otherwise be a little out of value and lacking in congruity. And if, in spite of many dramatic and 'seizing' effects, a certain mistiness, which is specially his own, degenerates at times almost into blurredness and unreality, and the airy distance between the reader and the scenes evoked produce now and again impressions that are almost dream-like, this result in no way detracts from the largeness of vision he displays, and the revelation of such curious and subtle aspects of human⁸⁸ nature as he has this time studied and discovered to us.

Lionel Johnson objected to those who referred to Hardy as an 'impressionist' because, he assumed, by associating Hardy with the impressionists, one was implying that the vision he was projecting was relative and hence undermined the general truth of his fiction, ideas which went against the grain of Johnson's classicist principles.⁸⁹ Hardy himself did not believe that impressionism and general truth need be incompatible. After viewing some Impressionist paintings at the Society of

tion in London of the New English Art Club, a society of painters who introduced the principles of the French Impressionists to the English public'.

88. 'New Books. The Mayor of Casterbridge', The State, 1, No. 8 (May 27, 1886), p.251. Cf. 'Minor Fiction', The Literary World, Boston, 17, No.12 (June 12, 1886), p.198.
89. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.123-4.

British Artists in 1886, he remarked that,

. . . their principle is, as I understand it, that what you carry away with you from a scene is the true feature to grasp; or in other words, what appeals to your own individual eye and heart in particular amid much that does not so appeal, and which you therefore omit to record.⁹⁰

What appealed to Hardy's 'own individual eye and heart in particular' was the 'inner substance' of life which was not incompatible with the rendering of general truth. Moreover, Hardy saw that the impressionistic approach allowed the artist to focus on 'the true feature' and, therefore, to intensify this feature.⁹¹

Some of Hardy's critics would have concurred with his notions on the Impressionists and believed that these aspects were essential for an understanding of his art. A.J. Butler emphasized Hardy's power of creating a mood which conveyed a scene's inner meaning and inner truth:

This faculty of catching, as it were, the essence of a particular aspect of external things, correlating it with an aspect of the human mind, and putting it into words so as to arouse the desired emotion in the reader, is one of which it is easier to feel the presence than to define the nature. It is very capriciously distributed, being quite distinct from what is called 'word-painting'.⁹²

Thomas Seccombe and W. Robertson Nicoll made direct reference to impressionism when discussing Hardy's rendering of the inner life and mystery of nature. They described him as

. . . a master of impressionistic English. His sensitiveness to aerial and atmospheric effects, to the moods and changes of day and night, to the voices of heath bells, the rustling of trees, the moaning of the wind, to the most delicate harmonies of colour and sound and form, enables him to bring his admirers into the inmost heart and

90. Life, p.184.

91. See, for example, Hardy's 'impression-picture' of Marty South as she appeared to Barber Percomb. The Woodlanders, p.41.

92. A.J. Butler, 'Mr. Hardy as a Decadent', The National Review, 27 (May, 1896), p.385.

shrine of the sombre and sphinx-like but exquisite Nature that he worships.⁹³

Mary Moss made the most extensive remarks on the impressionistic quality of Hardy's fiction. She believed that, as early as Desperate Remedies, Hardy's fiction revealed this quality:

At once you feel a touch new to English fiction. Here is a colorist. Not in the school of Gautier! He is not occupied with the hue of words, or with their harmonies. He makes no jeweled mosaic of cunningly chosen vowels and consonants, no musical alliterations, but rather evokes your visual imagination by the intensity with which he sees, an intensity cleaving its own way to the apt word. In 1870 this young provincial Englishman saw with the eyes of a Monet. Inventing no phrases to announce his discoveries, he seems to arrive by instinct at the purest impressionist vision, joined to an ability to transmit, with the greatest directness, every impression, whether of comedy, external loveliness, or emotion.

Moreover, Mary Moss stressed that Hardy was not merely conveying highly eccentric impressions, which were totally relative and which had no general significance, but rather that he was 'the most universal English writer since Shakespeare'.⁹⁴

These final extracts touch on many of the characteristics of Hardy's fiction which, as has been demonstrated throughout the last two chapters, critics emphasized in their discussions of Hardy's deviation from 'truth to life' or realism. It was, however, the recognition by critics of this quality in Hardy's novels of evoking a mood, of creating an atmosphere, which conveyed and underscored the inner mystery, beauty, and truth of his scenes and novels as a whole, that was most influential in diverting their attention away from the more obviously realistic

93. Thomas Seccombe and W. Robertson Nicoll, The Bookman Illustrated History of English Literature, Volume II (London, 1906), p. 520.

94. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (September, 1906), pp. 356, 355. Cf. her remarks on Under the Greenwood Tree and Far from the Madding Crowd on pp. 356-9 of this article. See the quotation on p. 71 of this study.

details and in prompting them into discussions of those qualities of Hardy's fiction which differentiated him from, rather than affiliated him with, those authors writing in a more distinctive and definite realistic mode.

Chapter V

Discussions of the Relationship of Art and Morality:

Morality and Didacticism, Morality and Immorality

The controversy over realism and idealism, as has been intimated throughout the previous two chapters, was not confined to considerations of the representational quality of the novel. The issues involved in this controversy touched upon most aesthetic considerations of the later years of the nineteenth century, influencing discussions of the relationship of art and morality, the relationship of art and philosophy, concepts of tragedy, and many technical matters.

It has been a long-standing critical problem to attempt a reconciliation of demands for truthful representation of life and didactic demands for an edifying and elevating work of art. Hardy himself was well aware of the incompatibility of these demands, as is facetiously revealed by a statement of Reuben Dewy in Under the Greenwood Tree:

'Well, now . . . that sort o' coarse touch that's so upsetting to Ann's feelings is to my mind a recommendation; for it do always prove a story to be true. And for the same reason, I like a story with a bad moral. My sonnies, all true stories have a coarse touch or a bad moral, depend upon't. If the story-tellers could ha' got decency and good morals from true stories, who'd have troubled to invent parables?'¹

This quotation suggests two major aspects of the conflicting demands of representation and didacticism: first, the tendency of a truthful representation to fail to carry with it a direct and explicit moral or for it to carry 'a bad moral', such as, for example, vice going unpunished or even triumphing; and, secondly, the tendency of a truthful representation to trespass

1. Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree (London, 1974), p. 80. In a more serious vein, see Life, p.40.

on indelicate or forbidden grounds, grounds which perhaps involve 'a coarse touch', such as, for many Victorians, any frank treatment of sexual questions. Hardy's critics, as will be seen throughout this chapter, had often to contend with both aspects of these conflicting demands.

As was the case with discussions of representation, no general observable pattern can be traced in discussions of morality in relation to Hardy's art, except that the most vociferous discussions occurred in the late 1880's and early 1890's when the controversy over realism and idealism was at its peak. Although the earlier criticism intermittently became quite vehement--Two on a Tower, for example, was harshly criticized for the pregnant Viviette's marriage to Bishop Helmsdale--The Woodlanders, Tess, Jude, and the short stories, especially A Group of Noble Dames, provoked the most and the strongest reactions. It is, of course, in the later novels that Hardy made his frankest and, in many respects, profoundest studies of various social and moral questions and it is, therefore, only natural to find critics who felt compelled to take up a position and to articulate this position in no indeterminate terms. In 1896, Havelock Ellis, whose work in the area of sexual psychology made him an astute critic of this facet, realized this trend, not only in Hardy's novels, but also in Hardy criticism. He pertinently noted that there is 'a large field in which the instincts of human love and human caprice can have free play without too obviously conflicting with established moral codes', and that, consequently, in his earlier novels, Hardy

. . . eluded any situation involving marked collision between Nature and Society, and thus these books failed to shock the susceptibilities of readers who had been brought

up in familiarity with the unreal conventionalities which rule in the novels of Hugo, Dickens, Thackeray, and the rest.

With Two on a Tower, Ellis observed, the public 'began to suspect that in reading Mr. Hardy's books it was not treading on the firm rock of convention'. This was not because 'any fundamental change was taking place in the novelist's work', but because Hardy, for his own purposes, had thoroughly exploited the 'large field' which avoided 'marked collision between Nature and Society':

But in novels, as in life, one comes at length to realize that marriage is not necessarily either a grave, or a convent gate, or a hen's nest, that though the conditions are changed the forces at work remain largely the same. It is still quite possible to watch the passions at play, though there may now be more tragedy or more pathos in the outcome of that play. This Mr. Hardy proceeded to do, first on a small scale in short stories, and then on a larger scale. 'Tess' is typical of this later unconventional way of depicting the real issues of passion.²

The vehemence of discussions of the relationship of art and morality by critics of Hardy's later fiction was also stimulated by influences extrinsic to Hardy's career. It was a time when there was a great public outcry against immorality in literature, perhaps best represented by the activities of the National Vigilance Association. This association is most notorious for its persecution of Henry Vizetelly, a publisher of French translations, who was imprisoned in the late 1880's, an imprisonment petitioned against by numerous eminent men and women. Because of the vehemence of many of these discussions, very often the criticism itself was valueless, simply becoming a matter of attack, defence, and counterattack. As R.G. Cox remarks:

2. Havelock Ellis, 'Concerning Jude the Obscure', The Savoy, No.6 (October, 1896), pp.39-40.

. . . it was not until the nineties, with Tess and Jude, that critical discussion tended to be seriously distorted by outraged conventionality and the concentration upon moral and philosophical issues. The blunting of critical sensitiveness appears in the more extreme views of both sides in the debate: Hardy's most perceptive critics were not always those who spoke most loudly in defence of him as progressive and advanced.³

Quite aside from these valueless criticisms--often recognizable by the accumulation of either abusive or eulogistic adjectives and phrases--important ideas were being re-assessed. The issue of morality in the general controversy over realism and idealism proved valuable in several respects: not only were the boundaries of subject matter considered suitable for art greatly extended, an extension which allowed for the exploration of even wider frontiers in the twentieth century, but many of the considerations involving the relationship of art and morality, which had been alluded to in earlier criticism, were brought to the forefront and underwent a much needed and profitable airing.

One of the most important issues brought to the forefront was the distinction between morality and didacticism. Although there was, contemporaneous with the activities of the National Vigilance Association and of critics who were of the same mind, a trend in the other direction--a trend towards the insistence that art was independent of morality--most critics and writers were more concerned with distinguishing between morality and didacticism. Even Oscar Wilde, who is often thought to represent the trend to dissociate art and morality, is actually more representative of those critics who were attempting to make distinctions between morality and didacticism, attempts which had been going on for centuries and would continue into the twentieth century. His comment in 'The Preface' to The Picture

3. R.G. Cox (ed.), Thomas Hardy (London, 1970), p.xlv.

of Dorian Gray--'There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all'--is often quoted in isolation from further comments.

Wilde, like most critics, realized the difference between a narrow sense of morality, as explicit moral instruction or didacticism, and morality in its larger and more general sense, as a disinterested concern with moral values. Thus, he went on,

The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists of the perfect use of an imperfect medium. No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved. No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style.

Despite the advances made by critics in distinguishing between morality and didacticism, advances outlined in the second chapter, a few critics, and even more readers, still demanded of the novel some sort of obvious didacticism. William Wallace, in his review of The Woodlanders, described the attitude of such readers:

With the possible exception . . . of Two on a Tower, it will be regarded as his most disagreeable book, not only by the ordinary clients of Mr. Mudie, who feel dissatisfied unless Virtue passes a Coercion Bill directed against Vice at the end of the third volume, but even by those of Mr. Hardy's own admirers who complain, as Mr. Morley complains of Emerson, that he is never 'shocked and driven into himself by "the immoral thoughtlessness" of men', that 'the courses of nature and the prodigious injustices of men in society, affect him with neither horror nor awe'. In recent fiction, even in recent French fiction, there has figured no more exasperating scoundrel than Edred Fitzpiers, who yet, in the third volume of The Woodlanders figures as the repentant, or, at all events, the returned prodigal . . .

4. Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray (London, 1976), p. 1. Cf. Oscar Wilde, Intentions (1891; rpt. London, 1909), pp.191-3.
5. William Wallace, 'New Novels', The Academy, 31 (April 9, 1887), pp.251-2. For examples of reviewers revealing this attitude, see, The Literary World (April 15, 1887), p.339 (quoted on pp.30-1 of this study), and, writing generally, Julian Abernethy, Education, Boston (April, 1901), p.472.

Although some critics adhered to the criteria of the necessity for a crude and blatant didacticism through the depiction of noble characters for the reader to emulate, through poetic justice, or through some obvious instructive or ameliorative purpose, during the last half of the nineteenth century, these age-old demands were being questioned and greatly modified.

The most impervious of these demands was that for noble characters on whom, as Walter Besant wrote,

. . . we model ourselves, our thoughts, and our actions. The writer who has succeeded in drawing to the life, true, clear, distinct, so that all may understand, a single figure of a true man or woman, has added another exemplar or warning to humanity.⁶

This demand meant that there could be no subtle moral shading; virtue and vice must be clearly defined. Some critics, Besant for example, even believed that such simplistic delineations were a sign of lifelikeness, a lifelikeness necessary if a reader were to identify easily with the virtuous and to be repelled by the vicious. While, from the earliest reviews of Hardy's novels, these demands are revealed,⁷ The Woodlanders, as a novel worthy of serious and close critical attention, was perhaps the worst received, many critics simply rejecting it as an artistic failure, affording no pleasure, because Hardy did not meet this demand for clearly defined virtuous and vi-

6. The Art of Fiction (1884), p.22.

7. The earliest example of a critic who censured Hardy for his failure to create characters worthy of emulation is John Hutton, The Spectator (April 22, 1871), pp.481-3 (see quotation on p.31 of this study). In contrast, Hutton, using the same criteria, found Elfride deserving of effusive praise. The Spectator (June 28, 1873), p.831. Elizabeth-Jane was a favourite for those critics judging by these criteria. See, as examples, Henry M. Alden, 'Editor's Study', Harper's New Monthly Magazine (European Edition), 12, No.438 (November, 1886), p.962 (cf. Alden's praise of Winterborne and Grace, quoted on p.31 of this study); Q., 'Pages in Waiting', The World, 24, No.625 (June 23, 1886), p.21.

cious characters. The most absolute condemnation of this novel is found in a review in The Nation. Hardy was criticized for being 'over and above tender' with Grace 'who affects us unpleasantly, like a noxious weed'. No character escaped this reviewer's censure:

She [Grace] is an Anna Karénina called to a lower state of life. She wants the earth, and takes all she can get of it, by fair means or foul. She had a worse man for a husband than was Anna Karénina's, and a better man for a lover; thus she was saved from actual infidelity, though by no virtue in herself. . . . Mr. Hardy exalts the spirituality of Grace Melbury, and doesn't seem to think that she commits an error worth the attention of conscience. He doesn't mean, either, that her husband shall appear rather less offensive than she, yet he does; for, having been off a year or so with another woman, Fitzpiers experiences a slight diffidence in inviting his wife to live with him again. The principal events and characters lead us to infer that Woodlanders are as bad as other people, and even worse; and the lesser characters do no more than help to an average goodness. Marty South and Winterborne are dull examples of virtue . . .⁸

There are some critics, however, who, while objecting to characters on didactic grounds, were yet able to concede to a novel aesthetic qualities. The reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd for The Westminster Review, for example, began with a quotation from Carlyle on the Waverley Novels:

'Not profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for edification, for building up or elevating in any shape! The sick heart will find no healing here, the darkly struggling heart no guidance, the heroic that is in all men, no divine awakening.'

This critic believed that Carlyle's strictures could be applied to Far from the Madding Crowd, especially to the characterization of Troy and Bathsheba. The former 'is simply what he is represented', having 'no higher morals than most privates in

8. 'Recent Novels', The Nation, New York, 44, No. 1142 (May 19, 1887), pp. 430-1. Cf. William Payne, The Dial, Chicago (July, 1887), p. 68; The Literary World (April 15, 1887), pp. 339-40; 'Belles Lettres', The London Quarterly Review, 68 (July, 1887), p. 382.

the army'. He believed that Bathsheba, 'whatever Mr. Hardy may wish us to think of his heroine', was primarily characterized by her selfishness, as revealed in her relationships with her three suitors. Despite objections to Bathsheba's character and conduct, he still granted that 'she is described with great skill' and that 'Mr. Hardy may be proud of having drawn such a character. But she is a character not to be admired, as he would seem to intimate'. Furthermore, although objecting to the novel's 'sensationalism' and some stylistic mannerisms, this critic believed that the novel would 'bear favourable comparison with "Adam Bede" for its humour, its power of description, and character-drawing. This is high praise, but we give it not without due deliberation'.⁹

This ability to dissociate didactic and aesthetic considerations was a major advance in Hardy criticism. Other modifications occurred when emphasis was placed on sympathy and interest, a modification probably largely dependent upon the influence of George Eliot. As she wrote to John Blackwood in 1857: 'My artistic bent is directed not at all to the presentation of eminently irreproachable characters, but to the presentation of mixed human beings in such a way as to call forth tolerant judgment, pity, and sympathy.'¹⁰ The notion behind

9. 'Belles Lettres', The Westminster Review, 47 (January, 1875), pp.265-7. Another excellent example of a critic acknowledging a novel's aesthetic qualities, while objecting on moral grounds to characterization, is R.H. Hutton, 'Books. Mr. Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles"', The Spectator, 68, No.3317 (January 23, 1892), pp.121-2.
10. The George Eliot Letters, Volume II, p.299. Walter Besant, while not suggesting the necessity for complexity of characterization, did stress the importance of 'that sentiment which is destined to be a most mighty engine in deepening and widening the civilization of the world'. For his remarks on sympathy, see, The Art of Fiction (1884), pp.11-2.

this stress on sympathy was still often the improvement of the reader, but it definitely reveals more sophistication than the demand for noble characters to emulate. Several essential modifications arise when the notion of sympathy is introduced. In the first place, allowances are made for greater complexity in characterization. Such complexity naturally led to the realization that moral standards were not always absolute, that a certain degree of relativity was necessary. Furthermore, although this recognition of the importance of complexity in characterization still demanded reader participation, it was not merely confined to reader identification and emulation, but rather often involved the notion of empathy. For some critics, if empathy were not a criterion, they recognized that, as George Eliot stated, complexity of characterization called forth 'tolerant judgment, pity, and sympathy'.

The concept of sympathy could, of course, be used in a narrow sense of an author's enlistment of a reader's sympathies or revelation of his own sympathies for simple virtue over simple vice. The reviewers of The Woodlanders for The Literary World and The Nation, previously quoted, were obviously using the concept of sympathy in this narrower sense.¹¹ Other critics, however, interpreted sympathy in its wider sense as engendering 'tolerant judgment, pity, and sympathy'. Tess was best received by critics using this criterion. D.F. Hannigan, although not always a reliable critic because of his self-ass-

11. See pp.30-1, 152 of this study. For critics who concurred, see, The Graphic (May 7, 1887), p.490 (quoted on p.27 of this study), and 'New Novels', The Globe, No.28,660 (April 5, 1887), p.3. In contrast to these writers, the reviewer for The Pall Mall Gazette (May 19, 1887), p.5, although using the same criterion, believed that Hardy prompted, through his own sympathies, the sympathies of the reader on the side of virtue (Giles and Marty) over vice (Fitzpiers and Grace).

umed role as advocate for greater freedom in literature, did express the feelings of many when, defending Tess against the strictures of such writers as Andrew Lang, he wrote: 'Comfortable critics of this sort cannot sympathise with the temptations, the struggles, the miseries of a noble but half-darkened soul like that of poor Tess Durbeyfield.' Hannigan believed that the censure of critics like Lang was not justified because,

We can follow her career as if we knew her and lived with her. We feel her sufferings; we respect her shortcomings; we lament the chain of circumstances that led to her doom; and finally, we forgive and pity her.¹²

The question of the characters' potential to effect some moral end also involved consideration of an author's means of presenting them, whether he allowed himself licence to moralize on character and behaviour or whether he let his characters reveal, through their actions, any moral implications without authorial intrusion. Most reviewers demonstrated critical sophistication in that they did not demand any blatant moralizing on the part of the author concerning the character and conduct of his personages. So, for example, a reviewer of A Pair of Blue Eyes, comparing George Eliot's and Hardy's 'way of presenting character to their readers', noted that George Eliot was primarily concerned with analysis and, consequently, as soon as a character was introduced, she fully confided his nature so as 'to enable us to follow her subsequent keen analysis of the influence of circumstances'. Hardy, too, was concerned with analysis, but his method was 'dramatic' or 'narrative':

12. The Westminster Review (December, 1892), pp.655, 657. Cf. 'Literature', The Critic, New York, 18, No.542 (July 9, 1892), p.14; William Sharp, The Forum, New York (July, 1892), p.592.

He labours to make his personages say and do things which mark their characters so unmistakably as not to need analytic comment to make them clear. He leaves the discussion of their morality and the philosophic exposition of their motives to the personages themselves, and to his readers and critics. His analysis¹³ is not served up raw; it is incorporated with the story.

All these modifications led to the realization that a novel's moral and aesthetic values were not dependent upon didacticism, underscored by simplified characters representing virtue and vice, and, as has been noted, such modifications allowed for greater complexity in characterization. Two major examples should be noted here. First, Janetta Newton-Robinson contended that Hardy

. . . does not glow with active benevolence towards his fellow-men, but gazes at them with a saddened, compassionate wonder, a tender irony. He makes few comments, but we know that he has felt the pity and the mystery. At the same time, his work is morally sound. Good and unselfish conduct is pointed out with admiration, and meanness and self-seeking are shown to be unlovely and disastrous. But the characters are delicately shaded, and the author's non-committal tone and absence of partisanship may possibly bewilder those accustomed to draw a sharp line between the sheep and the goats.¹⁴

Nine years earlier, Havelock Ellis revealed even greater sophistication in his approach to morality and the Hardy heroine. For Ellis, Hardy's heroines, 'these untamed children of Nature', were 'not quite without some principles of conduct, though generally their obedience to such rules is an involuntary and unreasoned obedience'. Comparing Hardy with Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, Ellis perceived that Hardy viewed both passion and the individual differently from these two writers:

13. The Examiner (October 13, 1877), p.1300. Cf. Alexandra Orr, The New Quarterly Magazine (October, 1879), pp.424-5; The International Review, New York (February, 1879), p.212; 'The Trumpet-Major', The Saturday Review, 50 (November 6, 1880), p.588.
14. The Westminster Review (February, 1892), p.157.

. . . with Mr. Hardy the individual self with its desires is neither per se, a devil to be resisted [as with Charlotte Brontë], nor a soul to receive its due heritage in the fellowship of souls [as with George Eliot]. It is an untamed instinctive creature, eager and yet shy, which is compelled to satisfy its own moderate desires for happiness before it can reflect its joyousness on others. It is instinct only that saves so egoistic and primitive a moral conception--if it can be so termed--from becoming utterly evil. In so far as it is a guide to conduct, it stands at the opposite pole to Charlotte Brontë's. Mr. Hardy is not concerned, as George Eliot is, with the bearing of moral problems on human action, and his heroines do not talk the language of morals, but a very exquisite language of love.¹⁵

Granted Ellis's perceptivity because of his general interest in such matters, these observations reveal that there were critics attempting to give subtle interpretations of Hardy's characters, interpretations worthy of the complexity of his characterization, and unhampered by narrow and simplistic conceptions of the part that characters should play in furthering some direct and obvious didactic aim of the novel.

There was surprisingly little objection, on moralistic grounds, to any lack of poetic justice in Hardy's novels. The Woodlanders was the most harshly criticized for its failure to adhere to the convention of poetic justice, criticism which has been previously mentioned. In contrast, Lionel Johnson, although giving a somewhat didactic interpretation of this novel, expressed the belief that Hardy was justified in ending it as he did and that this novel 'is characteristic of its writer's fearlessness' in having 'a bolder disentanglement' than poetic justice would allow.¹⁶ There were, in fact, writers

15. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.337-8.

16. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), p.197. For censure of the failure to resolve The Woodlanders in accordance with the demands of poetic justice, see quotations on pp.27, 30-1 of this study. Another example is William Payne's criticism of The Mayor of Casterbridge in The Dial, Chicago (July, 1886), p.68.

who criticized the element of poetic justice to be found in some of Hardy's novels. A reviewer of The Return of the Native, for instance, made a point suggesting a problem to which many critics have since recurred. After the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve, this critic wrote,

. . . the story is provokingly prolonged to enable the author to reward the deserving. If he had intended to point a moral he would wisely have stopped his story at the climax. As it is, the happy termination by no means compensates the sense of regret for the loss of so much physical beauty, evil as it was, in Eustacia's drowning.¹⁷

Criticism such as this justifies Raymond Alden's contention that there was dissatisfaction 'with the morality of such pictures of life as throw these rewards and punishments into strong relief'.¹⁸

The severest criticism was reserved for those novels which had a definite and obtrusive purpose. As was seen in the second chapter, most critics would not tolerate such blatant didacticism.¹⁹ There were, naturally enough, a few critics who did

17. 'The Return of the Native', The Nation, New York, 28, No. 713 (February 27, 1879), p.155. Cf. The Figaro (January 16, 1875), p.11, on Far from the Madding Crowd.
18. Raymond Macdonald Alden, 'The Decline of Poetic Justice', The Atlantic Monthly, Boston, 105, No.2 (February, 1910), p.264. See p.35 of this study for Leslie Stephen's criticism of the convention of poetic justice. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.73-4, cites earlier examples. There were still some supporters of this convention. See, for example, the passage from an article of Hall Caine quoted on p.30 of this study. Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.84-5, cites further examples. The philosophic and ironic implications of Hardy's rejection of the convention of poetic justice will be noted in other chapters.
19. See pp.34-5, 38-40 of this study. Other critics, writing generally, who condemned novels with a blatant purpose include Charles James Billson, 'The English Novel', The Westminster Review, 138, No.6 (December, 1892), p.613; Edward Fuller, 'The Decadent Novel', Lippincott's Magazine, Philadelphia, 57, No.28 (March, 1896), pp.431-2; The Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson, ed. Malcolm Elwin (London, 1950), pp.32-3.

still demand some distinct purpose, praising Hardy if they believed that they had discovered such a purpose, condemning him if they had not,²⁰ but few critics made such narrowly didactic demands on his novels. Until Tess and Jude, the main tendency was to insist that Hardy had no purpose and to commend this aspect of his fiction. Furthermore, these critics not only reveal an awareness that didacticism and morality are not synonymous, but also that, because a novel is not didactic, this does not mean that it is purposeless or frivolous. W.P. Trent, in 1896, well represents and summarizes this tendency in Hardy criticism:

'What message has he for his contemporaries?' This question of course presupposes that Mr. Hardy belongs to the class of writers who instruct as well as please, but it does not at all mean that he consciously writes his novels with a purpose. He is too good an artist for that, but he has seen so much of the life of humanity, and thought so deeply about it, that it has been impossible for him to refrain from giving us not a little of that criticism of life which is the basis of all great fiction as well as of all great poetry. In this sense Mr. Hardy has a message for his generation which it will be well for us to consider.²¹

There came a time in Hardy's novel-writing career when some critics felt that this 'criticism of life', this 'message', was becoming too obtrusive, too self-conscious, in essence, too didactic. Alexandra Orr, writing in 1879, believed that in The Return of the Native such didacticism was beginning to be felt. Of the novels prior to it, she contended that 'his success is

20. Two reviews of Two on a Tower well illustrate those who made such narrow demands: 'Two New Novels', The Pall Mall Gazette, 36, No.5553 (December 16, 1882), pp.20-1 (Supplement); 'Recent Novels', The Nation, New York, 36, No.915 (January 11, 1883), pp.42-3.
21. The Citizen, Philadelphia (February, 1896), p.285. Earlier critics who stressed these points include The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (April, 1879), p.502 (possibly by Harriet Preston); C. Kegan Paul, The British Quarterly Review (April 1, 1881), pp.344, 360; J.M. Barrie, The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), p.63.

proportioned in due dramatic manner to the absence of intention with which he appears to have set to work'. The Return of the Native, however, presented 'a new phase, and perhaps a new departure in the development of Mr. Hardy's genius', in that it was 'a more serious work than any of its predecessors'. For this reason, she believed it to be 'less spontaneous':

It suggests a more definite intention on the author's part, but also, dramatically, though not otherwise, a less equal inspiration. In his earlier works character is developed by circumstance; we cannot predict what is coming, and when the end comes, we can imagine no other to have been possible. In the present work the characters are defined from the first, the action soon becomes transparent, and the catastrophe nevertheless brings a kind of shock in which there is a decided element of objection. Hitherto the tragedy has been rooted in the facts of the story. In the present instance it is more or less imported into them.

Thus, she concluded,

At the climax of his dramatic genius, Mr. Hardy has been overtaken by a motive, or by a moral self-consciousness which is equivalent to one. . . . imagination and intellect are fighting for mastery in Mr. Hardy's work. Which will prevail? Will the unconscious inspiration assimilate the motive? or will the consciousness of the motive paralyse the inspiration?²²

Alexandra Orr was unique in her contention and, generally, critics believed that it was with Tess that self-consciousness first became apparent. An obtrusive purpose was one of the major criticisms levelled against Tess, even by those critics usually sympathetic to Hardy or by those sympathetic to this novel as a whole. Harriet Preston, for instance, an astute and sensitive critic of Hardy's fiction, was apologetic because she felt compelled to approach the novel 'in the light of a tract rather than of a tale', but she believed that 'we are openly invited to do so by the novelist himself' in the subtitle:

22. The New Quarterly Magazine (October, 1879), pp.416, 428-9, 431.

' . . . he distinctly announces a Tendenz-Roman, and asks our assent or our objection to the pitying yet despairing theory of woman's place in the universe so passionately portrayed therein.'²³ Harriet Preston believed this novel to be a failure. In contrast, Richard le Gallienne, although censuring the didacticism--'the painful "moral", the noble, though somewhat obtrusive "purpose"'--of Tess, asserted that it 'is one of Mr. Hardy's best novels--perhaps it is his very best'.²⁴

While some critics did defend Tess against the accusation of being a 'novel with a purpose'--The Athenaeum's critic, for instance, argued that the didacticism was only obtrusive in the subtitle and preface which he considered to be 'needless and a diversion from the main interest, which lies not in Tess, the sinner or sinned against, but in Tess the woman'²⁵--a great many critics viewed it, if not specifically as a 'novel with a purpose', at least as a novel which overstepped the bounds of an artistically fused 'criticism of life' or 'message'. The 'purpose' of Tess was defined differently by various critics. Some, Harriet Preston for example, concentrated on the word 'pure' in the subtitle which, as Hardy notes, 'was disputed more than anything else in the book'; others objected to the didacticism involving the 'wrath' vented against God; and yet others believed that 'Mr. Hardy's thesis is that we must

23. The Century Magazine, New York (July, 1893), p.358.

24. The Star (December 23, 1891), p.4. Cf. Francis Thompson, The Daily Chronicle (December 26, 1891), p.4.

25. 'Literature', The Athenaeum, No.3350 (January 9, 1892), p. 50. Cf. Charles T. Copeland, 'Recent American and English Fiction', The Atlantic Monthly, Boston, 69 (May, 1892), pp.697-9; W.P. Trent, The Sewanee Review, Tennessee (November, 1892), pp.18-22.

be judged by the will, not by the deed'.²⁶ Most of these discussions displayed the same confusion, that is, arguments against writing with a purpose were confused by objections to the purpose that it was assumed was being pursued. Andrew Lang was one of the few critics who explicitly criticized what he believed to be the purpose, without the screen or confusion of opposing a novel with a purpose: '. . . the story is an excellent text for a sermon or subtly Spectatorial article on old times and new, on modern misery, on the presence among us of the spirit of Augustus Moddle.'²⁷ For the most part, however, those who criticized what they assumed to be the purpose of Tess also criticized the whole notion of a novel with a purpose, and it is often difficult to discern where one objection ends and the other begins.

With Jude, the same objections arose. First, there are those who disliked what they believed was an obtrusive purpose, but felt that it did not injure the novel as a whole. Richard le Gallienne, for instance, contended that,

. . . the preacher turned novelist is a different thing from the novelist turned preacher. Not all Mr. Hardy's strenuous 'purpose' in Jude the Obscure . . . can rob him of a novelist's first great gift, the power of creating living human beings.

Moreover, le Gallienne believed that Jude had mistakenly been treated 'as a polemic against marriage', but that, if an indictment, it 'is an indictment of much older and crueller laws than those relating to marriage, the laws of the universe'.²⁸ Then,

26. See, as examples, The Critic, New York (July 9, 1892), p. 13; Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (March, 1892), pp.465-8, 474; Harper's New Monthly Magazine (June, 1892), p.152. For the quotation from Hardy, see Personal Writings, p.29.

27. The New Review (February, 1892), p.247.

28. The Idler Magazine (February, 1896), pp.114-5. See quotation on p.99 of this study.

there are those who condemned outright what they considered to be the novel's purpose. For many, as le Gallienne suggested, Jude seemed 'a polemic against marriage'. An obtuse reviewer for The Spectator not only viewed it as an anti-marriage novel, but classified it as a 'Hill-Top Novel', which advocated 'free-love, suicide, adultery, and all sorts of offences against law, morality, religion and commonsense'. For this critic, both Jude and Tess were 'written with a purpose, though not a purpose we can consent to call moral, unless "moral" and "immoral" are henceforth to be accounted synonymous terms'.²⁹ Finally, there are those critics who would concur with Edmund Gosse that,

Mr. Hardy is certainly to be condoled with upon the fact that his novel, which has been seven years in the making, has appeared at last at a moment when a sheaf of 'purpose' stories on the 'marriage question' (as it is called) have just been irritating the nerves of the British Patron. No serious critic, however, will accuse Mr. Hardy of joining the ranks of these deciduous troublers of our peace.³⁰

From many of these quotations, it is apparent that one of the major demands of critics was for the artistic fusion of ethical value with the narrative. In this way, many believed, didacticism was avoided. As George Eliot wrote in 1866:

I think aesthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching because it deals with life in its highest complexity.

29. '"Hill-Top Novels" and the Morality of Art', The Spectator, 75, No. 3517 (November 23, 1895), p. 722. Cf. 'Books of the Day', The Morning Post, No. 38,506 (November 7, 1895), p. 6; 'Jude the Obscure', The Times, No. 34,763 (December 18, 1895), p. 4; 'Literature', The Athenaeum, No. 3552 (November 23, 1895), pp. 709-10; M.O.W. Oliphant, 'The Anti-Marriage League', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 159 (January, 1896), pp. 135-49.
30. Cosmopolis (January, 1896), pp. 61-2. Hardy, too, stressed that Jude was not a novel with a purpose. See, for examples, Life, pp. 271, 273, 280; Personal Writings, pp. 34-5; One Rare Fair Woman, p. 47. Cf. Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (London, 1974), p. 308.

But if it ceases to be purely aesthetic--if it lapses anywhere from the picture to the diagram--it becomes the most offensive of all teaching.³¹

During the later years of the nineteenth century, the question of the relationship of moral and social significance to art became particularly pertinent with the great increase of novelists concerned with social and moral issues of the day. Because of this change, critics were called upon to reconsider the means by which a novel could or should convey its moral or social 'criticism of life'.

Some critics did not object to a 'purpose' if the purpose were thoroughly integrated with the narrative. Thus some critics simultaneously made high claims for the moral or social value and for the artistry of Hardy's novels.³² A more valuable, although similar, approach than this is that which placed emphasis on Hardy as storyteller or artist, rather than on Hardy as advocate of certain moral and social positions. This was an approach that Hardy himself would have condoned, disapproving, as he did, of didacticism in the novel, but believing that novels,

. . . which impress the reader with the inevitableness of character and environment in working out destiny, whether that destiny be just or unjust, enviable or cruel, must

31. The George Eliot Letters, Volume IV, ed. Gordon S. Haight (London, 1956), p.300. Cf. The Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson, pp.32-3. See general examples cited on pp.34-6, 38-40 of this study. Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.88-9, cites further examples.
32. An early example is 'The Woodlanders', The Literary World, Boston, 18, No.10 (May 14, 1887), pp.149-50. James Stanley Little used this approach to defend Tess. See his 'Mr. Hardy's "Tess"', The Literary World, 45, No.1174 (April 29, 1892), p.412, and his article in The Library Review (April, 1892), especially pp.63, 65-6.

have a sound effect,³³ if not what is called a good effect, upon a healthy mind.³³

Again, critics of the novels prior to Tess and Jude found little to quarrel with concerning Hardy's integration of moral and social significance, but, with these two later novels, the reviews resounded with criticism of Hardy's damage to his art by taking up a cause. Lionel Johnson wrote especially strongly on this point, the 'note of revolt' in Tess being too loud for his classicist's taste. He believed that, 'In art, nothing is more difficult than to turn theories of ethics, or of metaphysics, into living motives: than the expression of them through the treatment of human characters and of human actions', and that, in Tess, Hardy had not overcome this difficulty:

The novels, which 'vindicate the ways of God to man', are indeed wearisome: but fully as wearisome are those, which vindicate the ways of man to God: and it is because Tess of the D'Urbervilles contains so much insinuated argument of this kind, to the detriment of its art, that I cannot rank it so high, as certain other of Mr. Hardy's books. Its spirit is nothing new, for all Mr. Hardy's books proceed from the same range of thought: but none of them show quite this irritability of casual comment: this refusal to let the facts of the story convey their own moral, without the help of epigrammatic hints. At times, they read like quaint, modern imitations of those marginal glosses, which adorn the Pilgrim's Progress and the Ancient Mariner . . .³⁴

Later critics, looking over the whole range of Hardy's fiction, constantly praised his earlier novels, and found fault with his later, in accordance with this criterion.³⁵

33. Personal Writings, p.118. Cf. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.123.

34. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.232, 247, 236. Cf. 'Recent Fiction', The Nation, New York, 54, No.1400 (April 28, 1892), p.326, which declared that the 'argument' could simply 'be cut out by paragraphs and pages', it was so irrelevant to the narrative, but that 'there would remain between the covers a thrilling and gloomy tragedy'.

35. See, for examples, Mary Moss, The Atlantic Monthly, Boston

Some critics did come forward to defend Tess and Jude against such criticism. The Westminster Review, for example, began its criticism of Tess with the statement:

A new work by Mr. Thomas Hardy is always un vrai régal. He may, and too often does, harrow our sensibilities with piteous stories, but, at least, he never vexes one's soul with obnoxious theories, nor poses as the exponent of new views of life, or freshly invented types of humanity. His personages are creatures of flesh and blood like ourselves--not pantins, personifying theories.³⁶

Jude, too, found defenders of its artistry. The most extensive and perceptive comments on this aspect of Hardy's fiction are those given by Havelock Ellis. Ellis believed that, in Jude,

The sermon may, possibly, be there, but the spirit of art has, at all events, not been killed. In all the great qualities of literature 'Jude the Obscure' seems to me the greatest novel written in England for many years.

He continued: 'But I understand that the charge brought against "Jude the Obscure" is not so much that it is bad art as that it is a book with a purpose, a moral or an immoral purpose, according to the standpoint of the critic.' After defending Jude against charges of immorality, Ellis went on to give an astute interpretation of the relationship of art and morality:

. . . without doubt the greatest issues of social morality are throughout at stake. So that the question arises: What is the function of the novelist as regards morals? The answer is simple, though it has sometimes been muddled. A few persons have incautiously asserted that the novel has nothing to do with morals. That we cannot assert; the utmost that can be asserted is that the novelist should never allow himself to be made the tool of a merely moral or immoral purpose. For the fact is that, so far

(September, 1906), pp.363-5; Richard Burton, Masters of the English Novel (1909), pp.276-7; William Phelps, The North American Review, New York (October, 1909), pp.504, 506-7.

36. 'Belles Lettres', The Westminster Review, 137, No.3 (March, 1892), p.347. Cf. D.F. Hannigan, 'The Tyranny of the Modern Novel', The Westminster Review, 143 (March, 1895), pp.303-6.

as the moralist [sic] deals with life at all, morals is part of the very stuff of his art. That is to say, that his art lies in drawing the sinuous woof of human nature between the rigid warp of morals. Take away morals, and the novelist is in vacuo, in the region of fairy land. The more subtly and firmly he can weave these elements together the more impressive becomes the stuff of his art.

Jude was, for Ellis, a perfect illustration of these ideas.³⁷

An important aspect of discussions of the necessity to fuse ethical value with the narrative is the question of whether it is the duty of a novelist to offer solutions to the problems raised in his novels. Critics of the novels prior to Tess and Jude did not feel compelled to confront this aspect of Hardy's fiction, Havelock Ellis being the only critic to comment upon it. Ellis took up a question of the narrator of The Hand of Ethelberta when, after commenting that 'Ethelberta's gradient' was 'from soft and playful Romanticism to distorted Benthamism', he asked: 'Was the moral incline upward or down?' Ellis remarked: 'Mr. Hardy refrains from attempting to solve that problem; he is always more given to suggesting than to answering questions . . .'³⁸ Controversy arose over the difference between 'suggesting' and 'answering' questions with Tess and Jude. Mary Moss defined this as a central issue in her discussions of these two novels. While conceding Hardy's candidness and sincerity in his attempt 'to wrest logic from an insoluble problem' at the heart of Tess-- 'Hardy the moralist lays disaster to unnatural human laws, Hardy the incorruptible observer constantly remembers the cruelty of Nature herself'--she argued that these 'warring ele-

37. The Savoy (October, 1896), pp.40, 42, 43.

38. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.348-9. See The Hand of Ethelberta, p.297. Ellis made similar remarks in his review of Jude. The Savoy (October, 1896), p.49.

ments' were detrimental to its artistry: 'The real flaw lies in our pagan chronicler's effort to suggest remedies for what he with the same breath proves irremediable.' She asserted that the same problem existed in Jude because Hardy was 'trying to hammer some sense' out of 'the spectacle of the world's injustice' and desired 'to reconcile actual conditions with some respectable fundamental scheme of the universe': 'He depicts two natures so warring that under any conditions they must have suffered; and then blames their troubles upon an uncharitable world.'³⁹ Mary Moss's remarks well summarize a contentious problem that many critics have confronted in their analyses and assessments of Tess and Jude. Even those who acknowledge that no absolute solutions are offered, recognize that, in his caustic 'asides', Hardy's 'effort to suggest remedies for what he with the same breath proves irremediable', creates unevenness in the artistry of Tess and Jude.

Another means of avoiding overt didacticism which critics advocated was that the narrative have some sense of moral significance, some intrinsic moral values, permeated throughout it. This intrinsic morality was interpreted variously. Edward Clodd, for instance, emphasized the 'high moral tone' of Hardy's novels. He eulogistically, but aptly, contended that critics

39. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (September, 1906), pp.364-5. Several critics, underplaying the commentary in these two novels, would have dissented from these strictures. Henry Alden believed that, in Tess, Hardy 'attempts nothing beyond the concrete synthesis visible to him', that it 'is a true statement of the problem in living terms', and that Hardy 'passes no inflexible judgments upon Nature or society'. Henry M. Alden, 'Thomas Hardy', Harper's Weekly, New York, 38, No.1981 (December 8, 1894), p.1156. Cf. Frederick A. Peek, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy', Diss. Cornell University, New York (1910), pp.245, 247, on Jude. Hardy would have agreed with Alden's and Peek's remarks. See Personal Writings, pp.19-20, 35.

who thought that they found "a note of sensuality" which vibrates in a "tepid, quickening atmosphere" showed

. . . entire misapprehension of the lofty and earnest spirit which informs writings filled with the tenderest pity for the failures that are born of ignorance--writings coloured by that feeling of sadness which the saviours of men have ever felt most keenly. To dissect the various impulses of our nature is not to encourage their wanton exercise; the masters of the mind, realising the complexity of life, bid us watch that our judgments on our fellows are ruled by the motives that prompt their actions more than by the actions themselves.⁴⁰ And among such masters Thomas Hardy holds high place.

Lionel Johnson placed a similar emphasis on tone--Hardy's austere tone--which kept the atmosphere of his best novels healthy but, when lacking, had the reverse effect:

This meditative quality, full of nature's own deepening power upon us, forms the large and wholesome atmosphere of Mr. Hardy's finer novels: he deals with perversities of conduct, sentiment, and situation; but the air is never tainted, never loses its clearness, never stagnates. In his less austere stories, there is no such sense of an healthy atmosphere: breaths of malice vitiate the air around them; and Mephistopheles infects their world, with horrid cleverness.⁴¹

Many of these remarks reveal that stress was placed on the unconsciousness of aim on the part of the writer and the unconsciousness of the reader of any aim--'the edified should not perceive the edification', as Hardy said.⁴² T.P. O'Connor's remarks in 1912 well represent the belief that, for the most part, this was the way that the morality in Hardy's fiction operated:

40. Edward Clodd, 'The Boycotted Book', The Daily Chronicle, No.10,033 (May 5, 1894), p.3. This letter-to-the-editor is responding to and quoting from a letter in The Daily Chronicle of May 4 from William Archer.

41. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), p.129.

42. Life, p.225. Cf. Personal Writings, pp.113-4. See pp. 39-40 of this study for general remarks.

he wrote:

. . . the motives of his [Hardy's] novels have never been drawn from the world of books or closely associated with topics suggested by culture. His novels are not those of the study; their lines run in the free fields of nature, in an out-of-door atmosphere, and with that ready turn and flexion characteristic of all natural movements. He has never sought to illuminate any critical period of human history, as George Eliot did in Romola, or to treat some very complex strain of social life, as she did in Middlemarch. None of his works depends for its interest upon any 'burning' question of the day. The motives which inspired Felix Holt, Alton Locke, Daniel Deronda, or Robert Elsmere have never distracted him from his purpose --the portrayal of human life in simple conditions and lying next the bosom of Mother Earth.⁴⁵

Lionel Johnson took a different and generally more satisfactory approach, suggesting that Hardy's novels combined an interest in modern issues with an interest in a more general, timeless morality, one informing the other so that there was no conflict between these two interests.⁴⁶

Thus far discussion has been largely confined to the question of differences between didacticism and morality, but no discussion of the criticism of Hardy's novels would be complete without consideration of the charges of immorality brought against his novels. These attacks are probably the best known aspect of Hardy criticism because of Hardy's bitter recording of them in the Life and in his prefaces: The Spectator's attack on Desperate Remedies, Leslie Stephen's misgivings concerning the Fanny Robin episode in Far from the Madding Crowd, the hostile criticism of Two on a Tower, the problems of getting Tess published, and the moralistic objections to Tess, Jude, and The Well-Beloved, are all aspects of Hardy's novel-writing career about which he justifiably remained sensitive throughout

45. Harper's Weekly, New York (December 8, 1894), p.1156.

46. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.55-6.

his life.⁴⁷ With The Woodlanders, the full critical onslaught began, followed by attacks on Tess and Jude, although there are a few earlier examples of hostility over what critics considered 'immorality' in Hardy's fiction. Two on a Tower, in particular, suffered from such adverse criticism, Viviette's marriage to the Bishop proving to be especially offensive to critics. Much of this criticism was quite absurd and, after the immediate hostility, critics became more temperate. By 1912, a critic for The Athenaeum could write:

'Two on a Tower' is singularly poignant in its picture of a woman losing hold, slowly yet certainly, of a lover younger than herself. That it should have been regarded as 'improper', and a satire on the Established Church, is now cause for wonder. The freedom of novelists to-day seems so natural that we are apt to forget pioneers like Mr. Hardy, who fought for it, and suffered from copious abuse and misunderstanding.⁴⁸

There was nothing new in an author's choice of subjects often involving situations that many critics would deem 'immoral'. Subjects which a critic in 1875 pronounced as characteristic of 'the last few years'--'ill-sorted marriage, matrimonial infelicities and infidelity, seduction, separation, and perhaps a tragic death'--had, in actuality, been common since the novel began and most critics did not disapprove of the inclusion of

47. See, for examples, Life, pp.84, 98-9, 221-2, 240, 243-6, 265, 270-4, 276-80, 286-7; Personal Writings, pp.16-7, 26-9, 32-5. Despite Hardy's remarks and despite Edmund Gosse's contention in his review of The Well-Beloved--'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The St. James's Gazette, 34, No. 5225 (March 31, 1897), pp.5-6--that, with this novel, the critics' 'indignation knows no bounds', the only thoroughly hostile review of The Well-Beloved was 'Thomas Hardy, Humorist', The World, No.1186 (March 24, 1897), pp.13-4.
48. 'Notices of New Books', The Athenaeum, No.4433 (October 12, 1912), p.414. Cf. 'Notices of New Books', The Athenaeum, No.4414 (June 1, 1912), p.621, on Jude. Examples of hostile reviews of Two on a Tower include 'Two on a Tower', The Saturday Review, 54 (November 18, 1882), pp. 674-5; 'New Novels. "Two on a Tower"', The St. James's Gazette, 6, No.82 (January 16, 1883), pp.6-7.

such subject matter in a novel if the 'treatment' met with their approval.⁴⁹ This is not to suggest that Hardy did not suffer adversely from criticism which objected to his choice of subject matter, but that such criticism is, for the most part, valueless, simply being a tirade of abuse. Several reviews could be cited as examples of criticism which was reduced to absurdity by its hysterically moralistic attitude, but a review in The Pall Mall Gazette of Jude, entitled 'Jude the Obscene', well sums up the worthlessness of such criticism. After an account of the novel verging on parody, which concluded with a reckoning of 'a total of six marriages and two obscenities to the count of two couples and a half--a record performance, we should think', this critic turned to 'serious criticism':

It is indeed, as he himself tells us in his preface, a book of 'fret and fever, derision and disaster'--dirt, drivel, and damnation (these last characteristics he omits to catalogue). There is, as he promises, no mincing of the words in this his presentment of 'the tragedy of unfulfilled aims'. The 'series of seemings' stand forth in naked squalor and ugliness, shaped indeed by the hand of a master, but of a master in a nightmare.

This 'serious criticism' was rounded off with the remark: 'So, Mr. Hardy, don't disappoint us again. Give us quickly another and a cleaner book to take the bad taste out of our mouths. Of this we can only say with red-eyed Widow Edlin, "We can't stomach 'un.'"⁵⁰ Such criticism is obviously worth little attention and, fortunately, was less prevalent than Hardy's Life and prefaces might suggest. Hardy did receive some extremely harsh criticism, which was very often based on absurd misunderstand-

49. Harper's New Monthly Magazine, New York (March, 1875), p. 598. For general remarks on treatment, see pp.40-1 of this study.

50. 'Jude the Obscene', The Pall Mall Gazette, 61, No.9558 (November 12, 1895), p.4.

ings of his novels, but at least it was usually the outcome of more honest and serious attempts to confront the issues raised by his novels than is revealed in this review of Jude.

As suggested, critics very often appealed to 'treatment' in their assessments of a novel's morality or immorality. Nevertheless, the word 'treatment' could be interpreted widely and meant many and various things to critics. Sometimes it was interpreted as reticence or frankness and, depending on a critic's point of view, a novel was condemned or condoned for its examination of controversial subjects on these grounds. There was no agreement upon this aspect of Hardy's fiction. On the one hand, there are those critics who believed that Hardy was a reticent writer and commended this reticence.⁵¹ It was far more frequent for critics to comment upon Hardy's frankness, especially after the publication of The Woodlanders.⁵² Hardy

51. This, of course, was more frequent in the early reviews. See, as an example, 'Literature', The Morning Post, No. 30,372 (April 13, 1871), p.3, on Desperate Remedies. Nevertheless, even reviewers of novels in which it was observed that Hardy selected 'hazardous ground' commended his 'skilful' treatment of his subject matter. See The Athenaeum (November 18, 1882), p.658, on Two on a Tower. A few critics of Tess also commented upon its reticence. For Henry Alden, Harper's Weekly, New York (December 8, 1894), p.1156, the appeal was frank and direct, the treatment 'singularly reticent'. Cf. 'Mr. Hardy's New Romance', The St. James's Gazette, 24, No.3610 (January 7, 1892), p.5. Several critics thought Hardy reticent, but disapproved of such reticence. One--The Athenaeum (November 23, 1878), p.654, on The Return of the Native--believed that Hardy had wasted his talents on a subject which, because of English prejudices, he had been unable to treat as frankly as the subject demanded. Another--'Thomas Hardy's Latest Novel', The Independent, New York, 44 (February 25, 1892), p.276, on Tess--objected to the suggestiveness created by Hardy's reticence. Cf. The Spectator (February 3, 1883), p.154, on Two on a Tower.
52. Several critics found The Woodlanders's lack of reticence offensive. See, The World (April 20, 1887), p.22; 'New Novels', John Bull, 67, No.3468 (May 7, 1887), p.302; 'Novels', The Guardian, 42, No.2169 (June 29, 1887), p.990.

believed that, with Tess, 'there may be objections to the frankness of the tale' and he predicted correctly,⁵³ but it is with Jude that he was to feel fully the critical hostilities towards his frankness. A.J. Butler, for example, attempted to be open-minded in his discussion of the sexual element (which, however, he could not bring himself to name, but simply referred to as 'a certain instinct which forms a most important factor in human life and society'), admitting that 'to require the writer of fiction to confine himself within this limit [as demanded by those concerned with the 'young person']', and to produce no work that had better be excluded from the schoolroom is absurd on the face of it', but, when confronted with Jude, his open-mindedness deserted him:

Such a requirement if logically enforced would put Othello on the Index; and if it be not a bathos to mention other works after that, would have deprived the world of The Heart of Midlothian, The Cloister and the Hearth, and Adam Bede. Only the matter is a grave one, and should be treated with gravity and reticence, and with as little insistence on detail as possible. . . . Where Stevenson saw 'peril', Mr. Hardy deliberately wades in. It is all very well to talk about writing for men and women; but there are passages in Mr. Hardy's later books which will offend men in direct proportion to their manliness, and which all women, save the utterly abandoned--and it is not among these presumably that Mr. Hardy seeks his readers--will hurry over with shuddering disgust.⁵⁴

Hostile criticism of Hardy's frankness gradually diminished and, although as late as 1910 there can be found critics remarking on Hardy's 'treatment of certain topics . . . in a manner which

53. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.249. Examples of hostility towards the frankness of Tess include The Saturday Review (January 16, 1892), pp.73-4 (see quotation on p.66 of this study); 'Fiction', The Literary World, Boston, 23, No.4 (February 13, 1892), p.58.
54. The National Review (May, 1896), p.389. Cf. The Times (December 18, 1895), p.4; The Optimist, 'Books of the Hour. New Stories by Mr. Hardy and Mr. Kipling', The Sun, No.744 (November 20, 1895), p.1.

we associate with the French realists' and expressing the belief that, in Tess, Jude, and The Well-Beloved, 'we cannot feel that the unusual frankness here indulged adds either subtlety or power to his work',⁵⁵ the severity apparent in the reviews immediately following their publication was extremely rare.

What Hardy failed to stress in his bitter recording of the criticism which followed upon the publication of his later novels is that there were many who praised him for his frankness, believing that he had made a much needed contribution to the freeing of literature from the shackles of prudish restrictions. In essence, there were many critics who supported his plea for 'Candour in English Fiction' and, especially, that:

Nothing in such literature should for a moment exhibit lax views of that purity of life upon which the well-being of society depends; but the position of man and woman in nature, and the position of belief in the minds of man and woman--things which everybody is thinking but nobody is saying--might be taken up and treated frankly.⁵⁶

Some criticism, of course, while being the reverse of that which was merely abusive, was equally worthless in its eulogistic rant,⁵⁷ but other criticism, praising Hardy's novels for their frank treatment of topical questions, was moderate in its tone.

Annie Macdonell, for instance, observed:

Mr. Hardy recognises, without apology, the passion in human nature in a franker way than any of the other greater English novelists save the two elder Brontës. Till recently, English fiction was singularly lacking in its de-

55. William Collier, A History of English Literature (1910), p.686.
56. Personal Writings, p.133. Cf. Personal Writings, pp.25-6; Collected Letters, Volume One, p.264; and remarks in interviews in Black and White (August 27, 1892), p.240, and The Young Man (March, 1894), pp.76-8.
57. Such, for example, is the criticism of Grant Allen. See his 'Fiction and Mrs. Grundy', The Novel Review, n.s.1, No.4 (July, 1892), pp.294-315.

lineation, or in the presentment of the moral questions of which it is the source.

She continued, giving a sane and unbiased account of this element of 'frankness' in Hardy's fiction:

Mr. Hardy prefers frankness. But good taste is compatible with a large degree of frankness, and considering his unconventional views, and the boldness of his ventures, his reticence is much more remarkable than his freedom. . . . The chronicling of sordid detail, the childish pride in being audacious and outrageous, are not temptations for him. Perhaps there is no novelist with whom a love of beauty has been a more persistent force: it has kept him in wholesome ways. Accidental horrors and uglinesses have hardly any place in his work at all. Only, where a thing touches human life closely enough to make it worth representation in a story, it has been thought worthy of truthful expression.⁵⁸

For later critics, this became a recurrent theme: 'He has emancipated the novel from the shocked and over-protestant prudery of the Dickens and Thackeray epoch', wrote Thomas Seccombe in 1911 and, in 1912, T.P. O'Connor, somewhat hyperbolically and optimistically, 'Of the many services Mr. Hardy has done to literature none is greater than his expulsion for ever of "the too genteel reader" from the realms of English letters'.⁵⁹

Other critics appealed to the notion of 'tone'--an idea which, however, they used rather vaguely--in their analyses of the morality or immorality of Hardy's novels. Richard le Gallienne well represents the division of opinion over this as-

58. Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.217, 223-4. Reviews of Tess and Jude which commended Hardy's frankness in a temperate tone include 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The Speaker, 4, No.104 (December 26, 1891), p.771; 'Culture and Anarchy', The National Observer, 7, No.178 (April 16, 1892), p.555; The Times (January 13, 1892), p.13; James Little, The Literary World (May 13, 1892), pp.460-1; D.F. Hannigan, 'Prospective Transformation of the Novel', The Westminster Review, 140 (September, 1893), p.260; 'Jude the Obscure', The Saturday Review, 81 (February 8, 1896), pp.153-4.

59. Thomas Seccombe, 'New Books. Thomas Hardy: Romancier', The Bookman, 40, No.238 (July, 1911), p.171; T.P.'s Weekly (May 24, 1912), p.642.

pect of Hardy's fiction. In his review of Jude, he remarked: 'It handles delicate problems and situations with infinite delicacy and tenderness, and if in depicting certain aspects of country life, Mr. Hardy's realism is a little "coarse", well, country life is coarse, so what would you have?'⁶⁰ Yet, in a review of Life's Little Ironies, he criticized this element of 'coarseness' in Hardy's fiction:

There is one fault in Mr. Hardy's work that still jars in his Life's Little Ironies, but which he can hardly be expected to eradicate, as it is temperamental--a certain slight coarseness of touch in his love-making. . . . It is not his occasional 'realism' of detail which gives one this impression, for it would not be difficult to point out writers who are more realistic in detail, but who do not give us this impression. . . . it is rather a general pervading quality, an atmosphere, an accent. It seems simply an ingrained coarseness of touch, such as some men and women have, whom we cannot suffer to name certain matters, however reverent may be their intention; whereas others are at liberty to be as outspoken as they please.

He was more explicit in his comments on 'On the Western Circuit' about what exactly it was that he found objectionable in Hardy's fiction. Although he remarked that the heroine was 'once more' a typical Hardy heroine--'a beautiful she-animal, with a passionate, pleasure-loving nature, a certain veneer of culture, and a touch of imagination'--it was not this note of sensuality, but the 'flippancy' of the story's denouement, that he found most offensive:

There is something peculiarly Hardyish about the phrasing of 'let it be lips'; something that soils a beautiful situation. Why not 'give me your mouth', 'kiss me on the mouth', or some such honest and straightforward phrase? But 'let it be lips' betrays that flippancy which at such a moment always means grossness.⁶¹

60. The Idler Magazine (February, 1896), p.115. Cf. Richard le Gallienne, 'Books and Bookmen. Mr. Hardy. "The Well-Beloved"', The Star, No.2830 (March 29, 1897), p.1.

61. Richard le Gallienne, Retrospective Reviews (London, 1896), pp.80-2.

Le Gallienne's reference to the 'temperamental' reveals a major consideration of critics who were concerned with how the treatment of subject matter determined its morality or immorality. Concern with the 'temperamental', fundamentally a Longinian concept with the added moral emphasis of the Victorians, runs throughout the writings of the major nineteenth-century critics, most notably the writings of Arnold, Ruskin, Carlyle, and Pater. For lesser critics, too, this became an indispensable criterion, Leslie Stephen being one of its major advocates. Naturally enough, therefore, the notion of the 'temperamental' was an essential element in assessments of the morality or immorality of Hardy's novels. In his review of A Pair of Blue Eyes, John Hutton wrote that Hardy's novel 'has risen to the rank of those which show . . . true moral instinct . . .'.⁶² Hardy's critics delineated various qualities which went to make up this 'true moral instinct' in their discussions of his treatment of his chosen subject matter.

Few critics would have concurred with le Gallienne's accusations of 'flippancy', most, in fact, upholding Hardy's earnestness and sincerity as characteristics distinguishing his 'true moral instinct'.⁶³ With Tess and Jude, the insistence

62. The Spectator (June 28, 1873), p.831. See Longinus on the Sublime, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (Cambridge, 1899), p. 61, for his emphasis on the 'temperamental'. See pp.35-7 of this study for general comments.

63. In upholding sincerity and earnestness as important qualities of the writer, they were following the lead of such writers as Wordsworth, George Eliot, Leslie Stephen, and Henry James. See, for examples, Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, p.141; George Eliot, Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book (1884), pp.51-2, 57-8, 68-9; Leslie Stephen, The Cornhill Magazine (January, 1881), p.44; Henry James, The Art of Fiction, pp.21-2. Hardy would have concurred with this emphasis. See Life, p.273; Personal Writings, pp.25-6.

upon the value of Hardy's sincerity and earnestness is most prominent. Clementina Black wrote that Tess's superiority was 'largely due to a profound moral earnestness which has not always been conspicuous in his writing'. She believed that 'this very earnestness, by leading him to deal with serious moral problems, will assuredly cause this book to be reprobated by numbers of well-intentioned people who have read his previous novels with complacency'.⁶⁴ Despite her prediction, numerous critics lauded Hardy's earnestness and sincerity in his later two major novels. One critic wrote of Tess that it was 'truly a great work, in virtue both of the profoundly serious purpose which animates it, and of the high level of execution maintained almost from first to last in its pages', points with which Francis Thompson, the poet, would have agreed:

To call the book impure would be simply a piece of morbid Manichaeism, with which we have no kind of sympathy. Had the treatment not been in its essence delicate, it would have lost its artistic quality, and would not have retained our sympathies to its end. Nor does its 'moral', so far as it is pertinent to apply that word to the largely unconscious work of a literary genius of the highest type, indicate any trivial judgment or levity of thinking.⁶⁵

The earnestness and sincerity of Jude, especially in its dealings with moral and social problems, were similarly welcomed and commended.⁶⁶

Emphasis on the 'temperamental' in discussions of the mo-

64. Clementina Black, 'Mr. Thomas Hardy's New Story', The Illustrated London News, 100 (January 9, 1892), p.50.

65. 'The New Books of the Month. Mr. Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbevilles [sic]"', The Review of Reviews, 5 (February, 1892), p.200; The Daily Chronicle (December 26, 1891), p.4.

66. See, for examples, Geoffrey Mortimer, The Free Review (January, 1896), especially pp.388, 397-8; George Douglas, 'On Some Critics of "Jude the Obscure"', The Bookman, 9 (January, 1896), p.121.

rality or immorality of a novel also involved the notion of impersonality or objectivity. The criticism of the nineteenth century reveals an intensified concern with the question of whether an artist is required to intrude and reveal his moral predilections or whether he should objectively and impartially present his subject, letting the reader draw his own inferences. Wilkinson Sherren explained this 'vexed question of the true function of art' in these terms:

Whether methods of fine discrimination and reserve in relation to evil, should prevail, or methods of absolute and impersonal revelation, is the issue between the two schools. Typical examples are found in Zola, the unflinching photographer whose art is unmoral and embracive, and Barrie, the idealist, whose art is tenderly selective. . . . Those who put art beyond the sphere of morality, and claim absolute licence of expression, make truth their watchword; those who emphasize the goodness of mankind, and make no microscopic study of vice, also recognize the supremacy of truth, but assert that reticence in the delineation of moral deformity is a paramount duty.

Sherren is one of those critics who believed that Hardy took no moral stance, simply relating his tale as objectively as possible, but it is difficult to discern whether Sherren condemned or commended this purported objectivity.⁶⁷ Other critics leave their readers in no doubt about how they felt concerning this question. On the one hand, there are a few critics who objected to the Flaubertian ideal of impersonality, while, on the other, most critics praised the element of objectivity in Hardy's novels.⁶⁸ Yet other critics more aptly insisted

67. The Wessex of Romance (1902), pp.61-2, 67-8.

68. For an example of a reviewer who criticized Hardy's objectivity, see, R.H. Hutton, 'Books. The Woodlanders', The Spectator, 60 (March 26, 1887), pp.419-20. Examples of critics who praised the element of objectivity are cited on pp.155-6 of this study. Cf. 'Books to Read, and Others', Vanity Fair, 24, No.630 (November 27, 1880), p. 299, on The Trumpet-Major; A.J. Butler, The National Review (May, 1896), p.387, on Hardy's earlier fiction.

that, although Hardy's technique was that of objectivity, he was never cold or merely impersonal in his treatment. Hardy included in his personal scrapbooks a commentary which well represents this conclusion:

In some respects Thomas Hardy is the most impersonal of novelists. The stern self-repression of his art--his determination to stand outside his characters and remote from them; his idea that the novelist should be, in appearance at least, a passionless and impartial chronicler--leaving to life and men and women the task of telling the story and suggesting the moral--all these things establish a strong likeness between the ideas of Thomas Hardy with regard to art and the life-long gospel preached by Gustave Flaubert. And yet Thomas Hardy is the most personal of writers. Between the lines of nearly every story you can read the central facts of this man's nature and experiences. This frigid chronicler--this impartial and almost cruelly passive spectator of the drama of life--has his gospel very clear, very firm, and, above all things, throbbing with human feeling. . . . until his heart has also turned to dust Thomas Hardy will never cease to feel saeva indignatio which the sight of wrong and suffering begets in him.⁶⁹

As this quotation suggests, the question of objectivity and impersonality was, for many critics, not simply one of technique, but involved the 'temperamental' element of sympathetic or cynical treatment of the characters and the moral questions which their conduct raised. Most critics believed that Hardy possessed the quality of sympathy. One of the few exceptions is William Dawson who, in stressing Hardy's 'Lucretian austerity', seems to discount any sympathetic element in his novels.⁷⁰ Few critics would have supported such an extreme position. While some critics did insist upon Hardy's austerity, they did

69. Thomas Hardy's Personal Scrapbooks, Dorset County Library. This article is annotated 'Western Mercury. March 2. 1895. Plymouth'. It is entitled 'Pen Pictures of Men and Women of Note. Thomas Hardy' and signed 'T.P.', which could be T.P. O'Connor. Cf. William Phelps, The North American Review, New York (October, 1909), pp.509, 514.

70. The Makers of English Fiction (1905), pp.211-2. For general remarks on sympathy, see pp.33-4, 37-8 of this study.

not deny his sympathy. Mary Moss, commenting upon The Mayor of Casterbridge, stressed that, although 'austerity is the note of this book', this does not negate the fact that 'Hardy loves his people'.⁷¹ Moreover, some critics perceived that objectivity contributed to the dignity of a novel and that sympathy replaced pleading a character's case. Such was the approach of Lascelles Abercrombie to Tess:

To defend the characters whom he creates is not a dignified attitude for a novelist to assume; and Hardy's fiction is always dignified. . . . But what the story does for Tess, is to accept her with all the perfect sympathy and understanding of love. . . . this noticeable dualism in Tess of the D'Urbervilles is exceedingly important for the conveying of the epic motive of the whole book--the dualism of a merciless, unhesitating tragic imagination, and an impotent fervour of charity for its central figure; charity that seems always desiring to protect this figure from the steady, injurious process of the imagination which conceived her, yet can do nothing but painfully watch her destruction.⁷²

Other critics singled out Hardy's sympathy and pity for his characters as a defence against charges of immorality in his novels. Harold Williams, for example, spoke sensitively of Hardy's 'profound sympathy . . . with human nature':

Nothing could be more ignorantly fallacious than the common conception of Mr. Hardy as a novelist who paints the grosser realities of life for their own sake, or with a harsh indifference. His mind, imagination, and insight are sincere, he sees the stern truth of life as well as its surface proprieties, he writes of pain and tragedy in the story of narrow lives, because it is always and insistently there, not because he goes out of his way to look for it; but it is with a breadth of vision and deep sympathy which the majority of those who exclaim against his work are, perhaps, scarcely capable of realising. The fellow-sympathy of Meredith we feel to be more with mankind, while Mr. Hardy, though the race-consciousness is strong in him, centres our interest in the individual. . . . This is the final and great achievement which marks off the artist and man of genius from the person possessed

71. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (September, 1906), p.363.

72. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.144-5.

only of talent. . . . the indelible impress of character-drawing is rare. And a cold, unfeeling insight, however acute, will never breathe life into its characterisations: a sane and unprejudiced sympathy can alone do this.⁷³

One quality which critics simply would not tolerate in an author is cynicism.⁷⁴ Most critics believed that Hardy's novels were free from any cynical attitude. Earlier critics, in extricating Hardy from any possible charges of cynical treatment, tended to make an appeal to some distinct and definite moral element. Alexandra Orr, for example, claimed that Hardy's belief in a moral order saved him from cynicism:

. . . though the author's descriptive attitude is impartial almost to indifference, he is redeemed from the reproach of cynicism which impartial authors so often incur, by his obvious belief in a moral order to which human action is subject, if not responsible. It is only in his last work [The Return of the Native] that we find any reference to a moral ideal; but the lives of all his personages bear witness to that principle of natural retribution or of natural consequences which is the practical form of the moral law.⁷⁵

73. Two Centuries of the English Novel (1911), pp.285-7. Cf. Herbert Paul, The Nineteenth Century (May, 1897), p.788; Richard Burton, Masters of the English Novel (1909), pp. 275-6.
74. Hall Caine was particularly vociferous in his condemnation of cynicism which he believed to be 'the spirit of modern fiction'. Raymond Blathwayt, 'Interview with Mr. Hall Caine', The Bookman, 2, No.10 (July, 1892), p.114. Caine argued that 'cynicism' is the deadliest enemy that good literature ever had or can have' and that 'imagination and cynicism cannot live together, and no man of imagination ever was or will be a cynic'. The Contemporary Review (April, 1890), p.480. Cf. The George Eliot Letters, Volume II, p.362. Very few critics brought the accusation of cynicism against Hardy's novels. The rare exceptions are to be found in The St. James's Gazette (January 16, 1883), pp.6-7, concerning Viviette's marriage to the Bishop in Two on a Tower, and William Morton Payne, 'Recent Fiction', The Dial, Chicago, 20, No.231 (February 1, 1896), p.77, who censured Hardy's 'gratuitous cynicism' in Jude.
75. The New Quarterly Magazine (October, 1879), pp.412-3. Cf. The British Quarterly Review (July 1, 1876), p.235, which appealed to 'the idea of self-abnegation' in The Hand of Ethelberta as saving Hardy from the danger of assuming 'the cynical view'.

Later critics appealed to more general moral elements, especially to Hardy's sympathy and pity. A critic for the New-York Tribune in 1896 well summarizes many of the ideas, which have been previously discussed, in his argument that Hardy's novels were free from immorality and cynicism:

The strangest reproach ever brought against a writer has been the reproach of indelicacy brought against the author of 'Tess' and 'Jude'. . . . No French novelist living could have told the stories of 'Tess' or 'Jude' without awakening disgust in the reader's mind The books are really unspotted, for they are written in pity for the degradations and misfortunes of mankind, not in cynical dissection of them. To purge the imagination through terror and pity--that is admittedly the aim of the highest tragedy, and that is Hardy's aim. . . . In the presence of such intense realities as fill the epic of Jude's career it is childish to talk of indelicacy, of motives, and only a small soul will think of them. The spectator of such a drama is assisting in its solemn progression, he is not studying a work of 'literary art'. The art is there, and the literature, but the heart of humanity is beating through both, and the sufferings of Jude enter into the fibre of experience.

He concluded his article by distinguishing those qualities which gave to Hardy's novels their 'spiritual force':

But most of all he has shown the pity and the beauty of human life, most of all he has enlarged the boundaries of sympathy and charity. His has been no barren labor, for he makes his reader think less of himself and more of mankind, he teaches the glory of renunciation, the dignity of pain and the transfiguring power of unblemished love.⁷⁶

Cynicism was, for these critics, a sign of an unhealthy mind and a healthy mind was essential for the artist, especially if he were treating sexual topics. James Noble stressed this in his discussion of the handling of sexual themes in such novels as Jane Eyre, Adam Bede, and Griffith Gaunt:

The essential facts of sexual passion are handled with all needful truth and boldness, and the only differences between them and the present fiction of erotomania are: (1) that the former are works of permanent value as lit-

76. New-York Tribune (June 7, 1896), p.26. Cf. William Archer, 'Literature in 1895', The Daily Chronicle, No. 10,552 (January 1, 1896), p.3, on Jude.

erature, while the latter are not; (2) that the former put sexuality in its true place as an important, though not all-dominant, factor in life; and (3) that in dealing with it they treat of the broad central facts of passion which are of interest to everybody, and ignore the details of sexual psychology, which, if healthy, are familiar to every man and woman . . . and, if morbid, are attractive only to unwholesome undergraduates, or to neurotic young women of the idle classes.

He concluded: 'The success of such a book as Mr. Hardy's "Tess", which certainly does not ignore the missing "half" of life, shows that there is all needful freedom for any writer who will treat sex questions sanefully, truthfully, proportionately, and convincingly.'⁷⁷ Hardy would have agreed with the general drift of these remarks about the necessity for an artist to possess a healthy mind:

Were the objections of the scrupulous limited to a prurient treatment of the relations of the sexes, or to any view of vice calculated to undermine the essential principles of social order, all honest lovers of literature would be in accord with them. . . . But the writer may print the not of his broken commandment in capitals of flame; it makes no difference. A question which should be wholly a question of treatment is confusedly regarded as a question of subject.⁷⁸

Some of Hardy's critics did confuse the questions of treatment and subject, but many others reveal that they were in accord with these remarks, honestly attempting to assess his novels by their treatment, rather than by their subject, and, for many of these critics, the health of the artist's mind was an indispensable criterion in arriving at conclusions about this treatment.

The majority of accusations of pruriency and defences of Hardy against such accusations occurred with Tess and Jude.

77. James Ashcroft Noble, 'The Fiction of Sexuality', The Contemporary Review, 67 (April, 1895), pp.497-8. For general remarks on the importance of a healthy mind, see pp.33-7, 40-1 of this study.

78. Personal Writings, p.131. Cf. Life, p.273.

There are, however, a few earlier examples which act as a prelude to what follows. John Hutton, in his review of Desperate Remedies, anticipated the later critics who censured Hardy for pruriency in his condemnation of him for encouraging 'low curiosity about the detail of crime' by his 'idle prying into the ways of wickedness'.⁷⁹ Other reviewers would have refuted such censure and thus already a divergence of opinion which is to mark Hardy criticism in future years is apparent. The Athenaeum's reviewer remarked that, although the story was 'disagreeable, inasmuch as it is full of crimes', these crimes were 'never purposeless, and . . . their revelation comes upon us step by step, and is worked out with considerable artistic power'. Moreover, he noted the 'occasional coarseness' of expression, but asserted that it 'does not affect the main character of the story' and that it was 'better than the prurient sentimentality with which we are so often nauseated . . .'.⁸⁰

Not until A Laodicean did critics again feel called upon to defend Hardy against possible charges of pruriency, although such charges, with this novel, did not in fact arise; Two on a Tower, however, did not escape accusations of pruriency.⁸¹

79. The Spectator (April 22, 1871), pp.481-2.

80. The Athenaeum (April 1, 1871), p.399. Cf. Horace Moule, 'Desperate Remedies', The Saturday Review, 32, No.831 (September 30, 1871), p.441, who called attention to the suggestive scene between Cytherea and Miss Aldclyffe, but commented that it was 'drawn with an effective and analytical power that recalls the manner of George Sand'.

81. Two reviews of A Laodicean noted Hardy's 'way of insisting on the physical attractions of a woman', but argued that, in Hardy, this was not 'offensive': 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.2827 (December 31, 1881), p.900; 'A Laodicean', The Saturday Review, 53 (January 14, 1882), p.53. An example of a review which censured Two on a Tower for its pruriency is 'Current Fiction', The Literary World, Boston, 13, No.25 (December 16, 1882), p.461.

Nevertheless, the earlier novels were generally commended for their purity of thought, good taste, and tact. Critics of Far from the Madding Crowd well represent the emphasis placed upon these qualities in Hardy's earlier novels. The Saturday Review's critic noted that, in the Fanny Robin scenes and others, Hardy showed 'power and taste' and The Times's reviewer especially commended Hardy's tact 'in taking Bathsheba up to her unconscious and innocent rival's coffin--a coffin in which not only a life but a secret lies hidden away, and refraining from putting into words what the deceived wife feels when she lifts the lid'. This latter reviewer concluded that Far from the Madding Crowd 'rises a good deal beyond the ordinary dead-level of mawkish sentiment and romantic twaddle . . .'.⁸²

Only with Tess did accusations of pruriency begin to occur more frequently. Several critics, Mowbray Morris for example, attributed this purported pruriency to

. . . an inherent failure in the instinct for good taste, and a lack of the intellectual cultivation that can sometimes avail to supply its place, added to a choice of subject which must always be fatal to an author, no matter what his other gifts may be, who has not those two safeguards. . . . Poor Tess's sensual qualifications for the part of heroine are paraded over and over again with a persistence like that of a horse-dealer egging on some wavering customer to a deal, or a slave-dealer appraising his wares to some full-blooded pasha.⁸³

Jude suffered even more than Tess from absurd criticism vehemently attacking its pruriency. Over the following years, a gradual decline in such criticism is noticeable, although a

82. 'Far from the Madding Crowd', The Saturday Review, 39 (January 9, 1875), p.58; The Times (January 25, 1875), p.4. Cf. two reviews of A Pair of Blue Eyes: The Saturday Review (August 2, 1873), pp.158-9 (probably by Horace Moule); 'Literature. A Pair of Blue Eyes', The Liverpool Weekly Albion, 50, No.2619 (September 15, 1877), p.7.

83. The Quarterly Review (April, 1892), p.325. Cf. The Daily Chronicle (March 16, 1894), p.3.

few examples, equally vehement, did occasionally occur.⁸⁴

While there were numerous denials of pruriency in Hardy's novels, one critic stands out as a defender of Hardy against this hostility. Again, it is Havelock Ellis who made the most perceptive and illuminating remarks in his defence of Hardy:

In 'Jude the Obscure' we find for the first time in our literature the reality of marriage clearly recognized as something wholly apart from the mere ceremony with which our novelists have usually identified it. Others among our novelists may have tried to deal with the reality rather than with its shadow, but assuredly not with the audacity, purity and sincerity of an artist who is akin in spirit to the great artists of our best dramatic age, to Fletcher and Heywood and Ford, rather than to the powerful though often clumsy novelists of the eighteenth century.⁸⁵

Many of these more sympathetic reviews, especially those emphasizing the energy and strength of Hardy's fiction and those opposed to sentimentality, reveal that there are some critics who would have concurred with Hardy's statement that 'the development of a more virile type of novel is not incompatible with sound morality . . .'.⁸⁶ In 1892, Janetta Newton-

84. Harry Peck's accusations well illustrate the vehement and hysterical attitude with which some reviewers reacted to Jude at the time of its publication. The Bookman, New York (January, 1896), pp.427-9. W.L. Courtney, The Daily Telegraph (March 17, 1897), p.9, made similar accusations, but approached Hardy with a more temperate attitude and did not, as did Peck, resort to an accumulation of vituperative epithets. For examples of vehement and abusive criticism of Hardy in the following years, see, The World (March 24, 1897), pp.13-4; Thomas Gunn Selby, The Theology of Modern Fiction (London, 1897), pp.88-130; Rev. Samuel Law Wilson, The Theology of Modern Literature (Edinburgh, 1899), pp.381-408; The Literary World (June 21, 1901), p.588 (signed 'X').
85. The Savoy (October, 1896), p.48. For examples of reviewers of Tess who denied that there was any pruriency in the novel, see, Jehu Junior, 'Men of the Day.--No.DXL. Mr. Thomas Hardy', Vanity Fair, 47, No.1231 (June 4, 1892), p.391; The Bookman (February, 1892), p.180. Later defences of Jude against pruriency include John Henneman, The Reader Magazine, Indianapolis (November, 1906), p.681; Frederick Peek, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy' (1910), p.243.
86. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.250. Despite Edmund

Robinson touched upon one aspect of the question of virility-- a question which might, but does not necessarily, involve the sexual element--that is, the quality of a morbid, as opposed to a virile, healthy mind. She believed that Hardy revealed both qualities:

Despite his verve and spontaneity he is always restrained and master of himself; but he is a nervous writer, and his sentences glow with inner fire, for he strangely unites the freshness of an Elizabethan author with a gloomy pessimistic impressiveness which belongs solely to the present century.

In a later passage, she is more explicit about these qualities:

Mr. Hardy's books, though suggestive and stimulating from their thoughtfulness and freshness of observation, have, nevertheless, a curiously oppressive atmosphere. The author makes no profession of pessimism; his characters are not unusually unfortunate, nor his plots needlessly tragical, while the narrative is always relieved by a vein of penetrating and delightful humour. But a heavy sense of the mystery of life pervades his mind. He never attempts to give optimistic interpretations of the rulings of Providence; he never gives us to understand that all is ordered for the best. He does not glow with active benevolence towards his fellow-men, but gazes at them with a saddened, compassionate wonder, a tender irony. He makes few comments, but we know that he has felt the pity and the mystery. At the same time, his work is morally sound.

Other critics were not so astute in that they were unable to accept the contradictory tendencies in Hardy's fiction of morbidity and virility, morbidity and a healthy, sound mind. First, there are those critics who stressed the morbid tenden-

Gosse's contention in The St. James's Gazette (March 31, 1897), p.5, that, 'One really is tempted to believe that Mr. Hardy's main offence is his vitality', many critics stressed the virility of Hardy's fiction, while not denying its 'sound morality'. Two examples of critics who were unreservedly laudatory about this aspect of Hardy's fiction are D.F. Hannigan, The Westminster Review (March, 1895), p.303, and 'Sex in Fiction', The Westminster Review, 143, No.6 (June, 1895), p.624; Geoffrey Mortimer, The Free Review (January, 1896), especially pp.387-8, 400.

87. The Westminster Review (February, 1892), pp.155, 156-7.

cies. The earliest examples came in reviews of The Return of the Native by William Henley, who opposed this quality on temperamental grounds, and by R.H. Hutton, whose opposition was based on ideological objections, he being the first to associate this morbid element with what he believed to be Hardy's 'sombre fatalism'.⁸⁸ These objections are unique and it is not until Jude that censure of morbidity became more prevalent. Tess escaped such hostility from most critics. Richard Burton well represents the attitude of many critics in his remarks on the difference between these two novels. He believed that, 'A sane, vigorous, masculine mind is at work in all his fiction up to its very latest', and that only Jude lacked these qualities. Tess is 'a sane and wholesome work', but Jude is not, primarily because it 'is deficient in poetry, in the broad sense' and, therefore, the major impression received from it is 'of its unrelieved ugliness and disgust':

. . . there is something shuddering about the arbitrary piling-up of horror; the modesty of nature is overstept; it is not a truly proportioned view of life, one feels It is a fair guess that in the end it will be called the artistic mistake of a novelist of genius.⁸⁹

88. William Henley, London (November 23, 1878), p.498, and The Academy (November 30, 1878), p.517; R.H. Hutton, The Spectator (February 8, 1879) pp.181-2.

89. Masters of the English Novel (1909), pp.269, 272-4. Many critics would have agreed with these conclusions about Jude, criticism being largely directed against the characters, especially Sue, whom many viewed as pathological cases. See, for examples, Jeannette L. Gilder, 'Hardy the Degenerate', The World, No.1115 (November 13, 1895), p.15; 'Literature. "Jude the Obscure"', The Critic, New York, 24, No.723 (December 28, 1895), p.437; Robert Yelverton Tyrrell, 'Jude the Obscure', The Fortnightly Review, 59 (June 1, 1896), p.860. After Hardy ceased novel writing, critics persisted in their belief that morbidity was a predominant quality of Hardy's temperament and in their censure of this morbidity. Some of this criticism reveals temperate, well-considered, and honest attempts to evaluate the quality of Hardy's mind. For examples, Wilkinson Sherren, The Wessex of Romance (1902), pp.64-5, on Jude; M.M. Turnbull, The Gentleman's Magazine (November,

Most of the defences of Hardy against charges of morbidity have been noted in other contexts. These defences took various approaches, critics emphasizing different elements which they believed kept his novels healthy, sane, and wholesome, and prevented them from being overpowered by any morbid qualities: Lionel Johnson well represents those who stressed Hardy's austerity, Harold Williams those who stressed Hardy's 'profound sympathy' with human nature, Janetta Newton-Robinson Hardy's vitality and humour, and Annie Macdonell Hardy's love of beauty.⁹⁰ One final approach should be noted: those who contended that Hardy's belief and faith in humanity counteracted the morbid tendencies in his fiction. Thus, for example, Ernest Bates wrote:

. . . we must grant that the world for Hardy is not a world where permanent happiness and tranquillity are generally attainable. Misery is all about us, and increase of love inevitably brings increase of suffering. Does this view make Hardy after all a pessimist? In his own eyes, I grant, he is probably a pessimist, for in his metaphysical side-remarks the note of despair is beyond question often sounded. The deeper Hardy, however, whose manhood speaks to us through his spontaneous pictures of life more entirely than in his reflective remarks, I certainly call not a pessimist but an optimist, for he shows a worthy humanity, true to itself, unconquered by destiny, sanctified by love.⁹¹

It has become apparent that criticism of the moral aspects of Hardy's fiction was not as rigid as Hardy's comments on the

1903), pp.476-9; The Edinburgh Review (January, 1912), especially pp.96-102, 110. Other critics did not display such qualities, but simply abused Hardy for what they believed to be his morbidity. Examples include Rev. Samuel Wilson, The Theology of Modern Literature (1899), pp.381-408; The Literary World (June 21, 1901), p.588 (signed 'X').

90. See, respectively, pp.169, 183-4, 190, 176-7 of this study.

91. Ernest Sutherland Bates, 'The Optimism of Thomas Hardy', International Journal of Ethics, Philadelphia, 15 (July, 1905), p.484.

critical reception of his novels might suggest. While critics did concentrate to a large extent on the morality of a novel, this term was interpreted widely and was modified greatly by anti-didactic tendencies in the criticism. When it came to questions of morality, as opposed to immorality, insistence upon the notion of treatment, again interpreted variously and widely, allowed for greater freedom in dealing with controversial topics than concentration simply on subject would have granted. Hardy obviously was the victim of some narrow, prejudiced criticism and of criticism which misunderstood his aims and ideals, but this was balanced, and perhaps even outweighed, by sympathetic and very often enlightened ideas in discussions of the relationship of art and morality as revealed in his fiction.

Chapter VI

Criticism of Hardy's Introduction of Philosophical Ideas into his Novels

From the beginning, the realist movement of the later years of the nineteenth century was associated with a deterministic philosophy of life. This was primarily because critics early recognized that the most influential figures of this movement, Zola and other French writers, had some very definite and consistent viewpoints concerning man in his relations with nature and society which they wanted to convey through their literature. From a philosophical standpoint, English critics objected to the literature which was an outgrowth of this scientifically-oriented movement for several reasons. For one, they believed that it was wholly devoid of any idealistic elements and thus censured such a materialistic approach to life. Critics also objected to the pessimism of such an approach. As William Frierson points out, English critics 'protested against naturalism as a social philosophy; it was deterministic and therefore disillusioning and depressing; it was analytic and therefore not elevating or inspiring'.¹ Objections to the pessimism of the realists tended to stress its one-sidedness or, as Edmund Gosse argued in a generally sympathetic article in 1890, the limitations resulting from the realists' tendency to exaggerate discords between man and nature.² Such critics

1. William C. Frierson, 'The English Controversy over Realism in Fiction. 1885-1895', PMLA, 43, No.2 (June, 1928), p.538. An excellent example of a hostile article illustrating typical prejudices against the materialistic and pessimistic philosophy of the realists is W.S. Lilly, 'The New Naturalism', The Fortnightly Review, 38, No.224 (August 1, 1885), pp.240-56.

2. Edmund Gosse, 'The Limits of Realism in Fiction', The Forum,

were not asking simply for an optimistic view of life, but rather for a more balanced view.

The Mayor of Casterbridge and The Woodlanders were deemed, by some reviewers, to be pessimistic, but it was not actually until Tess that critics began to associate the ideas expressed in Hardy's novels with those of the realist school. These ideas were labelled variously as 'naturalistic', 'deterministic', or 'fatalistic', these terms being used interchangeably, inconsistently, and often with great confusion. It was, however, only with the publication of his poems, and especially with the publication of The Dynasts, that there was any general trend towards interpreting Hardy's novels in the light of a consistent philosophy. Nevertheless, while some critics would have concurred with Thomas Dickinson who, in 1912, insisted that The Dynasts was important 'in expounding the spirit and philosophy of Hardy's novels' and that, 'Hereafter no one can read these works understandingly except through the medium of this, perhaps his last, work',³ others did acknowledge Hardy's declarations that he neither upheld nor was attempting to propagate any consistent philosophy and thus emphasized the tentativeness of his views which were only formalized and consolidated in The Dynasts.

The belief that Hardy, in writing his novels, had a philosophical purpose, based either on a formal or informal philosophy of life, naturally led to discussion of whether such a purpose

New York, 9 (June, 1890), especially pp.397-8. Cf. William Simonds, An Introduction to the Study of English Fiction (1895), pp.81-5.

3. Thomas Herbert Dickinson, 'Thomas Hardy's "The Dynasts"', The North American Review, New York, 195, No.677 (April, 1912), p.529.

could be legitimately and artistically introduced into a novel. Although the nature of Hardy's fiction was instrumental in prompting such discussion, there was a general move towards the reconsideration of the relationship between art and philosophy in the novel because of the growing tendency towards greater seriousness and the inclusion of philosophical notions in novels. Novelists and critics alike had begun, by mid-century, to react against 'light literature', mere frivolous and diverting reading. Despite Henry Knight's advice to Elfride in A Pair of Blue Eyes that, 'It requires a judicious omission of your real thoughts to make a novel popular', if an author desired an audience beyond that of those who confined their reading to penny-thrillers and sentimental romances, quite the opposite was true.⁴ George Eliot was considered by most to be the greatest influence in contributing to a more significant and purposeful trend among novelists, in giving 'to the novel a philosophic breadth which it had never before had in England',⁵ but, while most critics acknowledged and respected her importance in directing the novel towards a greater seriousness and profundity, objections arose when these qualities interfered with other qualities considered to be equally essential for the novel. For this reason, the criticism of the latter years of the nineteenth century is marked by a great divergence of opinion concerning the restrictions which should be placed upon the introduction of philosophical ideas into the novel.

Many of the criteria used in discussing novels with a moral or social purpose, examined in the last chapter, were applied to

4. A Pair of Blue Eyes, p.186. See pp.27-30 of this study for general remarks and examples.

5. E.A.B., The Academy (February 15, 1902), p.173.

novels with a purportedly philosophical purpose. One of the most important of these--one with which Hardy would have wholly concurred--is that the novelist completely and artistically integrate into his narrative any ideas or philosophy that he might wish to convey.⁶ Hardy's early novels provoked few remarks concerning the intrusion of ideas or philosophical purport, but those who did comment tended to use George Eliot's fiction as a point of reference with which they could be compared. Horace Moule, for example, who wrote a generally sympathetic review of Desperate Remedies, did raise one major objection:

Like George Eliot, the author delights in running off to sententiae, in generalizing abstractions out of the special point in hand. He inclines to this intellectual pastime a little too often, and with a little too much of laboured epigram.⁷

The general attitude of critics was that George Eliot had, especially in her later novels, become more of an essayist than a novelist. Later critics of Hardy, looking back in retrospect over his novels, were inclined to believe that, if Hardy had an affinity with George Eliot in this respect, it was more evident in his last, rather than his first, novels. George Douglas expressed the sentiments of many when he contended that early reviews of Far from the Madding Crowd which ascribed it to George Eliot betrayed 'a surprising lack of literary instinct' because, 'in picturesqueness, in humour, in characterisation, above all in artistic perfection of workmanship', Hardy's novel

6. Although Hardy had a predilection for 'the large intention' and 'high ideas' (Life, p.310), he stressed the importance of artistic integration of ideas into a novel. See, for examples, Life, p.304; Personal Writings, pp.26-7, 112-4. Cf. Henry James, The Art of Fiction, pp.17-8. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.38, 42-4, 76, and Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.88-92, cite further examples.

7. The Saturday Review (September 30, 1871), p.442.

. . . was immensely superior to anything ever accomplished by that lofty-minded moral essayist who mistook her way into storytelling. . . . her heart was too often in the moral rather than in the story, and the destructive criticism of the day has already played strange havoc with her work.

Douglas further contended that, if 'any real resemblance to George Eliot' were to be found, it was 'in Mr. Hardy's later, not his early, works', these showing a 'seriousness of purpose and gloominess of creed [which] stamp the two authors as the outcome of a single period in the history of philosophic thought', that is, 'the age of Huxleyism, or of Positivism, George Eliot marking the rise of its influence in fiction, Hardy the close'.⁸

When objections arose in the early reviews of Hardy's novels, they were usually confined to the criticism that the ideas were inappropriate to the characters or scenes. Thus R.H. Hutton, in his review of Far from the Madding Crowd, criticized Hardy for 'blending' and confusing his ideas and his style of expressing these ideas with the thoughts of his characters (a 'mistake' which, he claimed, George Eliot never made), while, in a later review of The Mayor of Casterbridge, he similarly objected to the inappropriateness of Hardy's remarks to the subject of the novel:

. . . he intersperses throughout his story hints of the fashionable pessimism, a philosophy which seems to us to have little appropriateness to the homely scenery and characters which he portrays. . . . To our minds, these very pagan reflections are as much out of place as they are intrinsically false.

For the most part, critics of Hardy's earlier novels conceded that he integrated his ideas into his narrative and that his ideas were appropriate to his characters and scenes. An

8. George Douglas, 'The Well-Beloved', The Bookman, New York, 5, No.3 (May, 1897), p.247.

9. The Spectator (December 19, 1874), p.1598; R.H. Hutton, 'Books. The Mayor of Casterbridge', The Spectator, 59 (June 5, 1886), p.752.

important review for illustrating the emphasis which critics placed on ideas being artistically conveyed by being an integral part of the narrative is William Wallace's discussion of the theme of the 'Unfulfilled Intention' in The Woodlanders. He asserted that, in Far from the Madding Crowd, Hardy 'exhibited the Fulfilled Intention in the death of Troy and in the marriage of Bathsheba Everdene and Gabriel Oak--the Fulfilled Intention, that is to say, of his own imagination', whereas The Woodlanders demonstrated 'the Unfulfilled Intention of the actual world'. He praised the admirable way in which this theme was worked out through the characters and plot:

. . . the Unfulfilled Intention has its compensating advantages in nature and in art--it gives variety to both. Men and women hang by each other in consequence of their weaknesses; they are not indissolubly united through their virtues. But Mr. Hardy not only justifies--by reproducing--the Unfulfilled Intention, he provides, in The Woodlanders, a strong plot, diversified rather than marred by whimsicalities of incident. Melbury . . . is in his way the impersonation of the Unfulfilled Intention.¹⁰

With the later novels, The Mayor of Casterbridge but more especially Tess and Jude, some critics began to assert that philosophical ideas were marring Hardy's art and that he was forcing his narratives into distorted forms in order to illustrate these ideas.¹¹ Other critics concluded that the aesthetic and conceptual value of Hardy's novels were separable. Lionel Johnson, for instance, believed that Hardy had marred Tess because of the 'insinuated argument' in his attempt to 'vindicate

10. The Academy (April 9, 1887), p.252. This is perhaps the same William Wallace who published works on Hegel, Kant, and Schopenhauer and, if this is the case, it would partially explain his sympathetic attitude to The Woodlanders.

11. Robert Shindler's commentary in On Certain Aspects of Recent English Literature (1902), pp.64-9, well summarizes these objections (see, for example, the quotation on p.84 of this study). For other remarks on how a purpose marred Tess and Jude, see pp.74-5, 165-6 of this study.

the ways of man to God', but that,

. . . without changing a single incident of the story, it is possible to reject Mr. Hardy's moral: read it apart from his commentary, and it loses nothing of its strength: rather, it gains much. Tess is no longer presented to us, as predestined to her fate: she once more takes the tragic place.¹²

From the beginning, critics defended Hardy's novels against censure of inartistic intrusion of philosophical purpose, but it is two later studies which are most important for their argument that Hardy accomplished the difficult feat of giving to his novels philosophical seriousness and profundity while not sacrificing artistry. These are the studies of Helen Garwood and Lascelles Abercrombie, published in 1911 and 1912 respectively. They were both primarily concerned with what they saw as the philosophical or metaphysical value of Hardy's writings, yet they did not deny their aesthetic value, insisting that the two were completely integrated. Helen Garwood was the first critic to make an extensive analysis of the influence of specific philosophers on Hardy's art, her analysis focusing upon the similarities between Schopenhauer's philosophy and Hardy's art. She was quick to point out, however, that Hardy had not fallen victim to 'the one enemy of literature'--didacticism--and that his success as a novelist 'is due to his skill in welding together two interests not always congenial, the pure and simple story, his interpretation of the story'.¹³

12. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.236, 267. For fuller quotation of the passage from p.236, see p.165 of this study. Similar criticism persisted into the twentieth century. See, for examples, A.G. Gardiner, 'A Novelist's Philosophy', The Daily News, No.17,770 (March 5, 1903), p.8; 'Some Books of the Week', The Spectator, 109, No. 4403 (November 16, 1912), p.816.

13. Helen Garwood, Thomas Hardy. An Illustration of the Philosophy of Schopenhauer (Philadelphia, 1911), pp.9, 12. This was originally a doctoral thesis completed at the University of Pennsylvania in 1909.

Lascelles Abercrombie saw a complex 'metaphysic'--an 'aesthetic formation of some credible correspondence between perceived existence and a conceived absoluteness of reality'--informing and controlling all Hardy's major novels and thus giving to them a 'perfection of form'. This metaphysic was, Abercrombie believed, an outcome of Hardy's 'tragic apprehension of the world' by which he viewed 'tragic fate', not as an activity, but rather as 'a condition of activity'. Abercrombie contended that 'what many have described as the sense of fatality in Hardy's novels . . . is simply a tribute to their form': Hardy's delight 'in setting a great disturbing train of events on their way by means of a trivial or ludicrous beginning', the significant part that nature is made to play, and his invention of the Wessex scene in which 'the communal life . . . results in the closest interpenetration of influence and accident' and in which 'deliberate individual character' is fostered, were all commended by Abercrombie as Hardy's means of assimilating his themes into the texture of his novels.

Abercrombie also made important distinctions between the forms of what he termed Hardy's dramatic novels--Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, and The Woodlanders--and his epic novels, Tess and Jude:

In the four earlier novels . . . as the interest of the story concerns not one character, but several--a group, as a rule, of four contrasted personalities--its process is not a simple forward motion, but a system of vital currents ramified to and fro, the whole elaborate event obeying one general trend. . . . the two later books are great pieces of plain-song, each concerned with one human theme, which goes forward in unswerving continuity, not part of a broad stream of counterpoint, but accompanied by tones that follow it in unison.

In the dramatic novels, 'the pattern of events weaves itself' primarily through the use of 'elaborately contrived' accident

and tensions within and between the groups of characters. With The Mayor of Casterbridge, there is 'a distinct change in the manner of the conception' because Henchard is the one central character and because he 'appears as the symbolic counterpart of the whole tragic substance of the other dramatic novels', that is, 'of inner and outer forces'. By the time of Tess and Jude, Hardy needed to change his form because the dramatic form did not allow a novelist 'to make overt declaration of the sense in which [he] takes his own apprehension of the world . . .'. With the dramatic form, events move not only forward but 'to each side as well' and, therefore, attention must be devoted to linking the intellectual and artistic. Hardy, however, was a writer whose 'summing up of life's conduct' so strongly moves him that it 'at last demands artistic expression' and, consequently, in Tess and Jude, he chose to work in the epic form which, because it is straightforward, can accommodate expression of the emotional significance of its material. Tess and Jude were, Abercrombie believed, also characterized by their 'perfection of form'; 'the mood sometimes escapes from the art', such as in the final paragraph of Tess, and, therefore, there are 'offensive' passages 'because the form has given way, the art for a moment has lost its mastery', but generally their art was 'shapely', 'assured', and 'masterful'.¹⁴ There may be disagreement over Abercrombie's definition of Hardy's metaphysic or over his interpretation of the way in which this metaphysic dictated Hardy's form, but it cannot be denied that Abercrombie's study is essential for giving the first expansive and profound defence that Hardy attained thorough and artistic integration of form

14. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.19, 22, 25-6, 38, 50, 100-1, 103-4, 108, 122, 126, 129-31, 133-4, 142.

and metaphysic, narrative and idea, art and philosophy, in his fiction.

Most critics recognized, as Annie Macdonell remarked, that, 'In all his best work there is something recognisable beyond the story, a poetic idea or intention of which the narrative serves as illustration and commentary',¹⁵ and the first and major demand was that this 'poetic idea or intention' be totally assimilated into the texture of the novel. Several criteria, closely related to this demand for complete integration of idea, were used to ascertain whether this had been accomplished. One criterion for evaluating whether a philosophically-oriented work had been turned into a piece of literature was the success of the novelist in giving concrete form to the ideas he wished to convey. Generally, critics believed that Hardy accomplished this, but various interpretations were given of how this success was attained. Stephen Gwynn focused upon Hardy's concern for the individual and the 'personal interest' of his novels which, he believed, gave to them their concreteness.¹⁶ Other critics spoke of Hardy's animation of inanimate objects, especially in his settings, which, while giving his novels an abstract quality necessary for suggesting a significance and meaning beyond the mere facts of the narrative, prevented his novels from becoming too obscure or abstruse. This was the approach of Arthur Symonds, Lascelles Abercrombie, and numerous anonymous writers. A critic for The Academy in 1909, for example, emphasized the part that mood or atmosphere played in giving significance to the events of the narrative. He believed that Hardy had a 'power which he shares with few', that is,

15. Thomas Hardy (1894), p.54.

16. Literature (July 6, 1901), p.5.

. . . the faculty of calling into his service things insensate, outside the sphere of humanity, and investing them with a strange and prodigious significance; trees and clouds, rain and sunshine, night and morning, are deflected from their normal course and informed with a mood, a meaning, that urges his characters on or works in subtle connection with them at critical points in their careers.¹⁷

All these critics believed that Hardy successfully gave to his novels philosophical significance, while not succumbing to the dangers of being overly abstract or obscure.

Henry Alden made an important observation concerning the embodiment of ideas in a narrative, an observation which involves the question of whether an author is simply using his characters and plots to illustrate these ideas and, consequently, forcing and cramping his novels to serve this purpose or whether the ideas are a natural outgrowth of the characters and their actions. This, of course, entails the whole notion of the difference between an author coming to his work with a definite philosophical purpose or his conceiving his characters and situations first, out of which grows, as the novel evolves, the significance that the narrative carries. Studies of the evolution of Hardy's novels, especially John Laird's study of Tess (1975), suggest that Hardy worked in the latter way. This was early recognized by Henry Alden who, in 1894, wrote:

He does not bring a general truth to the facts of nature or humanity, seeking in them its illustration and confirmation: the truth he impresses upon our minds and hearts is one born of the reality itself as he sees it, and if it becomes a general truth it does so by a natural genesis.¹⁸

17. The Academy (February 27, 1909), p.823. Cf. The Times Literary Supplement (February 16, 1906), p.50; Arthur Symons, The Saturday Review (September 29, 1906), p.391 (see quotation on p.117 of this study). This was a quality which Lascelles Abercrombie missed in Hardy's short stories. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.79-80.

18. Harper's Weekly, New York (December 8, 1894), p.1156.

Alden's comments suggest another criterion by which critics evaluated whether an author had successfully integrated his ideas into his novel, that is, whether his method was that of exposition, a method usually attributed to the philosopher, or that of revelation, the method of the artist. Early critics were quick to praise the revelatory quality, the suggestiveness, of Hardy's novels.¹⁹ With the later novels, although there was some disagreement over this aspect of Hardy's fiction, most critics would have concurred with William Sharp who, in 1892, expressed the belief that Hardy's method was that of revelation, not of exposition:

Without ever unduly obtruding himself as the theologian or the philosopher, he touches the deepest chords of spiritual life, and having wrought his subtle music therefrom, turns away with a loving, sorrowful regret at all the by-play of existence beneath such dim darkness behind, above, and beyond. Yet to speak of him as a pessimistic writer would be misleading, because inadequate. He does not preach pessimism, for he has the saving grace of having no 'ism' to support or exemplify. He is tolerant and patient, seeing at once the good and the weakness in all. In a word, the pessimism of which so many complain is a revelation rather than an exposition. Characteristically enough, it is seldom that he directly writes in a strain of sadness. Life, movement, humor, the endless play of the forces of nature and her innumerable and ever-changing aspects, afford him more than enough material. It is only now and then that he reveals his intimate sense of the insoluble mystery of existence, of our unguided way across a trackless plain of whose lost frontiers there is no remembrance and whose horizons are seen of none.²⁰

19. See, for examples, The Examiner (October 13, 1877), p.1300 (quoted on pp.155-6 of this study); 'The Contributors' Club', The Atlantic Monthly, Boston, 44 (November, 1879), p.672 (probably by Harriet Waters Preston); J.M. Barrie, The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), pp.57-8. For Hardy, this was an important distinction. See Personal Writings, pp.26-7; Life, p.304.
20. The Forum, New York (July, 1892), pp.584-5. Cf. The Academy (February 27, 1909), p.823. One of the few objectors to Hardy's method of presentation of his ideas, one of the few who accused him of being too expository in his novels, is Maurice Hewlett, 'Time's Laughing-stocks', The English Review, 4 (March, 1910), p.641.

Critics expressed other concerns for how Hardy's predilection for 'the large intention' and 'high ideas' affected his method and style. There was some commentary upon the influence that Hardy's incorporation of philosophic ideas into his narrative had upon his method. Abercrombie's detailed and laudatory account of its influence upon form has already been noted. In 1906, John Henneman perceptively commented on how the ideas which Hardy incorporated into his novels affected his method, arguing that Hardy's 'natural instinct and dramatic intensity' contributed to saving the novel from the 'danger of passing into a philosophical disquisition' which it had threatened to do if it followed in the direction that George Eliot's novels indicated.²¹

Most critics, however, were primarily concerned with the effect that the introduction of philosophical ideas had upon a novel's style, particularly upon its spontaneity. Very few critics would have concurred with Oscar Wilde's contention that, 'All fine imaginative work is self-conscious and deliberate', and the belief that philosophic intent was detrimental because it led to self-consciousness and, consequently, to a lack of spontaneity was repeated time and time again in the criticism of the later years of the nineteenth century.²² Hardy's critics, too, were insistent upon a philosophic purpose hindering spontan-

21. The Reader Magazine, Indianapolis (November, 1906), pp.680-5. Other reviewers were not so laudatory. See, for example, 'Men and Women Who Write. No.IX.--Thomas Hardy', The Pall Mall Gazette, 52, No.8165 (May 22, 1891), p.2.

22. Oscar Wilde, Intentions (1891; 1909), p.121. For examples of critics who believed that spontaneity and philosophical intent could not co-exist, see Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.87-8, 92. Cf. Helen Garwood, Thomas Hardy (1911), p.12. Hardy would have agreed. See Personal Writings, pp.112-4; Life, p.98.

eity. Again, early critics of Hardy felt little called upon to comment on this aspect. In fact, the general tendency was to suggest that Hardy's 'impressions', his uniquely individualistic vision of the Wessex scene, resulted in spontaneity. Such was the attitude of Julian Hawthorne who asserted that Hardy 'is a novelist born, not made'. He further contended that,

. . . his fine literary organisation finds itself clogged or hampered by the assumption of any method not spontaneous to itself; it cannot breathe in any other than its native atmosphere; and very soon it withdraws itself from foreign support and influence, and is almost surprised to find how excellently it can walk alone. In other words, the essential veracity of Mr. Hardy's insight is potent enough to correct his tendency to self-distrust; he discovers that he can be more accurate when he depends upon his own vision, than when he accepts the spectacles of minds stronger and more positive than his own.²³⁾

With Tess, came the beginnings of criticism of self-consciousness. Richard le Gallienne, for example, wrote that, in this novel, 'the imperfect digestion of certain modern science and philosophy' was 'becoming somewhat too obtrusive', and resulted in 'sudden moments of self-consciousness in the midst of his creative flow'.²⁴ Critics of Jude concentrated more on what they believed was the detrimental effect of a philosophical purpose in creating an artificial plot and artificial characters. Even Edmund Gosse, generally a sympathetic critic of Hardy's novels, remarked that Jude 'is a study of four lives, a rectangular problem in failures, drawn with almost mathematical rigidity' and felt that, 'It is difficult not to believe that the author set up his four ninepins in the wilds of Wessex, and built

23. The Spectator (December 18, 1880), p.1627. As was seen in the last chapter (pp.159-60), Alexandra Orr was unique in her contention that a motive, an intention, which resulted in self-consciousness and lack of spontaneity, was beginning to be felt in The Return of the Native.

24. The Star (December 23, -1891), p.4. -

up his theorem round them'. This 'certain hardness in the initial conception' led to a lack of spontaneity in 'the relation of the parts' and a lack of enthusiasm in character creation. Nevertheless, Gosse went on to stress that Hardy could not be accused 'of joining the ranks' of 'purpose' novel writers on the 'marriage question'.²⁵ For Jude, there were, perhaps justifiably, no immediate defenders forthcoming; its austerity seemed to discourage them. Tess, however, attracted immediate praise of its spontaneity, as a review in The St. James's Gazette well illustrates:

But the book is intended--if it had any conscious intention which, being a work of art, it probably had not--as a study of a real woman; and that is the study in which Mr. Hardy, without using the scalpel, without one line of superfluous analysis, without a phrase of banal reflection, reaches always his high-water mark. In the utter absence of effort, in the supreme lack of consciousness, the book stands alone, even upon Mr. Hardy's shelf.²⁶

What the philosophy was that Hardy incorporated into his novels, or if such a philosophy existed, was interpreted variously by different critics. There were four general overlapping ways of regarding the ideas expressed in Hardy's fiction: those who did not give a label to his ideas, but did suggest that he illustrated the non-existence of Providence or of a Christian God; those who labelled his ideas fatalistic, a trend especially encouraged by a literal reading of the first sentence of Tess's last paragraph; those who labelled his ideas deterministic and associated him with contemporary French novelists; and, finally, those who insisted, as did Hardy himself, that the ideas expressed in the novels were tentative, that there was no

25. Cosmopolis (January, 1896), pp.61-2. For less flexible comments on this aspect of Jude, see Israel Zangwill, The Pall Mall Magazine (February, 1896), p.334.

26. The St. James's Gazette (January 7, 1892), p.5.

consistency, and thus that Hardy was propagating no definite and distinct philosophy of life. The tendency was, with a few notable exceptions, to suggest that the general tenor of Hardy's ideas was pessimistic, but, again, there was a division of opinion over whether this pessimism was consistently maintained throughout his novels.

Because numerous interpretations were given to the philosophy of Hardy's fiction, only the general current of criticism can be indicated. Up until Tess, there were few comments on what later came to be defined as Hardy's philosophy. As will be seen in the next chapter, critics tended to place emphasis on the role of character and circumstance in Hardy's working out of his plots. The few exceptions are those who considered The Return of the Native to be illustrative of a fatalistic philosophy and the several reviewers who commented upon what was considered to be Hardy's disbelief in God or Providence.²⁷ The reviews immediately following the publication of Tess tended either to comment upon the lack of a providential power guiding man's life or to interpret this power as malevolent and thus

27. The reviewer of The Return of the Native for The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (April, 1879), p.502 (probably Harriet Preston) remarked: 'A sense of the omnipotence of accident is no uncommon mode of modern fatalism.' This critic passed no judgment on Hardy's supposed fatalism. R.H. Hutton, however, insisted that Hardy's 'gloomy fatalism' in The Return of the Native (his criticism was directed towards the commentary of both Hardy and his characters) resulted, not in tragedy, but in dreariness, primarily because 'the measure of human greatness' is lowered and the characters 'feel and act as if they were puppets of a sort of fate'. The Spectator (February 8, 1879), p.182. Again, R.H. Hutton, in his review of The Mayor of Casterbridge, well represents the attitude of those who noted Hardy's disbelief in God or Providence and took offence; again, he objected, not to the plot, but to the commentary. In fact, he contended that Hardy's 'very pagan reflections' were 'intrinsically false' and then went on to give his own gloss, a Christianized one, to the narrative. The Spectator (June 5, 1886), p.752.

to attribute to the novel a fatalistic philosophy.²⁸ Jude, too, was considered to be fatalistic and, by the time of its publication, critics were attempting to discern a consistent philosophy throughout all Hardy's novels or, at least, the evolution of one.²⁹ Although there were throughout the later years of Hardy's novel-writing career, notably in several reviews of Tess, the first suggestions that Hardy's novels were beginning to be read in the light of a deterministic philosophy--that Hardy was concerned with theories of the influence of natural instincts, heredity, and environment upon a character's conduct and the direction his life took--it was not until several years after the publication of his last novel that there was any extensive commentary on these theories or any attempts to define them as part of a consistent philosophy. Wilbur Cross, in 1899, was one of the first to make such an attempt, although he, as many were to do, intermingled his interpretation with notions of fatalism.³⁰ These critics, in attempting to come to terms

28. The uncertainty over this aspect is well illustrated by the introductory sentence of R.H. Hutton's review of Tess. The Spectator (January 23, 1892), p.121. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.250-4, 262-5, also well represents the confusion of thought over what the philosophy of Tess was. He believed that Hardy upheld a philosophy, but that this philosophy was a tangled web of disbelief in Providence, fatalism, and determinism, which he condemned for lack of consistency.
29. Such attempts also occurred in reviews of Tess. See, for example, Charles Copeland, The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (May, 1892), p.697, who interpreted Hardy's philosophy as fatalistic. The reviewer of Jude for The Athenaeum (November 23, 1895), p.709, also believed that he had discovered a concept of fate which linked Hardy's earlier to his later novels, although this concept was fluid and flexible. Cf. A.H. Thompson, 'Thomas Hardy', The Eagle, St. John's College, Cambridge, 19 (October, 1895), pp.36-61.
30. Wilbur Lucius Cross, The Development of the English Novel (New York, 1899), pp.272-80. Carl Holliday, English Fiction from the Fifth to the Twentieth Century (New York, 1912), pp.362-5, also made extensive comments on the deter-

with the inconsistencies and contradictions suggested by the ideas expressed in Hardy's fiction, well illustrate the problems which have plagued Hardy critics from the beginning and which have resulted in innumerable interpretations of what is believed to be the existence, or the lack of existence, of a Hardy philosophy.

The major technical considerations resulting from the belief that Hardy upheld a philosophy of life which rejected Providence were considerations of the use of irony and of the effect that such a philosophy had on the convention of poetic justice. With the publication, in 1894, of the collection of Hardy's short stories entitled Life's Little Ironies, critics became especially interested in Hardy's use of irony, but, again, of what the irony was a result was interpreted variously and depended on what the critic believed to be the essential element of Hardy's philosophy: thus some interpreted it as fate; others attributed the irony of Hardy's fiction to circumstance; while yet others believed that the irony was dependent upon chance. Edward Chapman, writing in 1910, belongs to this latter group of critics. Although not all critics took offence at Hardy's use of irony, Chapman's remarks, granted their religious basis, well represent the general objections that critics tended to make. He censured Hardy's use of the irony of chance, as opposed to a fateful course of events. In the first place,

minism of Hardy's fiction. For examples of reviewers of Tess who commented upon the element of heredity, see Francis Thompson, The Daily Chronicle (December 26, 1891), p.4, and The Speaker (December 26, 1891), pp.770-1. The latter critic, however, went on to question whether Hardy was really concerned with this deterministic notion. Instead, he found a concept of fate informing the novel for which he took Hardy to task.

he believed that the insistence upon chance deprived Hardy of his humour:

When the incongruities of life come to be regarded as ironies, purposeful and cruel contradictions of fate, then the sense of humour atrophies and practically dies The reason is that, when all life's little incongruities have become signs of Fate's malevolence, the Universe grows too grim for laughter or for that quiet amusement which is even better. Indeed, in such circumstances, one no longer has a right to speak of the Universe, since cosmos has given place to chaos once again. Humour of a sane, good-tempered, gracious sort is indissolubly linked to faith.

He also objected because such irony resulted in the lowering of the significance of man. The introduction of 'a malevolent Chance into the place of rule' was harmful to art because it robbed man of 'character', that is, 'will, vital personal force, and the moral power to dominate events,--all, in short, that is understood by the Image of God in him . . .'.³¹

Another manifestation of the ironies of life upon which critics early commented was the lack of poetic justice. Although some reviewers of Hardy's novels accepted the artistic and representational necessity for rejection of the convention of poetic justice, they still had reservations about the philosophical implications of this rejection.³² Only in later criticism did this rejection come to be more fully understood and accepted. Helen Garwood demonstrated the greatest understanding of the lack of poetic justice in Hardy's novels. She praised the questioning of 'the truth and the value of poetic justice', a questioning which was characteristic of 'the spirit of our day'. The convention of poetic justice was being challenged because 'we ask why that which is not usually found in life should

31. Edward Mortimer Chapman, English Literature in Account with Religion (Boston and New York, 1910), pp.47, 553.

32. See, for example, The Athenaeum (March 26, 1887), p.414, on The Woodlanders.

usually be found in books about life'. She noted that poetic justice had, in previous tragedies, been one of the traditional ways of effecting a reconciliation--the need that the spectator felt 'of squaring himself with these forces greater than he is'--but that poetic justice 'is not necessarily the only way'. She believed that Hardy's rejection of poetic justice underscored the mysteriousness, the inscrutability, of life and the forces operating in it. She warned, however, that: 'If the unknown forces are bad then a cut and dried tragedy is established of a nature which hopeful man will not tolerate. We must feel that destiny is careless and uncertain, not that it is deliberately unjust.' She asserted that Hardy had not succumbed to this temptation and that he had been a successful innovator of the '"sort of tragedy founded upon the very inscrutability of the plotting of our lives"'.³³

Critics who believed that a malevolent fate, rather than chance or 'hap', predominated in Hardy's novels, would have disputed Helen Garwood's conclusions. Such was the attitude of Raymond Alden who, in a 1910 article entitled 'The Decline of Poetic Justice', contended that, in Hardy's fiction, his

. . . pathetic human creations are driven before a malevolence too persistent and effective to be fortuitous. Here . . . we have gone almost around the circle, and come to a sort of poetic injustice which may be thought to take the place of poetic justice as an orderly force making for tragic ends.

Alden did not, however, advocate a return to the convention of poetic justice, but rather urged the need for sanity and moder-

33. Thomas Hardy (1911), pp.85-9. Earlier critics who demonstrate a growing awareness and approval of the philosophical implications of Hardy's rejection of poetic justice include The Pall Mall Gazette (November 23, 1880), p.12, on The Trumpet-Major, and Joseph White, Letters to Eminent Hands (1892), p.64.

ation, instead of extremes, on the part of the writer.³⁴

The reactions to what was deemed to be Hardy's philosophy are just as numerous and various as the interpretations. These reactions are perhaps best illustrated in the discussions of the 'truth' of Hardy's purported philosophy. One of the major criticisms, as suggested by Raymond Alden's comments, was that Hardy's philosophy was too extreme, too one-sided.³⁵ There were, of course, those critics who took offence and called Hardy's philosophy untrue because they wished for a more hopeful, optimistic depiction of life. This attitude was most commonly found among critics who refuted the ideas expressed in Hardy's novels on religious grounds, primarily censuring Hardy for creating an 'untrue picture of a universe so blank and godless' and for his failure to take into account 'the principle of compensation at work in human things'.³⁶ Generally, however, the former attitude, that of Alden, predominated.

More valuable, although not necessarily more positive, criticism resulted when critics evaluated the 'truth' of Hardy's purported philosophy by the criterion of whether the novels gave the sense that the lives and actions to which his philosophy was being applied were 'typical'. Tess and Jude provoked the most divergent responses to this aspect. On the one hand, there were those critics who censured their lack of typicalness.

34. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (February, 1910), pp.265-6.

35. See, for examples, Anna Sholl, Library of the World's Best Literature, Volume 12 (1897), p.6933; T.P. O'Connor, T.P.'s Weekly (May 24, 1912), p.642.

36. The quotations are from R.H. Hutton's review of Tess in The Spectator (January 23, 1892), p.122, and from The Edinburgh Review (January, 1912), p.107. Cf. Frederic Manning, 'Books. Novels of Character and Environment', The Spectator, 109, No.4393 (September 7, 1912), pp.335-7.

Arthur Quiller-Couch, for example, criticized Tess for its failure to be representative: 'The story of Tess, in which attention is so urgently directed to the hand of Destiny, is not felt to be inevitable, but freakish.' This was largely because,

We feel that we are not concerned with a type, but with an individual case deliberately chosen by the author; and no amount of talk about the 'President of the Immortals' and his 'Sport' can persuade us to the contrary.³⁷

Eventually, critics did become more tolerant of what they saw as Hardy's presentation of untypical characters and, in fact, came to see it as praiseworthy. In 1907, Rolfe Arnold Scott-James, although conceding to critics the accusation 'that he has not given us a true picture of life; that in each tragedy he has presented a concatenation of miseries which seldom befall real men', felt that Hardy was justified in so doing:

It is true enough, the average man or woman does not endure all that Clym Yeobright, or Tess, or Jude had to endure, and even when the suffering does come, is not perhaps so sensitive to its continuous and overwhelming horror. But Thomas Hardy does not choose to deal with the average man; his chorus of village yokels or simple town-folk takes life lightly enough. They, too, have their troubles, but they are less sensitive, and therefore better able to bear them, than the protagonists. The latter are people fully percipient, who are taught by life to become conscious of its evils, who are capable of being fearfully impressed by the difference between the real and the ideal.³⁸

Yet other critics, as was seen in the third chapter, denied that Hardy's novels were not typical, and stressed the universal and symbolic qualities of his fiction.³⁹

37. Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch, Adventures in Criticism (London, 1896), pp.360-1. Jude received similar criticism. See, for example, 'Messrs. Osgood, McIlvaine's New Books: Hearts Insurgent', Bookselling, n.s.1 (December, 1895), p. 142.

38. Rolfe Arnold Scott-James, 'The Pessimism of Thomas Hardy', The Nation, 1, No.22 (July 27, 1907), p.795. Cf. 'Recent Novels', The Times, No.35,224 (June 8, 1897), p.9.

39. See examples on pp.97, 99-102 of this study.

Some of the most profitable and astute criticism came from those critics who insisted that it was not the critic's place to assess the truth of a novel by any standard other than its inner truth. Abercrombie is the most important advocate of judging Hardy's art by its "'inner Necessity and Truth"'. Discussing the 'delight in tragedy', which, he insisted, 'must, naturally, be of an aesthetic nature', he wrote:

. . . its perfection can only come from giving some form of art to the relation between known experience and a conception of originating reality; it can only come, in fact, from the ultimate satisfaction of imaginative desire. It is by no means necessary that the consequent metaphysic of an art should be universally accepted outside the art. . . . We have a right to demand no more than that while we are immersed in an art, and giving ourselves up to it, everything therein shall work together to make us at the conclusion apprehend the metaphysic dominating the whole, a perfect congruence of the rhythm of seen things with an imagined rhythm of unseen reality . . .

It was for this reason that Abercrombie was better able to appreciate Jude than many of his predecessors and contemporaries. Despite its occasional loss of control, he still believed it to be a great work of art, 'one of the most illustrious things in modern literature'. Hardy had attained this in Jude, as in his other novels,

. . . by reducing the whole sense of living to some formality, some shapeliness of significance . . . and while we are immersed in the art, the mere sense of living becomes the delighted sense of a perfectly masterful living. If a metaphysic can effect this, it is justified; and the metaphysic of Hardy's art unquestionably does effect this. Only in this way, it seems to me, can the value of an art be fixed to something firmer than opinion: to fix its value to the 'truth' of its conceptions, the pleasantness of its tone, or the usefulness, moral or otherwise, of its purport, is only to make it endlessly debatable.

From an early point in the criticism of Hardy's fiction,

40. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.22-3, 166-8. Frederick Peek, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy' (1910), pp.203-5, although not giving such a psychological interpretation, would have concurred. Cf. Thomas Hardy, Personal Writings, p.27.

critics realized that Hardy revealed an 'idiosyncratic mode of regard', but there was a division of opinion as to whether this 'idiosyncratic mode of regard' was primarily the result of the influence of certain philosophers and philosophical systems, the influence of a pervasive contemporary way of regarding life, or the influence of his own temperament, observation, and experience. Before Helen Garwood's examination of the similarities between the philosophy of Schopenhauer (and, although of lesser interest for her, that of Von Hartmann) and of Hardy, there were only suggestions made that Hardy might have been influenced by certain philosophers and philosophical systems. Helen Garwood asserted that, 'To couple his name with that of Schopenhauer . . . is no longer a new matter', and, except for passing remarks on the possible influence that the Positivism of Comte and his followers might have exerted on Hardy, Schopenhauer was certainly the thinker with whom Hardy was most frequently compared.⁴¹ Although there were several absurdly doctrinaire interpretations

41. Thomas Hardy (1911), p.5. It was, naturally enough, those critics who emphasized the deterministic role of circumstance in Hardy's novels who suggested the influence of Positivism. See, for example, The Athenaeum (January 9, 1892), p.49, on Tess. Cf. the quotation from George Douglas, The Bookman, New York (May, 1897), p.247, on p.198 of this study. R.H. Hutton, The Spectator (February 8, 1879), p.182, in his review of The Return of the Native, was the earliest reviewer to express the belief that Hardy's fatalism was a result of the influence of Schopenhauer. Four years later, Havelock Ellis, The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.363-4, also found several points of comparison between the two. For other critics who linked Hardy's name with that of Schopenhauer, see, as examples, Wilbur Cross, The Development of the English Novel (1899), p.277; M.M. Turnbull, The Gentleman's Magazine (November, 1903), p.473; William Robertson Nicoll, 'Thomas Hardy', Chambers' Cyclopaedia of English Literature, Volume III, ed. William and Robert Chambers (London, 1903), p.681; 'Thomas Hardy', Alma Mater, Aberdeen University Magazine, 24, No.7 (November 28, 1906), p.63; George Herbert Mair, English Literature: Modern (London, 1911), p.230; Harold Williams, Two Centuries of the English Novel (1911), p.299.

of Hardy's novels in the light of a Schopenhauerian philosophy,⁴² most critics were perceptive enough to be content to draw parallels, to mark similarities, or to suggest that there was a sympathy, rather than an influence. Most would have concurred with Helen Garwood that,

On the one hand, he has not deliberately and consciously set out to give artistic expression to the Schopenhauerian philosophy; on the other he constantly suggests it. Influence is too strong and definite a word for the result attained, sympathy comes nearer to it. There is a noteworthy and observable sympathy between⁴³ the philosophy of Thomas Hardy and that of Schopenhauer.

Helen Garwood is also representative in her suggestion that the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Hardy might be similar because both expressed a way of regarding life which was becoming common as the nineteenth century progressed:

Perhaps it is some such feeling of the age of the race which makes even the rawest pessimism seem more honest and dignified than this crude optimism. . . . There is surely something in the race to-day which makes despair, rebellion, and the melancholy minor key, though not good in themselves, more consistent with our time than flat complacency.⁴⁴

Perhaps the most sympathetic reviews were those which recognized, as Hardy said, that his novels expressed 'things which everybody is thinking but nobody is saying . . .'.⁴⁵ Some critics inter-

42. See, for example, Edward Wright, The Quarterly Review (April, 1904), pp.520-1.

43. Thomas Hardy (1911), p.11.

44. Thomas Hardy (1911), p.17. Critics differed in their acceptance of Hardy's expression of contemporary thought and feeling. On the one hand, there were those who censured it. See, for example, W.P. Trent, The Sewanee Review, Tennessee (November, 1892), pp.11-2, who criticized Hardy for having 'fallen a victim to the malheur du siècle' in The Return of the Native. On the other hand, there were those critics who were tolerant, and even sympathetic, towards Hardy's expression of 'the spirit of the time'. See, for example, The National Observer (February 7, 1891), p.301.

45. Personal Writings, p.133. For similar views expressed by Hardy, see, Personal Writings, pp.126-9; One Rare Fair

preted Hardy's expression of 'things which everybody is thinking but nobody is saying' as his ability to catch the 'temper' or the 'mood' of the times.⁴⁶ This 'mood' was believed to be especially characteristic of Jude, which was, accordingly, probably the novel most praised for this quality. Vincent Brown, for example, referred to Jude as 'prophetic' because it 'sums up all the weariness and unrest, all the vague haunting terrors of this strange generation'.⁴⁷

Finally, there were critics who viewed the ideas in Hardy's novels as primarily his individualistic response to life as he had observed and experienced it. For Hardy, this was essential, as revealed in a notation he made in 1901:

After reading various philosophic systems, and being struck with their contradictions and futilities, I have come to this: Let every man make a philosophy for himself out of his own experience. He will not be able to escape using terms and phraseology from earlier philosophers, but let him avoid adopting their theories if he values his own mental life. Let him remember the fate of Coleridge, and save years of labour by working out his own views as given him by his surroundings.⁴⁸

Woman, p.26. This idea was important in Arnold's criticism. See, for example, the quotation included in Hardy's notebooks (#1181) from Arnold's 'The Literary Influence of Academies'. The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy, p.135 (Text). The notion was also important for many other nineteenth-century critics and reviewers. See, for example, the quotation from The British Quarterly Review on p.24 of this study; Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library, Volume I (1899), p.235, and The Cornhill Magazine (January, 1881), p.49; Helen Garwood, Thomas Hardy (1911), p.6.

46. Ernest Bates, International Journal of Ethics, Philadelphia (July, 1905), p.473, for example, wrote: 'He gives powerful utterance to a widely prevalent mood.'
47. Vincent Brown, 'Thomas Hardy: an Enthusiasm', The Academy, 58 (March 10, 1900), p.208. Geoffrey Mortimer, The Free Review (January, 1896), pp.387-8, 397-8, 400-1, and Duane Williams, The University Magazine and Free Review (June 1, 1897), pp.253-8, expressed similar ideas concerning Jude.
48. Life, p.310. Again, this was an Arnoldian notion. See excerpt from Matthew Arnold's 'Wordsworth', included in

Numerous critics stressed the importance of temperament and observation in bringing Hardy to view life as he did, an approach which became even more important once biographical information on Hardy was known. Wilkinson Sherren, in 1902, well represents such an approach. He stressed that Hardy's upbringing close to nature bred 'in the mind of an imaginative child vague conceptions of a power aloof from human nature, and inimical to it'. Rural life, characterized by 'a sense of the impermanence of all things human' and influenced by various manifestations of change (the weather, for instance), left its mark on Hardy: 'Life unfolded its array of pastoral comedy and tragedy year by year before his eyes, until his mind grew equal to their meaning, and extracted the rudiments of a sombre philosophy from them.' Sherren also suggested that it was possible to 'discover the influences of later Victorian philosophies and theories, both decadent and scientific', in Hardy's writings, but, 'These are moulded and expressed in new forms, for above every other quality Mr. Hardy is a thinker, who uses the soil of current thought for the growth of his own ideas . . .'.⁴⁹ Other critics concentrated more upon Hardy's sensitivity than upon his reflectiveness.⁵⁰ An important aspect of this was the recognition that Hardy's temperament and observation prompted in him a reaction

Hardy's notebooks (#1104). The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy, p.122 (Text).

49. The Wessex of Romance (1902), pp.49-50, 61.

50. See, for examples, William Minto, The Bookman (December, 1891), p.100; 'The Career of the Novel. A Literary Study', The Puritan, New York, 6 (July, 1899), pp.342-3; Ernest Bates, International Journal of Ethics, Philadelphia (July, 1905), p.473; Helen Garwood, Thomas Hardy (1911), pp.10, 15, 17, 21, 27, 40; Arthur Compton-Rickett, 'Thomas Hardy', The Westminster Gazette, 39, No.5940 (June 8, 1912), p.3.

to complacent optimism. As Robert Shindler asserted in 1902, Hardy's 'gloomy views . . . are perhaps a reaction from the popular beliefs which represent the world as being very good in itself and only marred by the wilfulness and wickedness of man'. He discerned that 'Mr. Hardy stands in direct opposition to this' and that this was a result of and resulted in 'a profound sympathy for humankind'.⁵¹

Generally, critics concurred that Hardy's 'pessimism' was a result of his acute awareness of and sensitivity to the pains and miseries of life. The question still remained, however, what effect this had on his art. This 'profound sympathy for humankind' could gain mastery over his art, the result being bitterness and petulance, rather than sanity and control. As was remarked in the last chapter, discussions of the morality or immorality of Hardy's novels provoked some hysterical responses; the question of Hardy's 'pessimism' was the other aspect of his fiction which prompted such reactions. Thus, ironically, censure of Hardy's 'pessimism' sometimes degenerated into mere rant: ironically, because this was the very quality for which they were censuring Hardy.⁵² Such a reaction is well

51. On Certain Aspects of Recent English Literature (1902), pp. 69-70. Cf. Henry MacArthur, Realism and Romance (1897), p. 20.

52. There was a general belief that pessimism was a hysterical reaction to life and that the hopelessness which it suggested was decadent and unnatural. Articles which articulated this position include 'The Pessimist's View of Life', The Cornhill Magazine, 33 (April, 1876), pp.431-43; Agnes Repplier, 'Some Aspects of Pessimism', The Atlantic Monthly, Boston, 60 (December, 1887), pp.756-66; Janet E. Hogarth, 'Literary Degenerates', The Fortnightly Review, 57, No.340 (April 1, 1895), pp.586-92; Charles Morse, 'Optimism v. Pessimism', The Westminster Review, 158, No. 5 (November, 1902), pp.553-9. Other critics, however, defended pessimistic views against such charges, arguing for the sincerity and honesty of such an approach to life, stressing that such sensitivity to life's misery was de-

Hardy's fiction which have troubled many critics down to the present day. The Athenaeum's review of Jude well summarizes many of these aspects. This critic first noted the 'scolding tone' of Jude which 'is the worst possible form of stating views, because it irritates the reader, and instead of raising sympathy creates an unreasonable antipathy in his mind'. He next censured the jarring affect this had on the reader, the 'querulous bitterness' and the 'limited outlook on life' being qualities which pertained not only to the 'occasional remarks in the author's own person', but even more so to the characters' actions and dialogue. He then went on to note the two qualities to which critics most objected, Hardy's loss of sense of humour and the arbitrary piling up of miseries:

Another reason why this bitterness is fatal to art is that the novelist loses his sense of humour. In his self-imposed task of heaping obloquy on Fate or Providence or Destiny or what you will, he casts about for all sorts of devices for making his characters miserable.⁵⁴

For such critics, these elements did not contribute to the dignified, calm approach which the author should have; they did not contribute to the expression of 'the sanity, the measure, the harmony, of the world', which, as Lionel Johnson insisted, 'the great literature has always expressed' and thus left the reader 'quarrelling either with the universe or with Mr. Hardy'.⁵⁵

54. The Athenaeum (November 23, 1895), p.709. For other reviewers who made similar objections, especially about Tess and Jude, see, for examples, Arthur Quiller-Couch, Adventures in Criticism (1896), p.359; Edmund Gosse, Cosmopolis (January, 1896), pp.67-9 (partially quoted on p.125 of this study); Henry Newbolt, 'The Dynasts', The Monthly Review, 14, No.42 (March, 1904), pp.6-7.
55. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), p.234; The Academy (November 12, 1898), p.252. Henry MacArthur, Realism and Romance (1897), p.22, made a similar protest against Tess: '... there is something morbid and turbid in this spirit of vain and impotent revolt, something very far removed from the even and equable serenity of the artist.'

The reactions to Hardy's purported pessimism were by no means all negative and many critics came forward to defend him. Some did so by stressing the honesty and sincerity of Hardy's approach to life; others emphasized his sympathy and pity for man; while yet others stressed the melioristic or reforming tendencies of his art. Annie Macdonell touched upon all these aspects in her defence of Hardy against charges of pessimism; for her, they were all 'the woof-threads of a sane and liveable philosophy'. She insisted that, 'To call him pessimist is short and easy; only it hides half the truth'. She marked his honest, sincere outlook upon life:

From his survey of the world he has concluded that life is gay only so long as its conditions are unknown, that real happiness is incompatible with fearless thought and the knowledge that science has made common property of the shortcomings of natural laws, which cripple human powers, and the defects of which no human devotion can remedy.

This did not mean, however, that Hardy's fiction lacked melioristic tendencies. She continued:

Mr. Hardy would probably use 'alleviation' instead of 'cure', though his pessimism has never taken away his belief in the usefulness of human struggle. You will find many utterances scattered up and down his writings sympathetic with the reforming spirit; and 'Tess' is, of course, a defiant challenge to the world to revise a cruel social code--a defiance which despair alone could not emit.

Nor was Hardy cynical, his whole outlook on life being the result of his love and pity for mankind:

The tragic, his deepest note, is furthest of all from the cynical, for it recognises in the fragile, battered thing called life the stirrings and impulses of greatness. Life is not little, nor cheap, nor easily found out. And its path is lined with interest. . . . There is another reality, too, the need in a vexing world of sympathy; and thus all reasons for cynicism are taken away.

She further stressed: 'His humanism is not merely an intellectual or dramatic interest in the doings and motives of men; with it are mingled trust and sympathy. . . . He has laughed at

human nature, but he has never belittled it.' Thus Annie Macdonell condoned Hardy's spirit of revolt: 'The patience, or it may be, the low vitality, that marks some sad-voiced exponents of the view, is not his. . . . He is often in revolt: otherwise he would be no tragedian.'⁵⁶

Discussions of Hardy's purported pessimism were also concerned with the question of whether this pessimism was a mood or whether it was systemized into a philosophical stance. The Athenaeum's reviewer of A Laodicean was one of the earliest to suggest that pessimistic tendencies were recurrent in Hardy's fiction: 'But Mr. Hardy, even when he makes his stories "end happily", takes a somewhat desponding view of things.'⁵⁷ Only in later Hardy criticism were there more definite suggestions that Hardy's fiction presented a formalized pessimistic view of life. In 1920, Hardy wrote that, 'It is my misfortune that people will treat all my mood-dictated writing as a single scientific theory',⁵⁸ but what would have been more accurate was the observation that critics tended to interpret his pessimism 'as a single scientific theory' when they believed that his 'mood-dictated writing' became too insistent, too urgent, or

56. Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.231, 210-7. For other critics who stressed these qualities of Hardy's fiction when defending his pessimism, see, as examples, William Archer, The Daily Chronicle (January 1, 1896), p.3; W.P. Trent, The Citizen, Philadelphia (February, 1896), pp.285-6; Leon Vincent, The Bibliotaph and Other People (1898), pp.103, 106-7, 109; The Puritan, New York (July, 1899), p.342; George Douglas, The Bookman (January, 1900), p.111; Helen Garwood, Thomas Hardy (1911), p.15. The one critic who stands out as an exception among these writers is Ernest Bates, International Journal of Ethics, Philadelphia (July, 1905), pp.469-85, but the major difference is in his nomenclature--he labelled Hardy a 'heroic optimist'--rather than in any emphases of his arguments.

57. The Athenaeum (December 31, 1881), p.900.

58. Life, p.411. Cf. Collected Letters, Volume One, p.262; Personal Writings, pp.51-4.

too hysterical, qualities which, naturally enough, they discovered in his later, rather than earlier, fiction. The notion that the growth of his pessimism was gradual, that it was a development from a mood into a philosophy, and that, consequently, Hardy's early novels could be distinguished from his later by their pessimistic tendencies became common after critics had the whole range of his novels to examine and is well expressed by a critic in 1909:

Pessimism--or at least the pessimistic mood--may be induced by anything; a fallen leaf, a shot pheasant, or a page of the wise Epictetus. Mr. Thomas Hardy's pessimism, however, since he wrote 'The Woodlanders', has developed from the mood into the very texture and habit of his thought. He does not condemn the individual, he condemns the whole scheme of things. The individual has to suffer, not for inherent virtue or vice, but because Destiny has ordained things precisely in this or that particular way. It is a kind of fatalism, but a self-conscious fatalism that almost precludes even the moment's happiness.⁵⁹

A few critics explicitly contended that the pessimistic tendencies in Hardy's fiction were more 'mood-dictated' than an expression of a systemized philosophy. Abercrombie is the most important critic supporting Hardy in this view of his fiction. He asserted that 'the deepest and most unquestionable result in work of large and prevailing formality, is the sense of command and power in life; a thing sufficiently removed from pessimism, however pessimistic the materials used may seem'. He believed that, although the 'mood' of Tess and Jude might be called pessimistic, 'they themselves are nothing so; for

59. "'Time's Laughingstocks'", T.P.'s Weekly, 14, No.373 (December 31, 1909), p.884. Critics who expressed similar viewpoints include A.H. Thompson, The Eagle, Cambridge (October, 1895), especially pp.38-42; The Literary World (June 21, 1901), p.588 (signed 'X'); A.G. Gardiner, The Daily News (March 5, 1903), p.8; Richard Burton, Masters of the English Novel (1909), pp.269-74; Edward Chapman, English Literature in Account with Religion (1910), pp. 551-3; Harold Williams, Two Centuries of the English Novel (1911), pp.299-300.

their art is altogether too shapely, too assured, too masterful'. Abercrombie, however, did not really believe the mood to be pessimistic:

A genuine pessimism must surely go further than the conception of existence as an evil; it must add to this a sad acquiescence in the evil,--since what good can come of anything else than acquiescence, if all things end in evil? But the mood which governs Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure is plainly not an acquiescence. It is a fierce, burning revolt against the evil it conceives.⁶⁰

Discussions of whether Hardy's 'pessimism' was a mood or a philosophy were, of course, dependent on whether a critic believed that Hardy was propagating a consistent philosophy of life--fatalistic, deterministic, or whatever. As early as The Return of the Native, one critic commented that the same ideas kept recurring in Hardy's novels,⁶¹ but it takes more than recurrent ideas to justify the assumption that a philosophy is being advocated; these ideas must be organized, harmonized, and formalized into a consistent and coherent view of life. The lack of consistency of his ideas was one of the points which Hardy stressed when insisting that the ideas expressed in his novels were tentative and could not be considered as having been unified into a philosophy. In fact, Hardy believed that, 'Unadjusted impressions have their value, and the road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change'.⁶²

60. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.141-3. Cf. the quotation from William Sharp's 1892 article on p.205 of this study.

61. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (March, 1879), p.338.

62. Personal Writings, p.39. For Hardy's insistence on the lack of consistency of the ideas in his fictional works, see, for examples, Life, p.403; Personal Writings, pp.32-3, 48-9. Cf. Literary note #1114 from Henry James's French Poets and Novelists. The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy, p.124 (Text).

Hardy's critics did not tend to view his ideas as 'unadjusted impressions' or, if they did, they did not attach such a value to them; the two main tendencies were to see his ideas as a consistent philosophy and to praise him for this consistency or to stress the inconsistencies and to censure him for them.

A few earlier critics did praise what they believed to be the consistency of Hardy's ideas, but it was only with the publication of Wessex Poems, in 1898, that it became common for critics to view Hardy's fiction in the light of a consistent and formal philosophy, a tendency especially encouraged by the early dates affixed to many of the poems.⁶³ Nevertheless, while many critics did see consistency which they condoned, many others saw only confusion and inconsistency which they censured. Lionel Johnson's and Mary Moss's comments on this aspect of Hardy's fiction have already been noted. Mary Moss, however, writing in 1906, had also the first two parts of The Dynasts to which she could refer when analyzing Hardy's fiction. She attributed the lack of consistency in Hardy's philosophy to his contradictory viewpoints. She contended that, 'The Dynasts gains its chief interest from unraveling the strands which go to make up the dual nature of Thomas Hardy' and the debates 'afford a key to the apparent inconsistencies of Thomas Hardy':

63. Annie Macdonell is an excellent example of a critic who believed that Hardy's ideas demonstrated a consistent view of life and who condoned this consistency. See Thomas Hardy (1894), especially pp.140, 209, 232, and her article, 'Mr. Lionel Johnson on The Art of Thomas Hardy', The Bookman, 7 (December, 1894), p.86. For examples of reviewers of Wessex Poems who discussed and praised Hardy's consistency, see, W. Robertson Nicoll, 'Notes on English Style in the Victorian Period. V. Thomas Hardy', The Bookman, New York, 10 (October, 1899), pp.147-8; William Morton Payne, 'Recent Poetry', The Dial, Chicago, 26, No.308 (April 16, 1899), pp.274-5. The Dynasts prompted the same conclusions concerning Hardy's fiction. For one example, among many, see, Arthur Symons, 'Drama', The Athenaeum, No.4203 (May 16, 1908), p.615.

Re-read in the light of The Dynasts, every one of Hardy's novels represents a phase of mental struggle. Hardy has the mind of an ironic pessimist. Taken from this angle, almost every book is an invective against the wanton cruelty of 'The Immanent Will'. If this were all, we should merely have an arraignment of the entire scheme of creation. But in this lifelong debate, the intellect is constantly opposed by an instinct which steadily rejects a philosophy of logical despair. . . .

And in the end, as emotion must always prevail over reason, as love is eternally constructive, to the great gain of Hardy's readers, the discouragement wrought by his pitiless logic is forever canceled by his indestructible human sympathy.⁶⁴

Mary Moss made an attempt to explain the contradictions in Hardy's fiction, but she seems unable to accept them. One of the few critics who was able to do so was John Steuart, although it should be noted that he was writing before the publication of Tess and Jude. He expressed the opinion that too many novelists feared being inconsistent and that, consequently, they approached their art 'with some inelastic theory of life', but that,

In most cases servile consistency is only dastardly cowardice. Only a few choice souls in each generation have the courage to be nobly inconsistent; and, paradoxical as it may seem, it is precisely this inconsistency that we are in such pressing need of to-day.

Steuart believed that Hardy had 'the courage to be nobly inconsistent'; he never 'hampered' himself 'with theories' nor established 'hard and fast rules' for himself. He took what he wanted 'without fear of offending any pet prejudice, or falsifying any blatant oracle' and, therefore, he drew 'life as it really exists, with all its sad realism and its fascinating romance'.⁶⁵

The attempt to discover and define a consistent and coherent philosophy in Hardy's fiction was, as previously mentioned, at

64. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (September, 1906), p.367. For further remarks from Mary Moss, see pp.167-8 of this study. Lionel Johnson's strictures are mentioned on p. 210 (footnote 28) of this study.

65. Letters to Living Authors (1890), pp.107-9.

least in part, a result of the emphasis on the seriousness of the novel as a genre. William Mallock's important and perceptive comments, in 1901, are representative of this tendency. He observed that,

. . . in addition to these qualities of imaginative and sympathetic insight, and accurate worldly knowledge, all great novelists possess also a third, and this is some quality of philosophic thought. It is not enough that they see the facts of human character and circumstance spread before them as a mass of varied phenomena. They must, consciously or unconsciously, see them in the light of some unifying principle or philosophy derived from profound reflection on life--reflection on it, as distinct from observation of it.

He discerned that Meredith and Hardy conformed to this demand:

Whatever the merit of their stories, regarded as stories, they use them as the vehicle of something which is much more valuable--as a means of expressing the realities of human nature. They both of them possess that profundity, that directness of insight into motive and character, which is distinctive of the great novelist. They have brooded and meditated over the lot of man as a whole.

He went on to insist: 'In no English novelist, with the exception, perhaps, of George Eliot, is the quality of philosophic thought so remarkable as in Mr. Hardy; but he never parades it.'⁶⁶ The general emphasis on the importance of philosophical seriousness--as well as the thoughtful and meditative cast of Hardy's novels, poems, and The Dynasts--contributed to the refusal, at least partially justified, of so many critics to view his novels, as Hardy himself did, as tentative 'impressions' or 'seemings' rather than as expressions of a consistent and distinct philosophy.⁶⁷

66. The Quarterly Review (July, 1901), pp.249-51. For general comments which reveal the emphasis on the seriousness of the novel as a genre, see pp.27-9, 41-3 of this study. The quotation from Lionel Johnson on pp.97-8 and from The Times Literary Supplement on pp.101-2 of this study also well illustrate this emphasis. Cf. Lascelles Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy (1912), especially pp.70, 92-3, 96.

67. For Hardy's insistence that his ideas were tentative and that his works should be viewed as 'impressions' or 'seem-

An important aspect of this question of 'impression' or 'philosophy' is suggested by a remark made by Geoffrey Tillotson:

Nineteenth-century thinkers did not work at the formation of systems. The encyclopaedic range and concatenation which Mill admired in Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer were not often attempted, and the age dropped the terms 'philosopher' and 'metaphysician' for the humbler Saxon 'thinker'. Systems are the product of men who rearrange 'what oft was thought', not the product of men faced suddenly with a multitude of facts that are new.⁶⁸

Hardy obviously was affected by this upheaval of old systems and the consequence of his being confronted with 'a multitude of facts that are new' was his questioning attitude towards the conflicts and problems of existence, these "questionings" in the exploration of reality' being, as he believed, 'the first step towards the soul's betterment, and the body's also'.⁶⁹

Some critics did approach Hardy's novels as 'questionings' or the presentation of conflicts and problems of life, rather than as the presentation of remedies, solutions, or answers. Tess seemed to be especially amenable to such an approach.

ings', see Life, pp.vii, 155, 258, 319, 374, 375, 377-8, 403, 408-9, 410-11, 449; Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.239, 261-2; Personal Writings, pp.26-9, 32-3, 38-9, 40-1, 48-9, 53, 61. The few critics who responded directly to Hardy's prefatorial statements that his novels were 'impressions' or 'seemings' tended to deny the legitimacy of such a contention. See, for examples, A.M., "Jude the Obscure", The Bookman, 9 (January, 1896), p.124; J.P.C., 'Mr. Hardy's Apologia', The Pall Mall Gazette, No.14,693 (May 31, 1912), p.9.

68. Geoffrey Tillotson, Criticism and the Nineteenth Century (London, 1951), p.214.

69. Personal Writings, p.52. This questioning attitude was also a result of Hardy's belief, although not consistently or absolutely upheld, that: 'We don't always remember as we should that in getting at the truth, we get only at the true nature of the impression that an object, etc., produces on us, the true thing in itself being still, as Kant shows, beyond our knowledge.' Life, pp.247-8.

'Mr. Hardy is tossed about among alternative Weltanschauungen', as is well represented by his poem 'Nature's Questioning':
 'But the answer is not in nature. Nor indeed anywhere else for Mr. Hardy. "No answerer I." Revelation is rejected.'⁷¹

It has been revealed by many of these comments that one of the major distinctions critics made between art and philosophy was the emotional element: not only was a novelist, as an artist, expected to use the emotional life of his characters as his subject matter, but he was also expected, by most critics, to communicate to his readers his emotional involvement and sympathies with the conflicts and problems presented and thus to make his appeal to the readers' emotions. This expectation was, however, always qualified by the demand that the novelist tread warily so as never to allow this emotional involvement to degenerate into mawkish sentimentality. Throughout his comments upon art and the artist, Hardy himself emphasized these points. Moreover, Hardy was most insistent that the 'teaching' of novels, the 'mental enlargement from elements essential to the narratives themselves and from the reflections they engender', depended 'upon intuitive conviction, and not upon logical reasoning' because it was 'by their emotions men are acted upon, and act upon others'.⁷²

71. Peter Taylor Forsyth, 'The Pessimism of Mr. Thomas Hardy', The London Quarterly Review, 118 (October, 1912), pp.195-8. He quotes from 'Nature's Questioning'. The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy, ed. James Gibson (London, 1976), p.67. Cf. Henry W. Nevinson, 'Thomas Hardy', The English Illustrated Magazine, 29 (June, 1903), p.282; Helen Garwood, Thomas Hardy (1911), pp.9-10, 40, 71, 76, 82. The emphasis on Hardy as questioner was, as previously noted, an important issue in discussions of moral didacticism. The examples cited on pp.167-8 are relevant here also.
72. Personal Writings, pp.114-5. Cf. Life, pp.128, 200 (notation for May 29, 1887), 342; Collected Letters, Volume One, p.208; Personal Writings, pp.84, 107, 137-8. For general remarks, see pp.41-3 of this study.

From the earliest reviews, Hardy was praised for his concern with emotional subject matter, for his emotional involvement, and, by extension, for the appeal that he made to the readers' emotions and sympathies.⁷³ Criticism of the novels of Hardy's middle period continued in this vein, most reviews containing at least a passing reference to these aspects of his fiction. With Tess, critics again became insistent that these were major characteristics of Hardy's fiction and many critics would have concurred with Annie Macdonell that, 'judged by the strength of its appeal to human sympathies, it is doubtless his greatest book'.⁷⁴ The emphasis on these emotional qualities of Hardy's fiction was one of the most common emphases in the general criticism and surveys which followed and even a critic like Helen Garwood, who was more concerned with the philosophy underlying Hardy's fiction, insisted upon this approach.⁷⁵

Although emphasis tended to be placed on the emotional qualities, this is not to suggest that there was no recognition or praise of the thoughtful cast of Hardy's fiction. On the contrary, there were, from an early point, both recognition and commendation of this quality. R.H. Hutton, for example, was the first to speculate that Far from the Madding Crowd was written by George Eliot and it was because it was 'so clever and so remarkable', because it had 'the ring of the wit and the wisdom'

73. Excellent examples of these emphases are to be found in W.H. Browne's review of A Pair of Blue Eyes in The Southern Magazine, Baltimore (September, 1873), p.366, and in William Minto's review of Far from the Madding Crowd in The Examiner (December 5, 1874), pp.1329-30.
74. Thomas Hardy (1894), p.56. For two of many examples which could be cited to illustrate emphasis on Tess's emotional qualities, see William Watson, The Academy (February 6, 1892), pp.125-6, and The Bookman (February, 1892), pp.179-80.
75. See, for example, Thomas Hardy (1911), pp.9-10.

of George Eliot, especially in 'a passage descriptive of the companionship of the stars, so learned and so poetical', that he made this speculation.⁷⁶ With this novel, however, the first indications of a division of opinion over the value of Hardy's 'cleverness' are to be noted, this cleverness being associated with an analytical, detached attitude. In his review of this novel, Andrew Lang wrote:

In his way of looking at his subject he rather resembles George Eliot than George Sand. He contemplates his shepherds and rural people with the eye of a philosopher who understands all about them, though he is not of them, and who can express their dim efforts at rendering what they think and feel in language like that of Mr. Herbert Spencer. It is this way of writing and thinking that gives the book its peculiar tone. The author is telling clever people about unlettered people, and he adopts a sort of patronising voice, in which there are echoes, now of George Eliot, and now of George Meredith. Thus there are passages where the manner and the matter jar, and are out of keeping.⁷⁷

This division of opinion became more marked in the criticism of The Return of the Native. Even the commendatory remarks, however, are characterized by a note of hesitation about the value of the thoughtfulness or intellectual quality of this novel.⁷⁸ In the criticism of William Henley, this note of hesitation became definite hostility, a hostility resulting from Henley's nature which, as Jerome Buckley observes, 'was utterly unable to

76. R.H. Hutton, 'Books. The Magazines', The Spectator, 47, No.2375 (January 3, 1874), p.22.

77. Andrew Lang, 'Far from the Madding Crowd', The Academy, 7 (January 2, 1875), p.9. Cf. Henry James, The Nation, New York (December 24, 1874), p.423. This patronizing attitude towards his rustic creations was an attitude which Hardy, at least in the case of Under the Greenwood Tree, later came to realize and regret. See Life, p.12. At the time of writing, Hardy probably did not realize that he had assumed this attitude. See Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.11, 25. William Minto, The Bookman (December, 1891), pp.99-100, perhaps wrote best on this subject, acknowledging the facetiousness in the portrayal of Oak, especially in the introductory chapters, but arguing that this tone did not recur in later novels.

78. See, for examples, The Contemporary Review (December, 1878), p.205; Vanity Fair (November 30, 1878), p.293.

appreciate a literature of introspection; and all too readily he repudiated the artist wrapt in a contemplation of intangibles as one who sought to evade the realities of his world and his time'.⁷⁹

Henley insisted that 'rare artist as he [Hardy] is, there is something wanting in his personality, and he is not quite a great man'. This 'something' was emotional sympathy:

His sympathy is after all an intellectual and not an emotional sympathy; you never cry over him and you seldom laugh. You read and think; you are neither painfully affected, nor the reverse. He regards his world from above; his men and women are seen in bird's-eye view; and it is not as human beings but as studies that they interest you.⁸⁰

A reviewer for The Literary World also suggested that this was Hardy's attitude towards his characters: '. . . a certain painful quality attaches to his close vivisection of human character, which leaves his readers rather in the position of approving critics than friends; less lovers than admirers.'⁸¹

As these reviews reveal, the intellectual element was seen to be detrimental to art because it was not conducive to emotional (as opposed to intellectual) sympathy. Such criticism was to continue intermittently throughout Hardy criticism. An interesting facet was added to this concern by a critic for The Saturday Review in 1911 who, suggesting notions essential in the critical remarks of Wordsworth and George Eliot, argued that too much intellectuality led to abstractness in Hardy's style and hence to an ironic detachment and a lack of sympathy.⁸²

79. Jerome Hamilton Buckley, William Ernest Henley (Princeton, New Jersey, 1945), p.162.

80. The Academy (November 30, 1878), p.517; London (November 23, 1878), p.498. Cf. William Henley, 'Living Novelists. --No.X. Thomas Hardy', London, 2, No.35 (September 29, 1877), p.212.

81. The Literary World, Boston (February 1, 1879), p.37.

82. 'Reviews. Hardy for the French', The Saturday Review, 111,

The emphasis on the intellectual quality of Hardy's fiction did lead to some absurd conclusions. The notion that, in Tess and Jude, was to be seen 'the gradual preponderance of the author's power of understanding over his power of affection, with the result that we get something at once bigger and smaller than before--a more intensely intellectualised, but less loving sympathy' and that Tess, 'the creation of the brain' (rather than 'the creation of the heart'), 'strikes us as an intellectual abstraction' would seem preposterous, not only to today's critic, but, for the most part, would have seemed equally preposterous to critics of Hardy's own time.⁸³

The critics who reveal the greatest insight are those who attempted to take into account both the emotional and intellectual elements of Hardy's fiction. Some critics, such as Alexandra Orr, Mary Moss, and Lionel Johnson, did acknowledge the existence of both, but concluded that they were warring elements in his fiction.⁸⁴ Other critics came closer to an understanding of what Hardy meant by 'the emotional reason'.⁸⁵ These critics

No.2903 (June 17, 1911), p.747. George Eliot was most emphatic upon this aspect in her essay, 'Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young'. Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book (1884), especially pp.57-8.

83. Jacob Salviris (Jessie Georgina Sime), 'A Reading of the Wessex Novels', The Westminster Review, 178, No.4 (October, 1912), pp.408, 410. Cf. William Dawson, The Makers of English Fiction (1905), especially pp.211-2, 215-6. Even more extreme and absurd are G.H. Powell's remarks in The Oxford and Cambridge Review (August, 1912), pp.55-8.
84. For Alexandra Orr's and Mary Moss's comments, see pp.159-60, 228-9 of this study. Cf. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), especially pp.90, 96-7.
85. Personal Writings, p.115. Cf. Personal Writings, pp.56-8. Cf. Matthew Arnold's definition of 'the imaginative reason' as the characteristic of 'the modern spirit' in which 'the senses and understanding' and 'the heart and imagination' are fused, a definition found in his essay, 'Pagan and

saw some form of synthesis of emotions and intellect in Hardy's fiction. This synthesis was most often alluded to in comments on the suggestiveness of the novels. The criticism in The Westminster Review of The Woodlanders well illustrates such an approach to Hardy's fiction. This critic wrote that The Woodlanders

. . . is a treat for all lovers of imaginative literature of a higher order. . . . There is something in the texture of the writing, something which is imperfectly described as 'suggestiveness', 'thoughtfulness', or 'pregnancy of style', which removes such a book as 'The Woodlanders' from the common category of novels, and makes its perusal an intellectual⁸⁶ pleasure such as is rarely to be found in modern fiction.

Critics continued to stress the 'thoughtfulness' (obviously something quite different from an appeal simply to logical reason) as a distinguishing characteristic of Hardy's fiction.⁸⁷

Lascelles Abercrombie approached the problem of the conflicting claims of emotion and intellect by formulating a theory of a faculty in man which he called 'the imaginative desire' to which 'the metaphysical power of art' must appeal. This 'imaginative desire' was essentially a 'formative' faculty by which the material of life perceived by man was ordered.

Mediaeval Religious Sentiment', although it is an idea which can be found throughout his critical writings. That Hardy was extremely interested in this idea is revealed by his quoting Arnold's phrase on several occasions. See A Laodicean (London, 1975), pp.436-7; Life, p.147. Hardy also twice included this passage in his notebooks. The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy, pp.110, 134 (Text). This notion was also essential to the criticism of Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, especially in the former's stress upon the synthesis of intuition and intellect and the latter's emphasis that art is the creation of and appeals to the whole man.

86. 'Belles Lettres', The Westminster Review, 128 (June, 1887), p.384.

87. See, for examples, 'Mr. Hardy's "Tess" on the Stage', The Times, No.36,070 (February 20, 1900), p.9; Charles Lewis Hind, The Diary of a Looker-on (London, 1908), p.43.

This perceiving and ordering were not enough, Abercrombie contended, and

. . . after all this has been done there remains an overplus of imaginative desire . . . there remains some desire which is still unused, unsatisfied, unembodied. . . . This is the function of art: to satisfy, by embodying, man's overplus of imaginative desire.

The 'metaphysical power of art', which shall satisfy this 'overplus of imaginative desire', is 'more a feeling than an idea, an ethical metaphysic rather than an intellectual . . .'. Because this 'imaginative desire' entailed a sense of 'mastery over existence', it was the form, rather than the material, of a work of art which would give this satisfaction.⁸⁸ Although critics might not have concurred with the psychological explanations of Abercrombie, it is obvious that many were attempting to arrive at some such notion as his 'imaginative desire' to explain why Hardy should simultaneously appeal so powerfully to the emotions and the intellect, the imagination and the reason, not as distinct and separate entities, but as two faculties which merged one into the other. Furthermore, this attempt, which characterized so many of the discussions of the relationship of art and philosophy as pertaining to Hardy's fiction, was a preoccupation which prevented many from lapsing into mere agreement or disagreement, mere philosophical quibblings, with the ideas expressed or dramatized in his novels.

88. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.16-22.

Chapter VII

Criticism of the Tragic in Hardy's Fiction:

Tradition and Innovation

Criticism of the tragic in Hardy's novels is perhaps the most disappointing facet in so far as that, with very few exceptions, it adhered unquestioningly to traditional, Aristotelian approaches to tragedy. This adherence to tradition did, nevertheless, have its positive side, providing critics with some tangible touchstones by which the tragic in Hardy's fiction could be analyzed and evaluated. Thus Hardy, being a writer who could appeal when his works were approached with expectations derived from classical tragedies, did find acceptance and approval within these limits. The dignity of his presentation, the cathartic effects, the inevitability of his plots, and the flawed but essentially noble characters were often favourably compared to Greek and Elizabethan tragedies.

When the less traditional, more modern aspects of the tragic in his novels were under consideration, the criticism tended to be characterized by a lack of sympathy and understanding. Such aspects as the influence of circumstance, environment, and heredity in determining the tragic course of events--aspects which are essentially extensions and variations of innovations made by George Eliot in England and the 'realists' in France--were greeted with varying degrees of scepticism. Naturally enough, by the end of Hardy's novel-writing career and the early years of the twentieth century, there were more champions of these modern aspects. The modifications instigated by the realistic movement could not claim an absolute victory (nor can they yet), but more and more critics were willing to approach Hardy's work with flexibility and to adjust the criteria

by which they assessed and judged his tragic fiction.

Despite these limitations in outlook, most critics did acknowledge that Hardy, in those novels now usually considered to be his strongest--The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess, and Jude--did aim at something different from what is commonly understood as pathos, that he did attain works of art more akin to tragedy. Accordingly, critics stressed the dignity of his work over its sentimentality, the strength and nobility of his characters rather than their weakness and depravity, and the contribution, however slight it might be, that the characters made in working out the tragic course of events, instead of their being wholly innocent victims of forces totally beyond their control. These emphases characterized the criticism beginning with the publication of The Mayor of Casterbridge; in general, it was only in retrospect that The Return of the Native came to be regarded as a tragic novel.

Julian Hawthorne's review of The Trumpet-Major, although stressing and praising the pathetic elements in Hardy's fiction, well illustrates the distinctions that were made between pathos and tragedy. He believed that delicacy of treatment, arbitrary working out of events, and weak characters were major characteristics of Hardy's fiction, characteristics largely attributable to Hardy's 'genius' being of the 'order' incapable

. . . of the loftier and more powerful efforts of tragedy; its furthest range in this direction should be limited by the pathetic, and this involves never altogether losing sight of the humorous. Now, in true pathos Mr. Hardy has no living superior, but his attempts in the way of tragedy have not been satisfactory. His voice, so melodious within its proper compass, breaks when strained at more powerful notes.

He argued that the plot of The Return of the Native seemed arb-

bitrary because tragedy was not inherent in the weak characters:

He conceives his tragic episode forcibly enough, but he does not give his actors the strength to carry it out; they seem to do the thing, but they are not themselves when they do it; they achieve it only at the cost of their own lives, so to speak. When Othello kills Desdemona, the act only makes him more Othello than he was before; but when Eustacia drowns herself on Egdon Heath, she leaves the Eustacia that we believe in safe on the bank. How much less effective is that elaborate scene than the simple sentence which concludes the story of 'Under the Greenwood Tree' There is genuine heartbreak in those words, so gentle and so grievous.¹

Although most critics could, as Hawthorne, admire the more delicate, charming elements in Hardy's fiction, the sentimental and pathetic touches which in a novel like The Trumpet-Major make it so appealing, they discerned that this was not Hardy's characteristic note. For example, a reviewer for Vanity Fair contended that the power found in The Return of the Native was to be more desired than the delicacy of The Trumpet-Major:

'The Trumpet-Major' has far more of charm than any other of Mr. Hardy's books, but we miss now and then the element of power. He has tried to lighten his hand, and the result is that his₂ work sometimes becomes weak and even descends into farce.

Thus the first and perhaps major characteristic which critics distinguished as allying Hardy with writers of tragedy was that of power. They could admire the charm, the delicacy, the sentimental and pathetic touches, but, in the final analysis, most perceived that power, vitality, and dignity, were qualities of a different and higher order of art.

1. The Spectator (December 18, 1880), p.1628. Some critics did show a definite predilection for the gentler and more charming elements in Hardy's fiction. See, for examples, Kegan Paul's remarks in The British Quarterly Review (April 1, 1881), pp.352-3, on Hardy's treatment of death; Harper's New Monthly Magazine (March, 1881), p.633, on The Trumpet-Major; 'Editor's Literary Record', Harper's New Monthly Magazine (European Edition), 3; No.384 (May, 1882), p.951.
2. Vanity Fair (November 27, 1880), p.299.

As early as Far from the Madding Crowd, a Hardy critic associated the dignity of his presentation with the tragic. The reviewer for The Times aptly remarked that, 'In parts this story rises to the dignity of both an idyl and a pastoral' and that,

This idyllic or romantic element is never violent or forced, and is always kept within due bounds. . . . there is the comfortable sense all the time that Mr. Hardy has his subject well in hand, and, for all its tragic tendencies, will never let it turn to ranting or pathos.

He concluded, therefore, that it is 'a novel which rises a good deal beyond the ordinary dead-level of mawkish sentiment and romantic twaddle . . .'.³ This critic made clear, as so many were to do, that 'ranting or pathos' were two elements which would prevent an author from attaining or retaining the dignified poise necessary for tragic art.

One reason for pathos being held in such low esteem by many has already been suggested: the belief that sentimentality was the attitude of the pathetic writer. By the time that Hardy was writing his novels, the pejorative connotations associated with the word 'sentimentality'--maudlin sympathies, mawkish emotions, insincerity--were well established and it was a quality which most critics, although not the average reader and theatre-goer, would not tolerate.⁴ Generally, critics did not employ this term to describe Hardy's writings, the few exceptions to this tendency being found in the more hysterical reviews which obviously wished to summon up an immediate

3. The Times (January 25, 1875), p.4.

4. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.61-4, gives examples. There was a slight reversal of this tendency among those who supported the new romance movement of the late 1880's and early 1890's. Nevertheless, the word 'sentiment' never lost the stigma attached to it.

antipathy to Hardy.⁵ Annie Macdonell represented many when she insisted that,

One sin he has not committed; he has never been maudlin. And much of the sadness he expresses is of a kind tears do not come to relieve. Of that gentle pathos which is often the to-morrow of tragedy, or its pitying neighbour, you find little.

She was not one of those critics who believed tragedy and humour to be inimical: 'But relief there must be, else the tension would be intolerable, and it comes in fun and farce, where these are congruous, or in irony of tone and circumstance.'⁶ Annie Macdonell may have understated the pathetic touches in Hardy's fiction, but it was a healthy understatement and she more aptly defined the essence of Hardy's fiction by concentrating on the tragic than any emphasis on sentimentality or pathos would have done.

Critics often associated pathos with humour. For many, a writer's capacity for one automatically suggested that he had the capacity for the other and, therefore, the incapacity for tragedy. The previously cited remarks by Julian Hawthorne well exemplify an early belief that Hardy's genius was not tragic because of his great ability for humour. J.M. Barrie, writing in 1889, took the other extreme and argued that, in Hardy's tragic works, humour had no place.⁷ In the earlier

5. See, for examples, The Novel Review (March, 1892), pp.285, 288, and Prosser Hall Frye, Literary Reviews and Criticisms (New York, 1908), p.104, both on Tess. The latter was originally an article in The Independent, New York (July, 1902). The only serious charge brought against Hardy in this respect was by Edward Wright, The Quarterly Review (April, 1904), pp.522-3, who argued that 'Mr. Hardy's philosophic creed is that of a sentimental materialist . . .'.

6. Thomas Hardy (1894), p.128. Cf. Henry MacArthur, Realism and Romance (1897), pp.14-7.

7. The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), pp.61, 66.

novels, Hardy's use of humour owes more to Shakespearean than Greek models, but his reviewers tended to formulate criteria derived from their reading of Greek tragedy. Some later critics of these novels, however, did keep their Shakespeare in mind and thus did perceive that humour could be employed as validly and effectively in a tragic as in a pathetic work. 'Comic relief' is perhaps a well-worn phrase, but it does suggest one aspect of Hardy's use of the rustics. Annie Macdonell obviously recognized that Hardy's rustics did provide 'relief' from 'tension' which could be 'intolerable'. Other critics viewed Hardy's rustics in a more complex way, discerning that, in many cases, the rustics were invaluable for pointing the tragic issues at play among the protagonists and that, consequently, they acted, not simply as 'comic relief', but also as an intensifying element of the tragedy. A critic for an American periodical, Godey's Magazine, who signed himself 'Chelifer', made the most astute comments on this aspect. He noted that the fool in King Lear and the grave-diggers in Hamlet 'not only give a weird, uncanny support to the horror, but they hold it back from hysterical excess'; in this way 'emotion is both inspired and restrained'. Hardy had learned well from his model: 'Thomas Hardy has seen the value of this mechanism, and has used it with high skill, to the notable production of those shuddery thrills we all find so unpleasantly pleasant.' As an example, he chose the scene in Far from the Madding Crowd where Fanny's long walk and death is juxtaposed to Joseph Poorgrass's trip with the coffin and interlude at the tavern which is, in turn, juxtaposed with the 'terrific agony' of Bathsheba's opening of the coffin. This critic found Hardy to be 'pre-eminently dignified' and such aesthetic

control as Hardy exercises over his readers' emotions here could only have strengthened this conviction.⁸

Thus, many critics believed that Hardy's tragic narratives were controlled and dignified enough to prevent them from degenerating into sentimentality and excessive pathos. 'Ranting', as previously mentioned, was another element over which critics insisted that a tragic writer must exert strict control. Hardy believed that, 'The highest flights of the pen are mostly the excursions and revelations of souls unreconciled to life',⁹ but few critics seem to have supported this notion. One of the few critics to express overtly such an idea was Annie Macdonell: 'He [Hardy] is often in revolt: otherwise he would be no tragedian.'¹⁰ Generally, critics stressed that such revolt, as displayed in any bitterness or anger, was detrimental to the dignity and aloofness necessary for tragedy. It has been revealed several times previously that, only with Tess and Jude, did critics feel that they must come forward and censure Hardy for this. Many would have concurred with Andrew Lang that, in Tess, 'It is pity, one knows, that causes this bitterness in Mr. Hardy's mood', but that 'probably bitterness is never a mark of the greatest art and the noblest thought', and with The Athenaeum's reviewer that, in Jude,

8. Godey's Magazine, New York (December, 1895), pp.658-9. Cf. A.H. Thompson, The Eagle, Cambridge (October, 1895), p.52.

9. Life, p.240. This appears to be a controversial point in criticism of tragedy. Although many critics probably would have tacitly agreed with such an idea, it is only in twentieth-century criticism that it has become more widely and explicitly supported. See, for examples, George Steiner, The Death of Tragedy (1961; rpt. London, 1963), p.167; Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy (New Haven, 1959), p.5.

10. Thomas Hardy (1894), p.214. See pp.224-5 of this study for further and fuller quotation.

. . . Mr. Hardy, in his anger against Destiny and in his desire to make Destiny and its offspring Society odious, has overreached himself, and has entirely failed in attaining what; in his preface, he professes to be his object--to expose 'the tragedy of unfulfilled aims'.¹¹

Other critics maintained that this impartial, aloof attitude should be displayed by the author, not only in the presentation of tragic issues, but also in the presentation of characters. Edmund Gosse, for example, remarked that the Commemoration scene in Jude 'is of a marvellous truth and vividness of presentment, but it would be stronger, and even more tragic, if Mr. Hardy did not appear in it as an advocate taking sides with his unhappy hero'.¹² Some critics, attempting to exculpate Hardy from such charges, ignored the outbursts of bitterness or anger and underestimated Hardy's 'note of revolt' in his presentation of tragic issues and character,¹³ qualities which many critics, from the beginning, have felt to be jarring. Most critics today would tend to agree with Abercrombie's assessment of these elements in Tess and Jude which did not ignore the jarring moments, but which concluded that, overall, the art of these novels was controlled enough to justify their claims to tragedy.¹⁴

While critics saw sentimentality and 'ranting' as detrimental to the attainment of tragic effects, they also insisted that the tragic writer must avoid the other extreme of coldness

11. The New Review (February, 1892), p.248; The Athenaeum (November 23, 1895), p.709. For further criticism of this aspect, see pp.165-6, 221-3 of this study.

12. Cosmopolis (January, 1896), p.65.

13. See, for examples, The St. James's Gazette (January 7, 1892), p.5 (partially quoted on p.208 of this study); 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The Academy, 51 (March 27, 1897), p.345.

14. See quotations on pp.202, 216 of this study.

or cynicism.¹⁵ At a time when melodramatic plays and sentimental romances were the mainstay of the theatre and publishing house, the dignity of Hardy's presentation was sometimes interpreted as coldness or lack of sympathy. The Return of the Native, as was seen in the last chapter, especially fell prey to critics who interpreted its intellectual element and aloofness as a failure to convey any emotional involvement.¹⁶ With Tess and Jude, most critics were too aware of the 'note of revolt' to bring allegations of coldness or cynicism against Hardy. Even a critic like A.H. Thompson who contended that, in The Return of the Native and The Mayor of Casterbridge, 'There is a contented, hopeless, almost cynical tone . . . seeming to say that a tragedy once made cannot be unmade, nor is it subject for strife', believed that 'when we come to Tess of the D'Urbervilles, we find a change. The author has no longer that helpless agreement in his subject; at every point he turns and curses at the fatalism in which he believes'.¹⁷ Thompson, as many critics, did not feel that this change was for the better; it was the exchange of one fault for another.

What was obviously needed to balance the extreme view-

15. For comments on coldness and cynicism, see pp.182, 184 of this study. Hardy himself realized the danger of the tragic writer becoming cynical. See, for examples, Life, pp. 215, 296.
16. See pp.235-6 of this study. Not all the commentary on this novel was so negative. See The International Review, New York (February, 1879), pp.211-2; The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (April, 1879), pp.502-3, and The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (November, 1879), p.673, both perhaps by Harriet Preston. In a much later article, Harriet Preston demonstrated an even greater understanding of these elements in Hardy's fiction. While emphasizing the aloofness and dignity of Hardy's attitude, she was not blind to his emotional involvement in the tragedies of his characters. The Century Magazine, New York (July, 1893), p.356.
17. The Eagle, Cambridge (October, 1895), pp.40-1.

points of Hardy as sentimentalist or of Hardy as the stern, aloof, verging on cynical writer was a viewpoint which saw him in a more moderate way, one which would have come much closer to the true Hardy: a writer full of sympathy for his tragic protagonists, fully aware of and sensitive to the tragic issues--hence a writer whose commentary did sometimes go beyond the perfect control of tragic art--yet a writer whose art was essentially controlled and dignified. Abercrombie, as noted earlier, was a writer who upheld such a viewpoint. Lionel Johnson anticipated the general tenor of Abercrombie's remarks, although Johnson was far more concerned with tone and atmosphere, Abercrombie with form. Johnson insisted that Hardy 'is the least sentimental of writers: he never lets sentiment take art into captivity', but this did not mean that Hardy's fiction was cold:

He writes with emotion, but not in agitation: he has learned much of Virgil's secret; the art of being stately in passion, with a natural instinct of fine manners, in the presence of fine things; yet with swells and storms of emotion, beneath the austere solemnity.

Much of the dignity of Hardy's work, Johnson believed, 'comes from its occupation with dignified natures . . .'. Moreover, Johnson stressed that he did not find Hardy's novels to be 'merely painful'; 'the severity of thought and of style' precluded such painfulness and, consequently, 'he takes his place among those writers, who from the early ages of literature have expressed in art a reasonable sadness'.¹⁸

This is Johnson's general conclusion about Hardy's fiction

18. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.119-20, 73, 275-6. Cf. Israel Zangwill, The Pall Mall Magazine (February, 1896), pp.332-4, on Jude; Harold Williams, Two Centuries of the English Novel (1911), pp.284, 286-7 (partially quoted on pp.183-4 of this study); Arthur Compton-Rickett, The Westminster Gazette (June 8, 1912), p.3.

but it is obvious from other comments that he believed that such 'reasonable sadness' did not characterize Tess and Jude and that they were 'merely painful'. In his 1898 article, he stated that, 'Tess and Jude leave us quarrelling either with the universe or with Mr. Hardy', whereas 'the earlier great books . . . leave us, as art ought to leave us, tranquil as at the close of Greek tragedy'.¹⁹ Here Johnson is evoking the traditional Aristotelian concept of catharsis, the purgation of pity and fear that have been aroused by tragedy. Oscar Mandel, in his A Definition of Tragedy (1961), argues that two 'common conditions which are unfavorable to the sense of pleasure which we seek even in painful art' are 'excessive realism or modernity, and the depiction of victims'.²⁰ These are two conditions which many critics have felt to be incompatible with the attainment of cathartic effects, as traditionally understood. Johnson concentrated on the latter condition. Because he believed that, in Tess, 'there was no real struggle of the will with adverse circumstance, no conflict of emotions, nor battle of passions: all was fated and determined', he concluded that, 'Our pity and our fear are not purified merely: they are destroyed, and no room is left for them . . .'. Thus he argued: 'The tragedy of Tess does indeed rouse in us "pity and fear": it does indeed purge us of "pity and fear": but with what a parody of Aristotle!' In contrast, should be placed Johnson's contention that The Mayor of Casterbridge 'perfectly fulfil[s] the great demands of Aristotle upon the composers of dramatic plot, and the conceivers of dramatic character'. This

19. The Academy (November 12, 1898), p.252.

20. Oscar Mandel, A Definition of Tragedy (New York, 1961), pp.83-4.

was because 'for good and bad, Henchard is his own fate, and to himself "both law and impulse"' and, therefore, his tragedy evoked the proper tragic responses: '. . . we give him the pity, he would not give himself: yet we own the justice of his lifelong discipline.'²¹

Johnson's statement that, in Tess, pity and fear are not merely purged, but actually destroyed, suggests the reason for many critics believing that 'the depiction of victims' was inimical to the creation of cathartic effects: it did not spur the reader or spectator on to the belief that struggle was worthwhile; it left him either with a sense of hopelessness or of futile fretting; it was not a stimulant, but a depressant. Many critics felt that Hardy's novels could not have an invigorating effect because external forces--circumstance, environment, heredity, accident, fate, or whatever--were too implacable. A critic in 1906 well sums up this attitude:

To Mr. Hardy, we are trammelled in the unyielding meshes of Fate; for us there is no escape. And though this in his best work rises to those heights of self-pity and fear after a manner which from the time of ancient Greece has been universally regarded as the highest type of tragedy; we are left sometimes with a feeling not so much of a deep and purging sorrow, but rather one of miserable fretting and irritation at the inexorable dictates of that ever present mystery which we call Fate.²²

Not all critics, however, felt that the rigid inevitability of Hardy's tragic narratives prevented cathartic effects. The reviewer of Tess for The Speaker, for instance, although remarking that Hardy 'is as remorseless as Fate itself in un-

21. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.264, 203-4.

22. Alma Mater, Aberdeen (November 28, 1906), p.63. Tess was especially felt to produce such emotions. See, for example, 'Among the Books', The National Review, 18 (February, 1892), p.850. A typical nineteenth-century interpretation of what Aristotle meant by catharsis is given by William Archer, 'Pessimism and Tragedy', The Fortnightly Review, 65, No.387 (March 1, 1899), p.393.

folding the drama of her life' and that the reader is 'pained and almost horrified' as Tess is 'drawn deeper and deeper into the vortex of ruin', asserted that the book did have 'an irresistible fascination' and that it 'is a wonderful triumph of art . . .'. Furthermore, he maintained that, because 'the irresistible feeling is borne in upon the mind as one reads, that thus, and thus only, could the life of Tess Durbeyfield have shaped itself', 'the pity of it, and the horror, are all the greater . . .'.²³ It is obvious from such remarks that the notion that 'the depiction of victims' and the creation of cathartic effects were incompatible was being modified. Helen Garwood traced such modifications to essential changes in values. The whole concept of tragic pity was changing, she argued: 'Pity of a certain sort one always had for the individual, but it was the pity for those who make mistakes, the pity for the sinner; now it is the pity for those who are sinned against.' The concept of terror, too, was undergoing modifications: 'Formerly it was definite, we feared the rewards and punishments which would surely follow; now we scarcely know what we fear, we call it the lack of justice.'²⁴ Such modifications were valuable for those critics who insisted upon viewing Hardy's characters simply as victims; it did lead to greater sympathy, although not necessarily greater understanding, of his fiction.

A greater understanding was revealed by those critics who took into consideration the artistry of Hardy's tragic fiction

23. The Speaker (December 26, 1891), p.771.

24. Thomas Hardy (1911), pp.41-2. Frederick Peek, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy' (1910), pp.206-7, also questioned the basic premises of traditional concepts of catharsis.

when discussing catharsis. One aspect of the difference between catharsis and mere painfulness which many critics have debated is the notion that catharsis is created by the distancing effect of art: form and language contribute to the creation of a mood in the spectator or reader which allows him to contemplate the tragic issues without the raw painfulness he would experience if contemplated in life. Life does not provide the unity and beauty which art should provide. This aesthetic distancing can even alleviate the painfulness when 'excessive realism or modernity', as Mandel notes, is one of the 'conditions' of the tragic work. Abercrombie was probably suggesting some such idea in his contention that 'the function of art' is 'to satisfy, by embodying, man's overplus of imaginative desire', that 'in art man knows himself truly the master of his existence. It is this sense of mastery which gives man that raised and delighted consciousness of self which art provokes'. For Abercrombie, this mastery was attained through 'perfection of form'.²⁵

Some of Hardy's critics did refer to his artistry as an explanation of why his tragic narratives were not merely painful. W.P. Trent, for example, claimed that Tess 'is pure tragedy--the greatest tragedy, it seems to us, that has been written since the days of the Elizabethans' and, although 'it lacks "the accomplishment of verse" . . . it is told in the strongest and purest prose'. He conceded that 'it leaves a sensation of pain', but insisted that 'it is the bitter-sweet pain that tragedy always leaves, and the pain is overbalanced by the pleasure we gain from our appreciation of the artist's triumph'. To achieve this triumph, Trent argued, Hardy had

25. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.18, 22.

'sunk his realism in idealism . . .'.²⁶ A critic in 1899, in contrast, asserted that 'beauty of form' was not characteristic of Hardy's fiction, but instead a certain vigour took its place:

This tragic intensity of outlook, expressed in Mr. Hardy's fine prose, has, it is true, a stimulating, soul-bracing effect, as of some rough wind which, while it buffets, still gives fresh vigour to face the storm.²⁷

Several of these passages reveal that, for some, the conception of catharsis had become a social idea; the emphasis was no longer on purgation of pity and fear, but rather on the enlargement of social sympathies. It had, in essence, taken on a distinctly Shelleyan flavour whereby 'the imagination is enlarged by a sympathy with pains and passions so mighty' and 'the good affections are strengthened by pity, indignation, terror, and sorrow . . .'.²⁸ Such a conception of catharsis was most widely and explicitly revealed in comments on Tess. William Watson, for instance, saw 'the great theme' of Tess to be 'the incessant penalty paid by the innocent for the wicked, the unsuspecting for the crafty, the child for its fathers' and thus concluded that the novel was 'a direct arraignment of the morality of this system of vicarious pain . . .'. He further contended that it was 'in virtue of the almost intolerable power

26. The Sewanee Review, Tennessee (November, 1892), pp.20-1. Cf. Arthur Compton-Rickett, The Westminster Gazette (June 8, 1912), p.3. In contrast, see Trent's comments on The Return of the Native, quoted on p.27 (footnote 12) of this study, a novel which he believed to illustrate Hardy's 'passion for excessive realism' (p.11).
27. 'Books of the Week', The Times, No.35,718 (January 5, 1899), p.10.
28. Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism, p.135. Hardy also would seem to have upheld such a notion of catharsis. See, for examples, his remarks in the 'Postscript' to Jude, Personal Writings, pp.34-5; Collected Letters, Volume One, p.190 (quoted on p.16 of this study).

with which this argument is wrought out' that 'Tess must take its place among the great tragedies, to have read which is to have permanently enlarged the boundaries of one's intellectual and emotional experience'. Watson did see, however, that Hardy 'himself proposes no remedy, suggests no escape' and that, 'He is content to make his readers pause, and consider, and pity . . .'.²⁹ The social element, the enlargement of social sympathies, is certainly an important aspect of Tess and other Hardy novels, but to view them exclusively in these terms is to miss the more universal and essentially more significant tragic themes. Critics who were able to perceive both these elements and to synthesize them into a unified perception came much closer to a genuine understanding of the tragic in Hardy's fiction. This is well illustrated by the comments of a critic for the New-York Tribune in 1896 who, while placing great emphasis on Hardy's contribution to the enlargement of social sympathies, realized that tragedy and the creation of cathartic effects involved, but was not exclusively devoted to, such an enlargement:

To purge the imagination through terror and pity--that is admittedly the aim of the highest tragedy, and that is Hardy's aim. He achieves it in presenting the spectacle of inexperienced natures caught in the meshes of life; confused between the dictates of society and those of their inner convictions, acting, in the end, with a human genuineness that leaves the reader breathless.³⁰

Inevitability has also always been a central concept in definitions of tragedy.³¹ For Hardy's critics, the criterion

29. The Academy (February 6, 1892), pp.125-6. Some critics reduced this notion to an absurdly narrow interpretation of the response evoked by Tess. See, for example, 'The Art of Thomas Hardy', The Sewanee Review, Tennessee, 3 (August, 1895), p.451.
30. New-York Tribune (June 7, 1896), p.26. For this critic's emphasis on social sympathies, see the quotations on p.185 of this study.
31. Oscar Mandel, A Definition of Tragedy (1961), p.24, asserts

of inevitability in assessing his tragic narratives was an essential one. A novel excellently demonstrating the emphasis critics placed on this criterion is A Pair of Blue Eyes which many justifiably felt to fall short of the tragic because of its rather arbitrary mechanics and contrived plot. While early reviewers did comment on this defect, remarks made by Edmund Gosse in 1901 well sum up the objections made. He argued that this novel 'does not quite represent him [Hardy] as we have become accustomed to see him now'. Although referring to the novel as 'tragedy' (from the remarks which follow, he was obviously not using the word in its formal, artistic sense), he asserted that it is 'conducted with a light-hearted extravagance of plot, a sort of preposterousness, which is not favorable to our pleasure in it'. Gosse found 'the bewilderments of her [Elfride's] two simultaneous lovers the least encouraging to follow' and contended that, 'Here, more than elsewhere, there is something artificial in the evolution of the story'. The tragedy of The Return of the Native must have seemed to Gosse a decided advance over A Pair of Blue Eyes. Of the later novel, he wrote:

There is, perhaps, not another modern novel, out of France and Russia, which is pervaded with so serene a sense of unity. In the breadth of the conception, the simplicity of the details, the extraordinary prescience with which the author seems endowed, in the irresistible march of destiny, ³²all seems drawn with the broad lines of ancient tragedy.

that 'inevitability impresses us as the kernel of the definition' of tragedy. Hardy realized the importance of inevitability in tragedy. See, for examples, Life, pp.176, 251.

32. Edmund Gosse, 'The Historic Place of Mr. Meredith and Mr. Hardy', The International Monthly, Burlington, Vermont, 4, No.3 (September, 1901), pp.316-7, 321. Earlier reviews which touched upon the lack of inevitability in A Pair of Blue Eyes include 'New Novels', The Figaro, No.443 (Octo-

Most critics eventually came to view The Return of the Native in the same way as Gosse, but it took many years for it to be fully accepted as a tragic novel and for critics to praise the sense of inevitability which it undoubtedly does possess. Indeed, most early reviewers would have concurred with William Henley that 'his tragedy is arbitrary and accidental rather than heroic and inevitable . . .'. Henley found 'the sadness' to be 'unnecessary and uncalled for' primarily because of the accidents:

. . . Mr. Hardy makes his heroine kill somebody by one wrong calculation and be killed herself by another. . . . Is not life wretched enough as it is, and must an author to be impressive invent accidents to make it still more so?

Henley concluded: 'The motive of the book is so needlessly cruel as to be absolutely inhuman. Mr. Hardy, like Balzac, is a lover of futile tragedy.'³³ One of the few critics who, at this time, did claim that the tragedy of The Return of the Native was inevitable used narrowly moralistic criteria to assess the tragedy, criteria totally alien to Hardy's notions of tragedy. The British Quarterly Review's critic saw the tragedy as one which 'sets wrong things right' and felt, therefore, that it 'was manifestly necessary' and 'the skill and naturalness of its occurrence are the work of a master hand'.³⁴

ber 29, 1873), p.7, and 'New Novels', The Graphic, No.189 (July 12, 1873), p.36. Havelock Ellis, The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.343-6, made extensive and perceptive comments on this aspect.

33. The Academy (November 30, 1878), p.517; London (November 23, 1878), p.498. Henley's reviews are relatively reasoned compared to some of the absurd remarks made by others. See, for example, 'The Return of the Native', The Examiner, No.3696 (November 30, 1878), p.1525.
34. The British Quarterly Review (January 1, 1879), p.243. In contrast, Alexandra Orr, who also saw the tragedy in moral terms, believed that moral intention marred the spontaneity and hence inevitability. The New Quarterly Magazine

With The Woodlanders, the critical trend reversed and Hardy's tragic plots began to be censured for a too rigid inevitability. The reviewer for The Literary World, for example argued that, in this novel,

. . . everything is in the grasp of an iron destiny . . . that hopelessly mars and despoils. In the vision of humanity here unfolded malign influences are ceaselessly at work frustrating happiness, mocking hopes, thrusting worthless husks into hands that yearn for the fair fruits of ideal endeavor.

For this reason, the reviewer found The Woodlanders to be 'a disagreeable novel', a novel that 'arouses the keenest sympathies on the part of the reader, may, indeed, if he be of sensitive fiber, wring him with anguish, and leaves him at the last, baffled, stupefied, cast down'. This critic is obviously one who believed that a too rigid inevitability did not induce the proper tragic emotions, it did not inspire in the reader a belief that struggle was worthwhile. Thus he went on: 'The quality of inevitableness is there, and gives the book high rank as a work of art, but the inevitableness is too irresistible, too implacable.'³⁵ Such criticism marks the beginning of a division of opinion as to whether Hardy's novels were too inflexible. A critic in 1904 made quite explicit the 'difficulty' which critics had 'of placing him among novelists who follow the natural development of a plot or among those who have a bias in the direction of pessimism'.³⁶ Generally, the problem arose with his later novels because some critics began to identify the inevitability of his tragic narratives with a malevolent

(October, 1879), pp.413, 428-31. See quotations on pp.159-60, 184 of this study.

35. The Literary World, Boston (May 14, 1887), p.149.

36. 'Thomas Hardy's Genius', The Literary World, 70, No.1813 (July 29, 1904), p.88.

fate. Critics hostile to such an idea (and, again, there were divergent reactions here) responded by arguing that the inevitability was not natural, that the hand of the author was too apparent in the manoeuvring of events into an ever-tightening accumulation of miseries heaped upon his characters. In many instances, the only inevitability which critics would approve as tragic was inevitability in the Bradleyan sense of character and incident working out the narrative; when it was believed that any other element came into play, Hardy was censured as being merciless and ruthless towards his own creations. Another Aristotelian tenet, then, which was upheld almost unswervingly was that the tragic character must be an active agent in initiating and keeping the tragic course of events in motion; tragic characters are, in essence, not victims, but masters of their own fate.³⁷

In the early reviews of A Pair of Blue Eyes and Far from the Madding Crowd, although some critics took up the simplistic position of assigning blame to one character or another,³⁸ several critics wrote perceptively on the interaction between cha-

37. Lionel Johnson obviously upheld such a criterion for characters to be tragic. See, for example, his comments on Tess and Henchard, quoted on pp.250-1 of this study. Wilbur Cross, The Development of the English Novel (1899), pp. 274-5, also remarked that, 'It has been a tacit assumption in English tragedy that the dramatic hero must commit some deed from which he suffers', and believed that Hardy, in insisting that Tess 'is free from any wrong-doing', was making a break with tradition and was 'an innovator'.
38. One reviewer, for instance, stressed Elfride's innocence, weakness, and docility, and placed the blame on Smith and Knight, remarking that 'between them they kill the girl'. '"A Pair of Blue Eyes"', The Pall Mall Gazette, 18, No.2713 (October 25, 1873), pp.11-2. In contrast, the reviewer for The Figaro (October 29, 1873), p.7, placed most blame upon Elfride. Bathsheba and Troy divided the blame between them. For a critic who blamed Bathsheba, see 'Far from the Madding Crowd', The Echo, No.1858 (November 28, 1874), p.2, and Troy, The Times (January 25, 1875), p.4.

racters and between characters and events, interactions which, while not attaining tragic dimensions in these novels, certainly anticipated an important aspect of Hardy's later tragic fiction. The reviewer of A Pair of Blue Eyes for The Saturday Review, probably Horace Moule, noted that,

. . . Mr. Hardy has in the book before us developed, with something of the ruthlessness of George Eliot, what may be called the tragedy of circumstance, the power of mere events on certain kinds of character. By mere events we mean a sequence in the evolution of which no moral obliquity, no deliberate viciousness of choice, can be said to have had a share.

In this novel, he believed, 'the tragedy consists in the operation of quite ordinary events upon her [Elfride's] sensitive and conscious, but perfectly simple, nature'.³⁹ Several years later, the reviewer for The Examiner insisted that Hardy was not as interested in 'circumstance' as George Eliot, that his 'object is rather to illustrate the influence of one human being upon another, the interaction of characters, without much regard to how those characters came to be what they are'. For this reason, he believed Hardy to be predominately a 'dramatic' novelist, George Eliot an 'analytic'.⁴⁰ William Minto, in his review of Far from the Madding Crowd, combined the ideas of these two critics. He also felt that the 'dramatic' quality of Hardy's novels distinguished them from George Eliot's, defining this dramatic element as, not 'in the multiplication and complication of incidents', but rather 'in the searching and complete way in which he traces the effect of each incident upon the thoughts and feelings of his personages'.⁴¹ Such

39. The Saturday Review (August 2, 1873), p.158.

40. The Examiner (October 13, 1877), p.1300.

41. The Examiner (December 5, 1874), p.1329.

criticism reveals that, while critics saw the tragic resulting from the interaction of characters and circumstance, not all saw it in terms of good and evil polarities.

In general, the criticism of The Return of the Native immediately following its publication proved disappointing in this respect. Whereas many critics found enough charm or fascination in the characters of Elfride and Bathsheba to temper their judgments, critics of The Return of the Native found the characters too enigmatic or, even worse, repellent. This was largely because of moralistic objections, especially to Eustacia and Wildeve, and, consequently, tragic 'weakness' or 'flaw' became moral weakness or fault.⁴² It had to await Havelock Ellis, in 1883, for any temperate assessment of the part which characters played in the working out of their tragedies. Ellis defined 'the great flaw in Eustacia's nature--the cause of that want of adaptation to her environment which . . . will make life impossible to her' as a 'lack of discipline':

And with her passionate and abstract desire for love, her greedy egotism, her 'instincts' towards social nonconformity', her outcries against destiny, we soon learn how ill able she must ever be to carry on adequately that complex and continuous adaptation of internal relations to external relations, which is life.

Nor was Clym's nature exempt from potentially tragic tendencies: 'The elements of tragedy lie in his nature as clearly as in hers.'⁴³

Again, the reviews of The Mayor of Casterbridge were disappointing for much the same reason as those of The Return of the Native, although here the criticism was not so much characterized by moral objections as simply by an isolation of Hen-

42. For examples, John Bull (November 30, 1878), p.776, and The Saturday Review (January 4, 1879), pp.23-4.

43. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.349-50.

chard's faults or weaknesses, especially his rashness and stubbornness.⁴⁴ Reviewers failed to apprehend the complexity, the warring elements, which make up Henchard's character from beginning to end. It took a critic like R.H. Hutton, despite his limitations in viewpoint, to appreciate a character of the magnitude of Henchard. In quibbling with Hardy's subtitle ('One looks for the picture of a man of much more constancy of purpose, and much less tragic mobility of mood, than Michael Henchard'), Hutton came much closer than any other critic at this time to an understanding of the tragic elements within Henchard's nature:

But the essence of Michael Henchard is that he is a man of large nature and depth of passion, who is yet subject to the most fitful influences, who can do in one mood acts of which he will never cease to repent in almost all his other moods, whose temper of heart changes many times even during the execution of the same purpose, though the same ardour, the same pride, the same wrathful magnanimity, the same inability to carry out in cool blood the angry resolve of the mood of revenge or scorn, the same hasty unreasonableness, and the same disposition to swing back to an equally hasty reasonableness, distinguish him throughout.

Critics tended to view Tess primarily as a victim of external forces. One of the few reviewers to acknowledge that Tess is at least partially responsible for the tragic events which befall her was Richard le Gallienne who, although in a somewhat flippant review, saw Tess as a lineal descendant of other Hardy heroines:

She is by no means so empty-headed as they are wont to be, but, like her sisters, she is a fine Pagan, full of human-

44. For examples, The World (June 23, 1886), p.21 (signed 'Q'), and The Athenaeum (May 29, 1886), p.711. Henry Alden, Harper's New Monthly Magazine (November, 1886), pp.961-2, concentrated on the wife sale as the one act of Henchard which actuates the tragedy, but he, too, failed to detect any subtlety in Henchard's portrayal.

45. The Spectator (June 5, 1886), p.752.

ity and imagination, and, like them, though in a less degree, flawed with that lack of will, that fatal indecision at great moments.

Le Gallienne stressed, however, that this did not mean complete passivity, but rather passivity at those moments when activity is demanded; he was, in fact, one of the few critics to see in Tess's earlier relations with Alec, not simply 'lack of will', but a suggestion of 'a Pagan bias for mere pleasure'.⁴⁶ Le Gallienne took a similar stance in his review of Jude to which the majority of critics were reacting in the same way, that is, viewing it as a novel in which either fatalistic or deterministic forces predominated. Le Gallienne appears to identify character and fate: 'A malignant fate seems to dog their footsteps, at every turn of the way they make tragic mistakes, and their very wisdom is always for the worst.' This is made clearer when he defended Jude against those critics who 'have treated Jude as a polemic against marriage': 'It is true that the tragedy of Jude and Sue was partly brought about by the marriage laws, but their own weakness of character was mainly responsible for it . . .'.⁴⁷

Although later criticism persisted in stressing external forces as the cause of the tragedies in Hardy's novels, there are a few notable exceptions. Henry Nevinson, in 1903, is such an exception. He discerned a pattern throughout Hardy's fiction whereby into the 'quiet atmosphere of ancient life' Hardy 'loves to introduce a soul touched from its birth by something alien, something that reaches out into a world of different experience, whether for delight or spiritual need'.

46. The Star (December 23, 1891), p.4.

47. The Idler Magazine (February, 1896), pp.114-5. For fuller quotation, see p.99 of this study.

He further noted the tragic 'dividedness' of 'goodness' and 'flawedness' in these characters: 'Deep in such souls lies some trace of precious but perilous substance' He went on to remark that Hardy's plots were concerned with showing 'the development of a soul like this. Character is fate, and link by link from its small beginning we see the fateful chain of character wrought out'.⁴⁸ It was, as will be emphasized later, by acknowledging the importance of the inner struggle, rather than by concentrating solely on the external one, that many critics arrived at a better and more appreciative perception of the tragic in Hardy's fiction.

It has been seen that, in the early reviews of A Pair of Blue Eyes and Far from the Madding Crowd, there were some critics who believed that Hardy had an affinity with George Eliot because of the importance of circumstance in his novels. Critics were also quick to discern that, in The Return of the Native, Eustacia's being placed on the Heath was largely responsible for the tragedy which ensues, although few critics read more into this than physical oppression and limited opportunities.⁴⁹ The reviewer for The Atlantic Monthly, possibly Harriet Preston, was the only critic who, at this time, went beyond this

48. The English Illustrated Magazine (June, 1903), p.280. Abercrombie also came to a more complete understanding of Hardy's novels by not ignoring the characters' part in working out their destinies and by noting the significance of the 'interior conflict'. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.30-1. Robert Bechtold Heilman, Tragedy and Melodrama (Seattle and London, 1968), p.7, interpreting Aristotle, views the 'dividedness' in a tragic character to be in his 'goodness' and 'flawedness': 'Goodness and flawedness imply different incentives, different needs and desires, indeed different directions. There is a pulling apart within the personality, a disturbance, though not a pathological one, of integration.'

49. See, for examples, Henry M. Alden, 'Editor's Literary Record', Harper's New Monthly Magazine, New York, 58, No.346 (March, 1879), pp.627-8; 'The Return of the Native', The Observer, No.4572 (January 5, 1879), p.6.

narrower interpretation, noting that 'along the edges of the narrow life portrayed there are frequent glimpses of infinite horizons' and that 'the cumulative tragedy . . . is all simple, circumstantial, inevitable . . .'. Hardy's depiction of the Heath suggested, not merely physical oppression and limited opportunities, but 'tyranny of place'. The 'crushing tyranny of circumstance' was also noted: 'The most trivial accidents are fraught with the grimmest consequences A sense of the omnipotence of accident is no uncommon mode of modern fatalism.'⁵⁰

These remarks reveal that critics early recognized an important aspect of Hardy's use of circumstance--the element of accident or chance in his novels, whether defined as the misfortune of a character being placed in an alien environment or as the untowardness of certain occurrences in a character's life. Early criticism of this element, as illustrated by the remarks of William Henley, tended to be condemnatory because the introduction of accident or chance seemed to detract from the sense of inevitability. Coincidence tended to be viewed in the same way.⁵¹ By the time of Tess, however, critics were beginning to view accident and coincidence as essential elements in Hardy's tragic vision of life. This is well exemplified by a reviewer of Tess for The Athenaeum who saw 'the accident of birth and the untowardness of circumstances' acting in conflict with Tess's 'own struggles and inclinations [which] are always towards honourable conduct'. He singled out the inopportune salutation of Parson Tringham ("Sir John") 'made in a moment of

50. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (April, 1879), pp.500, 502.

51. See, for example, Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), p.61.

whim' and Angel's failure to choose Tess for his partner in the dance as the 'two pegs' upon which 'the story hangs'. This critic contended that, in triggering the course of events by these two inauspicious incidents, Hardy 'proceeds after the manner of all the great dramatists . . .'. Nevertheless, he did not fail to recognize, as did some critics, that, although accidents and circumstances are indispensable elements in creating the tragic situations and tensions, Tess possesses a certain stature--an innate purity--which ultimately sets her above her circumstances and the misfortunes which befall her. Thus, he insisted that, 'Like the scenes of pleasant rural comedy, and like the pathetic incidents abounding in the book', each of the characters 'by his very existence throws into relief the figure of this imperfect woman, nobly planned, who, like the geisha of the Japanese legend, has sinned in the body, but ever her heart was pure'.⁵²

Several approaches were used to justify Hardy's introduction of accident and coincidence. One approach was to suggest that, contrary to the belief of early reviewers, it strengthened the sense of inevitability. Abercrombie, for example, condoned Hardy's use of accident because of the sense of inevitability it imparts. Thus he wrote of the gambling scene in The Return of the Native:

52. The Athenaeum (January 9, 1892), pp.49-50. Abercrombie also perceived that Hardy's characters retained a certain stature--'some nobility and dignity'--when beset by accidental and coincidental occurrences. Thomas Hardy (1912), p.30. Setting the tragic events in motion by incidents such as this critic singled out is considered to be a legitimate device by most twentieth-century critics. See, for examples, A.C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (1904; rpt. London, 1978), pp.9-10; Oscar Mandel, A Definition of Tragedy (1961), p.41.

This skilful and elaborate contriving of an accident in itself comparatively simple, powerfully excites and maintains the reader's interest. . . . the unfortunate accident falls out in a strangely inevitable way; so far from seeming artificial, the series of occurrences has a formidable air of unswerving destiny.

Abercrombie, of course, probably would have taken this one step further: with Hardy, accident and coincidence do not simply convey 'a formidable air of unswerving destiny', but are, in essence, a part of that fatality, that 'tragic fate' which is 'not an activity at all', but 'a condition of activity'.⁵³

Another approach which has been used to account for accident in tragedy is to suggest that it is psychologically inevitable, that is, to suggest that, given the characters of certain individuals, occurrences which may appear to be accidental are, in actuality, destined to happen. This is a predominately twentieth-century approach⁵⁴ and thus it is only in the period after that now being examined that any extensive psychological justifications and explanations of Hardy's use of accident have been made. There were, however, several suggestions of such an approach in the earlier criticism. A reviewer of Wessex Tales for The Critic, for instance, asserted that,

Were we required to name the dominant idea in the development of his characters and plots, we should say that it is this: in the temperament of the individual is lodged the individual's destiny, and circumstances are more often an

53. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.106-7, 26. Harriet Preston, in her 1893 article, viewed Hardy's use of accident and coincidence in this latter way. See the quotations on pp.81-2 of this study. Cf. Wilfrid L. Randell, 'Reviews. The Smaller Wessex', The Academy, 83, No.2112 (October 26, 1912), p.535, who distinguished between 'two classes' into which Hardy's novels could be separated by the success or failure of his use of coincidence in conveying a sense of inevitability.
54. See, for examples, A.C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (1904; 1978), p.10; Robert Heilman, Tragedy and Melodrama (1968), p.30; Oscar Mandel, A Definition of Tragedy (1961), p.42.

impellent than a deterrent force, acting upon any temperamental bent towards catastrophe.⁵⁵

Here undoubtedly lies the germ of ideas which were only to be developed much later: the suggestion of unconscious drives in Hardy's characters towards the provocation of the tragic consequences of certain circumstances, perhaps even the suggestion of a latent self-destructiveness to be found in such characters as Eustacia and Henchard.

With Tess and Jude, as was seen in the last chapter, some critics began to interpret circumstance and character in the more deterministic way of environment and inherited temperament. These critics were primarily concerned with the philosophical implications of Hardy's purported determinism and few addressed themselves to the tragic implications. Many, indeed, simply ignored that there might be a conflict between tragedy as traditionally understood--a noble, free protagonist engaged in some purposeful struggle--and determinism.⁵⁶ Lionel Johnson is one of the few nineteenth-century critics who discussed the conflict between tragic and deterministic principles. His criticism of Tess in this respect has already been cited, but it should be emphasized that it was not the plot of Tess to which he objected, but rather the commentary. Furthermore, that it was the deterministic, rather than the fatalistic, implications of this commentary which particularly offended him is revealed

55. 'Thomas Hardy's "Wessex Tales"', The Critic, New York, 10, No.242 (August 18, 1888), p.76. John Henneman, The Reader Magazine, Indianapolis (November, 1906), pp.680, 685, also seemed to be moving towards such an interpretation. The only critic before 1912 to develop these ideas any further was Helen Garwood, Thomas Hardy (1911), pp.58-9.

56. See, for examples, Francis Thompson, The Daily Chronicle (December 26, 1891), p.4, on Tess, and William Howells, Harper's Weekly, New York (December 7, 1895), p.1156, on Jude.

when he argued that, if the story were read 'apart from his commentary', the novel

. . . loses nothing of its strength: rather, it gains much. Tess is no longer presented to us, as predestined to her fate: she once more takes the tragic place. . . . she is brought into collision with the harshness of life: she may have inherited impulses, vehement abettors of her temptations: circumstances may be against her always: the conflict will be an agony between the world and the will. . . . the world was very strong; her conscience was blinded and bewildered; she did some things nobly, and some despairingly: but there is nothing, not even in studies of criminal anthropology or of morbid pathology, to suggest that she was wholly an irresponsible victim of her own temperament, and of adverse circumstances.⁵⁷

With twentieth-century criticism, there was a growing awareness of the conflicts between tragedy and determinism, but there was an almost equal division between those who thought that they were compatible and those who argued that they were not. The latter is less interesting than the former because it simply tended to iterate the belief that determinism robbed a character of responsibility for his actions and hence of tragic potential.⁵⁸ In early twentieth-century criticism, there were several important attempts to reconcile the essentially antagonistic demands of tragedy and determinism. This was accomplished by looking at the nature of the tragic struggle and consequent suffering, rather than by concentrating on the free-will

57. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.267-8. See p.250 of this study for Johnson's objections to Tess.

58. Examples of this include The Literary World (June 21, 1901), p.588 (signed 'X'); Richard Burton, Masters of the English Novel (1909), pp.266-74; Frederic Manning, The Spectator (September 7, 1912), p.336. One of the few critics to deviate from this trend and to provide a stimulating discussion is Wilfred Durrant, The Fortnightly Review (June 1, 1909), pp.1117-24, who discussed the incompatibility of naturalistic (both in the sense of realistic and deterministic) and traditional tragic principles. Towards the end of his article, however, Durrant's reasoned argument degenerates into hostile condemnation of 'the gloomy creed enunciated by this great Apostle of Pessimism'.

question. John Henneman, for example, viewed Hardy's fiction in a deterministic way, but he did differentiate between 'mere psychological and naturalistic manifestations of fiction' and 'the dramatic novel'. This difference lay in Hardy's concentration on 'the presentation of character . . . (and not so much the detailed analysis of character), of man exposed to the fateful whirl of time and circumstance and accident . . .'. He contended that his 'effects are produced through the stress of character itself': 'It is the time-honored contest between body and soul, the struggle between the physical and the spiritual.'⁵⁹ Although Henneman does emphasize an important, perhaps the most important, element in Hardy's novels--the inner discord--he understates the conflict between the protagonist and his environment which does go on simultaneously. In contrast, Stephen Gwynn, several years earlier, saw the external struggles--struggles which were the result of man's relations with both Nature and Society--leading to inner turmoil and suffering and thus gave a more satisfactory interpretation of the tragic in Hardy's fiction:

We are put here to obey certain instincts, laws within us, which tend to the perpetuation of the species in a state of healthy animalism; yet so constituted are we, that we must of necessity form to ourselves ideal ends for our existence, and even wrap ourselves round in restraints, laws without us, to check the free play of nature. . . . Jude works the will of nature, the large goddess who concerns herself with the renewal of life, and who, once her end is accomplished, is indifferent to the rest. Man is bound by her, but he is also bound by his own nature as an individual and as one of a human society. Jude's idealism delivers him tied and bound into the hands of a woman [Arabella] who is no fit mate for him; and the idealism of society exacts that for his weakness he shall be a martyr.

For Gwynn, then, the inner and outer struggles not only occur simultaneously, one informing the other, but they actually become one; nevertheless, he believed it was the inner turmoil

59. The Reader Magazine, Indianapolis (November, 1906), pp. 681, 683.

which finally mattered and saw Hardy as primarily 'occupied with the individual, not with society, nor with the race . . .'.⁶⁰

Critics were equally divided over whether a fatalistic presentation of character could be tragic. Those who believed it could not be tended to use either one or both of the aforementioned arguments: fatalism is dispiriting and contrary to the inspiriting effects tragedy should have; tragic characters must be held accountable for the tragic course of events.⁶¹

Critics who did contend that fatalism and tragedy were compatible sometimes appealed to Greek tragedy as a precedent.⁶²

Moreover, critics often argued that the sense of fatality reinforced both the sense of inevitability and the sense of universality and permanence. A reviewer of Tess for The Pall Mall Gazette asserted that, in this novel, Hardy 'works determinedly in his most fateful vein . . .--the vein of "The Return of the Native"--with an artistic result of concentrated tragedy such as is rarely to be found in the modern novel . . .'. He especially commended Hardy for taking 'a simple history like that of Tess Durbeyfield' and shaping and interpreting it to a profound 'ethical and aesthetical result--giving it all the modern

60. Literature (July 6, 1901), p.5.

61. Enough later examples have been cited, but an early one, probably the earliest, should be noted. This is the criticism of The Return of the Native by R.H. Hutton, The Spectator (February 8, 1879), pp.181-2, who anticipated later critics in both objections. See p.209 (footnote 27) of this study.

62. See, for example, John Steuart, Letters to Living Authors (1890), pp.105-6. Several critics did argue that Hardy's affinities with Greek tragedians had little relevance for his own age. See, for examples, H.W. Massingham, 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The Daily Chronicle, No.9296 (December 28, 1891), p.3, and the letter-to-the-editor which this review inspired by a correspondent who signed himself 'Une Vieille Baderne'. 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The Daily Chronicle, No.9298 (December 30, 1891), p.3.

significancy you please, and yet never losing sight of the permanent, in the casual, effect . . .'.⁶³ Even a novel like Jude, concerned as it is with more 'modern' issues, found critics who suggested that a sense of fatality gave to it a permanent significance. The reviewer for The Illustrated London News, for example, argued that it 'is a tribute to Mr. Hardy's mastery of his art' that,

He has carried you from one broken hope to another, through a series of painful climaxes; and such is the spaciousness which his grasp of elemental things imparts to the story that a tragedy of three lives seems to fill the world with sorrow, and invite irony from the heavens. In 'Jude', even more than in 'Tess', Nature plays a sort of ironical chorus; the most casual circumstances fall into the dismal harmony of fate: an organ peals a hymn of gratitude at the very moment when Jude finds his children dead; and the first conversation that reaches his tortured ear from the street is between⁶⁴ two parsons who are discussing the eastward position.

This emphasis on a sense of fatality, rather than on Fate being some active and omnipotent prankster, whimsically and often maliciously having his sport with man, led, not only to a better appreciation, but also to a better understanding of Hardy's tragic novels. Such an emphasis, indeed, contains the seeds of criticism to be developed by writers like Abercrombie: the contention that 'tragic fate' is 'not an activity at all', but rather 'a condition of activity'⁶⁵ and, by implication, an intrinsic aspect of life. Moreover, this emphasis often led to

63. The Pall Mall Gazette (December 31, 1891), p.3. Cf. William Watson, The Academy (February 6, 1892), p.126, who delineated specific ways that Hardy created this sense of fatality.

64. 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The Illustrated London News, 108 (January 11, 1896), p.50. William Howells also suggested that, although 'the gods' have become 'conditions', Hardy is appealing to some deep-seated instinct in man. Harper's Weekly, New York (December 7, 1895), p.1156.

65. Thomas Hardy (1912), p.26.

more satisfactory discussion and interpretation because, as was suggested in the case of determinism, it was attempting to ascertain the nature of the tragic conflict and generally avoided degeneration into mere quibblings over the necessity of free will in tragedy.

Not, however, until the late 1880's and early 1890's were any perceptive interpretations of the nature of the tragic conflict given. The earliest of these criticisms tended to concentrate upon the conflict in Hardy's novels between the old, rural, more primitive way of life and the new, urban, more sophisticated element which is introduced and causes friction.⁶⁶

Once this conflict had been brought to the forefront by critics, another intimately related, but more fundamental, conflict in Hardy's fiction--the conflict growing out of man's relationship with both Nature and Society--also began to be emphasized and more fully discussed. This is well represented by Havelock Ellis's examination, in 1896, of the collision between Nature (both as the physical world external to man and as the passions, the impulses, 'the instincts of human love and human caprice') and Society (duties and 'established moral codes'). Ellis recognized that the major source of tragedy in Hardy's novels was

66. The first critic to write sensitively on this conflict and to stress that it was a source of tragedy was Edmund Gosse, 'New Novels', The Saturday Review, 63 (April 2, 1887), p.484, in his review of The Woodlanders. Cf. The Leeds Mercury (May 25, 1887), p.3. Lionel Johnson was the first critic to write perceptively on this conflict as essential to all Hardy's novels. Johnson's most sensitive remarks on Tess occurred when he did not allow the free-will issue to bias him and when he discussed this theme of the novel. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp. 52-3, 62-4, 101, 189-90. During the 1890's and early years of the twentieth century, this conflict became a common theme of discussion in Hardy criticism. Examples include Annie Macdonell, Thomas Hardy (1894), p.44; Wilkinson Sherren, The Wessex of Romance (1902), pp.2-5; Edward Wright, The Quarterly Review (April, 1904), pp.510-6; Frederick Peek, 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy' (1910), pp.84-5, 225.

a result of the inevitable conflict between these two elements and all that they implied: 'Life finds her game in playing off the irresistible energy of the individual against the equally irresistible energy of the race, and the stronger each is the finer the game.' For this reason, Ellis was better able to appreciate Jude than many of its contemporary reviewers. He did not view it, as many critics did, as an unfortunate departure by Hardy from his usual concerns, but rather as

. . . the natural outcome of Mr. Hardy's development, along lines that are genuinely and completely English. It deals very subtly and sensitively with new and modern aspects of life, and if, in so doing, it may be said to represent Nature as often cruel to our social laws, we must remark that the strife of Nature and Society, the individual and the community, has ever been the artist's opportunity.

Ellis's comments suggest two important considerations which naturally grew out of the emphasis on the conflict evolving from man's relationships with Nature and Society: concern with the struggle internalized in the tragic protagonist and the realization that Hardy's tragic novels are concerned with the tragedy of existence. The Mayor of Casterbridge would seem to be a novel which would particularly lend itself to the former interpretation, but it had to await the 1890's before any critic wrote perceptively on this aspect. Annie Macdonell, for instance, observed:

Henchard was made by nature to be the principal feature and obstacle in his own and his neighbour's views, and his biographer expresses the fact. He plays the overmastering part, tempered by human fragility and instability, that the heath does in 'The Return of the Native' and the

67. The Savoy (October, 1896), pp.38-9, 44, 48. See pp.147-8 of this study for relevant quotations from Ellis. Henry Alden, Harper's Weekly, New York (December 8, 1894), p. 1156, also wrote well on this aspect. That this collision between Nature and Society was an essential element in Hardy's notions of tragedy is revealed by some of his comments in 'Candour in English Fiction'. Personal Writings, pp.126-9.

woods in 'The Woodlanders', a part that Mr. Hardy rarely assigns to his human personages. . . . His contradictory emotions, his savagery and sentiment, each have their harmonic counterparts in the incidents . . .⁶⁸

Later twentieth-century criticism has provided much perceptive commentary, not only on The Mayor of Casterbridge, but also on The Return of the Native, Tess, and Jude, in which the internal struggle has been regarded as of great interest and significance. Generally, the earlier criticism concentrated on the conflicts between the tragic protagonist and forces entirely external to him. There are, however, several instances which anticipated later criticism, one being particularly pertinent to this discussion. W.H. Chesson, in two letters-to-the-editor, made some comments on Tess which are remarkably modern in their outlook. Chesson was the only critic to note that now much discussed incident of Tess's expression of the belief that "our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive" and the symbolic coincidence that, while she is voicing this idea, dairyman Crick's knife and fork are 'planted erect on the table, like the beginning of a gallows'. Chesson commented: 'It is the skeleton at the feast, and that capacity of dissociating soul from body was the cause both of Tess's purity and her ruin.' Furthermore, it was this 'capacity of dissociating soul from body' which made it possible for Tess to be 'physically . . . wedded, to d'Urberville. That fact must be borne in mind in calling her pure. Spiritually she was the mate of Angel Clare. One man only possessed her body, and one man only her soul'. It was, Chesson contended, this

68. Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.53-4. Abercrombie made very similar comments. See, for example, the quotations on p.202 of this study. Other than R.H. Hutton's previously cited review, the only reviewer to remark upon the internalization of struggle in Henchard was in The State (May 27, 1886), p.251.

complete division between the physical and the spiritual in Tess's nature which made 'the murder and the "hanging" . . . so absolutely sequential to the exposure of d'Urberville's last crime': '. . . her spirit made a great wrench for liberty, and she died heroically.'⁶⁹

Lascelles Abercrombie was not the first critic to recognize that Hardy's tragic novels were largely concerned with, as he finely put it,

. . . an invasion into human consciousness of the general tragedy of existence, which thereby puts itself forth in living symbols. . . . The general, measureless process of existence, wherein all activity is included, cares nothing, in working itself out, for the needs and desires of individual existence; the only relation between the two (but it is an utterly unavoidable relation) is, that in the long run the individual must obey the general.⁷⁰

Although Abercrombie was the critic who wrote most extensively and perceptively on this theme, earlier critics also discerned Hardy's preoccupation with the tragedy of existence. Ernest Bates, in 1905, for example, wrote:

For Hardy the Supreme Reality is to be found in a Universal Mind which is above the inconsistency of Self-consciousness with its self-contradictory functions of volition and moral agency. His Ultimate, though he calls it Immanent Will, is not Will in any very meaningful sense of the word. It might more accurately be called Tendency, for it acts without either emotion or conscious design.

Bates did not, as did some critics who emphasized the tragedy of existence in Hardy's fiction, depreciate the heroic resistance to this tragedy by Hardy's protagonists. Although stressing that 'the power of Nature is frequently hostile to man, and the chain of circumstance is often beyond his control', he did not believe the importance of man to be diminished in Hardy's

69. W.H. Chesson, "'Tess'", The Literary World, 48, No.1237 (July 14, 1893), p.38, and No.1239 (July 28, 1893), p.78. Quotations are from Tess of the d'Urbervilles, p.158.

70. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.25-6.

novels: 'Whatever hope he may possess must be based ultimately upon his own character.' Bates contended that Hardy should be labelled a 'heroic optimist' because of this emphasis on humanity and because Hardy 'shows a worthy humanity, true to itself, unconquered by destiny, sanctified by love'. He asserted that it was by these qualities that Hardy's tragic characters showed themselves to be of a heroic mould, superior both to those who simply let themselves drift with the general, unconscious tendency of the universe and to the very tendency itself.⁷¹

Such an emphasis as that of Bates was essential to counteract the more extreme views which were being taken by some Hardy critics that, in his novels, man was of absolutely no account. This attitude was evident as early as The Return of the Native of which some critics argued that Egdon Heath was the most or only important character and, while later critics exchanged Nature for fatalistic or deterministic forces, the insistence upon the insignificance of man in Hardy's novels was maintained.⁷² There were, however, critics who assumed a more moderate stance and, while not ignoring the power or importance of the forces with which man must contend, did not deny that man was

71. International Journal of Ethics, Philadelphia (July, 1905), pp.472, 477, 482, 484. See quotation on p.192 of this study. Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.29-30, also emphasized the necessity of 'human resistance' in a tragedy. As an example of critics who perceived the tragedy of existence in Hardy's novels, but argued that they demonstrated man's inability to resist this tragedy and, consequently, man's insignificance, see William Vaughn Moody and Robert Morss Lovett, A History of English Literature (New York, 1902), pp.381-2.

72. For examples of reviewers of The Return of the Native who illustrate this attitude, see The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (April, 1879), pp.501-2 (possibly by Harriet Preston); The Eclectic Magazine, New York (March, 1879), p.378; The Contemporary Review (December, 1878), p.206. A later example of this attitude is Herbert Paul, The Nineteenth Century (May, 1897), p.788.

the most essential element in Hardy's fiction. Some took this one step further and tried to explain why man was eminent, why he was not simply reduced to an insignificant atom in the vast and timeless universe against which he must enact his drama. William Dawson, for instance, in 1905, stressed the interaction between Hardy's characters and nature, 'the sense of something elemental acting in them, and acting and re-acting through them', which gave them a certain sublimity. By stressing the interaction of man and nature--'Nature is only seen aright through man, and man is interpreted through Nature'--Dawson came to a much better understanding of Hardy's use of nature than those critics who could only see the total submersion of man in and by nature.⁷³ A variation on this theme is seen in the criticism which suggested that the sense of man's suffering was heightened or reinforced by the sense of nature's suffering. Rolfe Scott-James defined 'the genius of places' in Hardy's fiction as 'a symbol of the beautiful, free world which is passing, of that primeval state wherein man lived unafflicted by the consciousness of good and bad'. There had been a change and,

The woods and fields, the heath and the hills, the very leaves and the worms underfoot, seem to him now to be suffering along with man; they are responsive to his instincts, they join with him in his cry of agony. In nearly all his stories, as one is ushered into the human drama, one is at the same time taken into a place which is part of it, a panorama with growing, creeping and flying things which belong to the soul and spirit of the tragedy.⁷⁴

Although Scott-James ignored the definite sense in Hardy's fiction of a certain cruelty in nature, he did recognize that nature could not be simply identified with the unconscious, un-

73. The Makers of English Fiction (1905), pp.206-7, 209.

74. Rolfe Arnold Scott-James, Modernism and Romance (London, 1908), p.65. Cf. Harold Williams, Two Centuries of the English Novel (1911), p.295.

feeling tendency which lies behind it and thus was able to perceive it as an entity suffering along and with mankind.

Other critics concentrated on certain qualities of Hardy's characters which distinguished them as tragic protagonists. They tended to select traditional tragic qualities, with a few notable modifications and deviations. The most important of these qualities was emphasized by Henry Nevinson when, comparing Hardy and Wordsworth, he wrote:

But nature without man to them is valueless and unmeaning, and even among men of low estate it is for the aristocracy of passion that they are ever seeking--'the aristocracy of passion', to use Pater's fine phrase for the true patent of nobility.⁷⁵

This 'aristocracy of passion' involved the closely related elements of unrest, aspiration, self-assertion, and rebelliousness.

The Return of the Native eventually became the novel which most critics identified as containing the primary examples of these elements. Earlier reviewers tended to be divided over whether, in this novel, 'human passion', as R.H. Hutton wrote, is 'in general commonplace and poor', or whether, as the reviewer for The New Quarterly Magazine wrote, 'the bitter disillusioning' of Eustacia, an 'eager, passionate girl', and 'the patient acquiescence of Clym Yeobright, the Native, in what he cannot control; his no less persistent struggle with what can still be bent to his ends, are two of the elements in a tragedy of no common power and sadness'.⁷⁶ There continued to be some disparagement of the tragic potential of the characters, particularly of Eustacia, throughout the following years, but most late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics would have

75. The English Illustrated Magazine (June, 1903), p.280.

76. The Spectator (February 8, 1879), p.181; The New Quarterly Magazine (January, 1879), p.238.

concurred with Ernest Baker that, 'Clym Yeobright and his mother and the strangely fascinating Eustacia Vye are among his finest impersonations of human longing and disillusionment, anguish and endurance'.⁷⁷ The poverty of the direction of Eustacia's dreams and the impracticability of Clym's were ignored and the fervour of their revolt was seen as distinctly tragic.

The later novels presented a problem for some critics because they believed that Hardy's protagonists were primarily characterized by a stoicism or a passivity that had no tragic potential. An extreme example of this is a critic in 1912 for The Edinburgh Review who complained: 'The figures on Mr. Hardy's stage are too passive for either initiative or resistance: they are driven by their circumstances and their sluggish brute passions; they do not act.'⁷⁸ Most critics realized that this was an inadequate summation of Hardy's tragic protagonists and that they were of an entirely different mould; most perceived that, beneath the stoic mien of a character like Henchard, there were warring passions and impulses, a 'tragic mobility of mood', as R.H. Hutton aptly termed it.⁷⁹

Nor were Tess and Jude considered by most to be merely impassive characters, unheroically acquiescing in the limited opportunities or cruel blows of life. Stephen Gwynn, writing generally on Hardy's novels, made some comments which are especial-

77. Ernest Albert Baker, A Descriptive Guide to the Best Fiction (London, 1903), p.121. Cf. Edward Wright, The Quarterly Review (April, 1904), p.509.

78. The Edinburgh Review (January, 1912), pp.105-6. Helen Garwood, although making essentially the same point, was more moderate. Thomas Hardy (1911), pp.56, 85.

79. The Spectator (June 5, 1886), p.752. See quotation on p. 262 of this study. Cf. Henry Alden, Harper's Weekly, New York (December 8, 1894), p.1156.

ly applicable to Tess and Jude. He observed that Hardy believed that 'as ideals and ambitions diffuse themselves wider, and as men and women less easily content themselves with a life along the line of least resistance, so the tragic conflict becomes more frequent, and the wearisome condition of humanity more wearisome'. Gwynn saw this as particularly true of Hardy's depiction of 'the strongest of human passions' which is his 'eternal theme':

. . . Mr. Hardy sees happiness as something very difficult to compass, and the supreme joy which arises from the mating of two beings specially endowed to complete one another as almost a miracle. And he writes by preference about those who desire the miracle.⁸⁰

Later, this idea was expanded and varied by Abercrombie in his discussion of Tess as the feminine tragedy, the tragedy of 'personal existence', in which Tess's '"will to enjoy"' is pitted against '"the circumstantial will against enjoyment"' and of Jude as the masculine tragedy, the tragedy of aspiration, in which Tess's '"will to enjoy"' becomes the more complex and more dangerous "will to power"⁸¹. Furthermore, most critics recognized that, for Hardy, the characters 'who desire the miracle' had the greatest interest and significance; these exceptional characters, who aspired and struggled to raise themselves above the mediocrity of their circumstances, were capable, as Ernest Bates wrote, of 'real living' which

. . . is worth more to Hardy than days and years of mere existence, and these moments of real living, of vital ess-

80. Literature (July 6, 1901), pp.5-6.

81. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.145-54. That Abercrombie saw a distinct contrast between the patient, simple characters and the self-assertive, more complex characters is revealed by his categorization of characters in his Chapter Five. See, especially, pp.108-25.

ential experience, are for no ulterior purpose. They carry their credentials upon their face; they need no others.⁸²

For Hardy, it was not only those characters 'who desire the miracle' who became the 'Characters', as contrasted to the 'No-characters', but it was also those who were keenly sensitive to and conscious of the painful conditions of life.⁸³ This sensitivity and consciousness, many critics realized, although leading to more pain and suffering, elevated Hardy's tragic protagonists above both the complacent and cheerful rustics and the unconscious, unfeeling universal tendencies. Tess and Jude especially interested critics from this point of view. J.B. Firth, for instance, concentrated on the development of consciousness in Tess, her awakening to life. In the early scenes, Tess is not a conscious being:

Her mind is innocent, for it is a blank; it does not actively think, it simply receives impressions that give the necessary impulse for action, but do not force themselves into being subjects for her thought. It is only after the first tragic scene is over that her mind awakes.

Although 'it is only after her shame that Tess wakes into life, only then that her mind begins to work, only then that she recognises that there is such a power as love', Tess could still become irresolute when 'Nature and her associations are at work on her mind'. Thus 'the languorous heat of mid-summer' and 'the cool of the long twilights' at Talbothays 'weaken the resolutions

82. International Journal of Ethics, Philadelphia (July, 1905), p.482. Bates is here discussing the 'intrinsic soul-value' of Henchard and Farfrae. One of the few critics to miss entirely this most important point was Anna Sholl, Library of the World's Best Literature, Volume 12, ed. Charles Warner (1897), p.6934.

83. See, for examples, Life, pp.185-6, 213; A Pair of Blue Eyes, p.65; Far from the Madding Crowd (1974; rpt. London, 1978), p.326; The Hand of Ethelberta, p.332; The Return of the Native, pp.162, 197; The Woodlanders, pp.50, 325; Tess of the d'Urbervilles, p.195; Jude the Obscure, pp.36, 197.

of the past winter' and she succumbs to her 'irresistible attraction' towards Angel. Tess only attains complete consciousness, only fully breaks from the levelling effect of Nature, in the final scenes: 'Tess was never a woman standing apart from Nature, until Clare returned and she saw what she had done. It was not till then that she saw things in their true proportion, that she caught a glimpse of Justice, and straightway murdered her betrayer.'⁸⁴ This, one of the subtlest interpretations of Tess at the time of its publication, made some points which would only be taken up again in the psychologically-oriented interpretations later in the twentieth century. Critics of Jude also emphasized Jude's sensitivity and consciousness, qualities which the reviewer for The Bookman, as an example, saw as sources of both strength and weakness: 'He is a man with the defects of his amiable virtues and his sensitive nature. . . . Life finds out the weak places in his very human body and soul.'⁸⁵

It was not until Rolfe Scott-James's comments in 1907 that any critic directly addressed himself to this aspect of Hardy's tragic characters.⁸⁶ Abercrombie also recognized that sensitivity and consciousness were distinguishing characteristics of Hardy's protagonists and that, when coupled with self-assertion, they often led to tragedy. Nevertheless, Abercrombie was not one of those critics who believed that this tragedy had no 'general significance'; in fact, he insisted that this 'personality for ever moved to assert itself against the implacable, impersonal

84. J.B. Firth, 'Some Aspects of Sentiment: A Comparison', The Westminster Review, 138, No.2 (August, 1892), pp.130-2.

85. A.M., The Bookman (January, 1896), p.124.

86. The Nation (July 27, 1907), p.795. See quotation on p.215 of this study.

drift of things' has 'the general significance' of 'gaining thereby not the desired alteration of the unalterable, but simply a keener consciousness of human destiny; which, however, is not an inconsiderable gain'.⁸⁷

Contrary to what some critics have assumed, there was, with very few exceptions, a general acceptance that characters drawn from the common walks of life, engaged in the routine of daily affairs, could attain a tragic stature.⁸⁸ Indeed, the question was rarely even mooted and, when it was, it was to express admiration for Hardy's ability to elicit the tragic from such lives. From a very early point in Hardy criticism, critics were insisting that, as a reviewer of The Return of the Native wrote, 'Mr. Hardy shows how deep may be the tragedy which is being enacted beneath the surface of the most commonplace lives'.⁸⁹ Ernest Bates wrote many years later:

One would have supposed that Dickens and George Eliot and Balzac would already have taught the critics that tragic dignity was a matter of the soul and not of social position, but it was left for Thomas Hardy in his remaining work [after Far from the Madding Crowd] to prove the thesis beyond the shadow of a doubt.⁹⁰

Thus, critics did look to qualities other than high station as giving Hardy's characters a tragic nobility and worthiness.

87. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.26-7, 102-3.
88. Jeannette King, Tragedy in the Victorian Novel (London, 1978), pp.4-9, is a good example of a critic who assumes the reverse of this. There are only two, possibly three, exceptions to this tendency. They are The World (June 23, 1886), p.21 (signed 'Q'); Maurice Thompson, 'Studies of Prominent Novelists. No.4--Thomas Hardy', The Book News Monthly, Philadelphia, 6, No.65 (January, 1888), p.224; and, possibly, The Saturday Review (January 16, 1892), pp. 73-4.
89. The International Review, New York (February, 1879), p.212. For other examples, see pp.113-4 of this study.
90. International Journal of Ethics, Philadelphia (July, 1905), p.479.

While most implicitly recognized that all possessed an elemental dignity, complicated by the 'ache of modernism' derived from education and experience, it was this 'aristocracy of passion' and acute consciousness of suffering and sensitivity to the incongruities of life upon which most critics concentrated. Moreover, these qualities were recognized as being, not simply 'the true patent of nobility', but also as the 'precious but perilous substance' which became, as the narrative progressed, an essential element in their tragic constitution.⁹¹

This was probably the most important single development in criticism of the tragic in Hardy's fiction throughout these years: the development away from ascribing blame to certain characters or to certain 'evil' traits in a character warring with certain 'good' traits and the development towards regarding the tragic constitution of a character as a complex synthesis of strengths and weaknesses of which moral assessment was irrelevant. Although often only the seeds were to be found in this criticism--especially, but in varying degrees of importance, in the criticism of Hutton, Chesson, Firth, le Gallienne, Ellis, Macdonell, Johnson, Bates, Gwynn, Nevinson, and Abercrombie--the foundation was laid for the subtler and more extensive analyses of Hardy's tragic characters in the twentieth century.

91. The quotations are from Tess of the d'Urbervilles, p.163; Henry Nevinson, The English Illustrated Magazine (June, 1903), p.280. See pp.263-4, 279 of this study.

Chapter VIII

The Artistry of Hardy's Fiction:

Discussions of Character, Plot, and Setting

Rarely did nineteenth-century critics, even those who were allied with the aesthetic movement, strictly confine themselves to technical considerations. Of the earlier critics, G.H. Lewes perhaps showed the greatest interest in the artistry of novel writing, but this interest coincided with and was dependent upon his interest in representation.¹ Throughout the later years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century, representational theories continued to exert a great influence on the aesthetic and technical criteria applied by critics in their analyses and assessments of literature, as is instanced by the criticism of A.C. Bradley. Even when criteria appear to be derived from purely aesthetic and technical concerns, it often becomes obvious upon closer examination that they have their roots in notions of representation. In the third and fourth chapters of this study, the importance of representational theories in Hardy criticism was examined, but it was also stressed that, except in cases of rigidly upheld theories of representation and realism, they were always modified or counteracted by concepts of idealism. These concepts included such ideas as unity, symmetry, structure, pattern, and harmony. Indeed, some critics proclaimed that these very qualities constituted idealism and that as soon as the artist began to mould and shape the material drawn from observation of life, his work

1. See, for example, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (July, 1859), pp.101-2.

entered the realms of idealism.²

The influence of representational theories on technical and aesthetic considerations is most evident in discussions of character. While some critics did concern themselves with more purely technical matters such as methods of characterization or the function of secondary characters, the prime concern was with the nature of the characters themselves. 'Life-like', 'natural', 'substantial', 'vital', and 'consistent' were the common tests of the success of a character and these tests had, for the most part, their basis in concepts of representation.³ The major advantage of this emphasis was suggested in the close of the preceding chapter: it led to the development away from moral assessments of characters, which often meant simply asserting that a virtuous character was successfully delineated and an evil one unsuccessfully, and the development towards the demand for composite, complex characters.

Thus the first quality which nineteenth-century critics demanded of the novelist was an intimate and profound knowledge of human nature and the demonstration of such knowledge through the creation of subtle and complex characters. Most critics were effusive in their praise of the more obviously and morally noble of Hardy's characters--Oak, John Loveday, Giles, and Marty, for instance--but there is enough subtlety and complexity in their characterization (with the possible exception of the Trumpet-Major) to grant that many critics

2. An excellent example of this is John Addington Symonds, 'La Bête Humaine. A Study in Zola's Idealism', The Fortnightly Review, 50, No.298 (October 1, 1891), pp.453-62.
3. For discussion and examples of these qualities, see pp. 57-62, 79-80, 83-4 of this study.

based their proclamations of success not solely on moral attributes. It was acknowledged from the beginning that Hardy performed one of the most difficult tasks of the novelist: the creation of interesting and natural virtuous characters.⁴

What critics found most troublesome was the existence of those male characters who could possibly be labelled 'villains' from a psychological point of view, especially Knight and Angel Clare. It might seem surprising that Knight was generally more accepted than his successor, Angel, although this is probably explained by the sympathetic light in which Tess is treated by Hardy, a sympathy which many readers and critics extended. The ironic tone of A Pair of Blue Eyes seems to preclude much of the sympathy for the heroine which permeates the powerful and, in many ways, more dramatic and tragic Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Consequently, while many critics acknowledged and deplored the harsh treatment of Elfride by Knight, they were still able to view him as a well drawn character.⁵

The divided reactions to Angel, which still exist today, began with the reviews of Tess immediately following its publication. While some critics simply rejected Angel as 'a

4. J.M. Barrie, The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), p.62, directly addressed himself to this question. For discussion of critics who analyzed and assessed by moral criteria, see pp.151-3 of this study.
5. See, for examples, John Hutton, The Spectator (June 28, 1873), p.831; The Pall Mall Gazette (October 25, 1873), p.11. There were, however, several dissenters from this opinion. The reviewer for The Saturday Review (August 2, 1873), p.158, possibly Horace Moule upon whom it is sometimes thought that Knight was based, dismissed him as 'the least natural character in the book, and he inclines here and there unmistakably to priggishness' and the reviewer for The Examiner (October 13, 1877), p.1300, as 'a somewhat impossible monster'.

serpent in this Eden', 'the most curious thing in the shape of a man whom we think we have ever met with', an 'insufferable being', such disparaging terms were usually reserved for Alec.⁶ The epithet 'prig' was censoriously applied to Angel, but several critics did attempt to discover the reasons for the development of such a character in fiction and did grant a certain subtlety in his characterization. It is difficult to ascertain what judgment W. Earl Hodgson, in his satire of Tess entitled 'A Prig in the Elysian Fields', passed on the successfulness of Angel as a character, although it seems to incline more towards disapproval than approval. Nevertheless, some of his remarks on why such a character came to exist are discerning. He contended that the archetypal villain with his elemental vices was no longer acceptable and that the development of characters like Angel was (the shade of Angel is speaking) "in response to a new need of society, the need for an amusement adequate to the increasing complexity and subtlety of its realizations . . .". This need could be fulfilled by characters who were a type of "the new villainy--the villainy of moral and intellectual posturing", that is, "by certain weak creatures who do nobody any particular harm . . . by prigs, in short . . . prigs half-extenuating, half-satirizing, the new intellectual forces and

6. Quotations are from Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (March, 1892), pp.470, 472 (probably by Mrs. Oliphant), in reference to Angel. No critic recognized the contribution that Alec makes to the ballad element which gives an archetypal quality to the novel. Taking the demand for complexity and subtlety of characterization most seriously, critics could not accept a character as seemingly simple and unilateral as Alec and thus did not seek for any possible explanations for his inclusion in the novel, despite that it was generally acknowledged that Hardy was adept at the creation of more psychologically subtle characters. See, for example, The Baron de Book-Worms, 'Our Booking-Office', Punch, 102 (February 27, 1892), p.108.

tastes of the age". So far Hodgson's remarks are astute and applicable to Hardy's fiction, but when he goes on to argue that, because virtue and vice are no longer viewed in a simplistic and rigid way, "society has developed a need for something to tickle its instinct of intolerance", and that "Priggishness meets the need", his remarks degenerate into mere nonsense, especially as regards Hardy's novels.⁷

William Watson wrote more perceptively on this last point. He contended that, 'Perhaps the most subtly drawn, as it is in some ways the most perplexing and difficult character, is that of Angel Clare . . .'. Alec, Watson continued, prompted a simplistic and recognizable reaction--he is 'spurious' and 'entirely detestable'--but 'one's fiercest indignation demands a nobler object than such a sorry animal as that' and, therefore, many 'will be conscious of a worse anger against this intellectual, virtuous, and unfortunate man than they could spare for the heartless and worthless libertine who had wrecked these two lives'. Watson insisted that this perplexity was artistically and psychologically justified:

It is at this very point, however, that the masterliness of the conception, and its imaginative validity, are most conclusively manifest, for it is here that we perceive Clare's nature to be consistently inconsistent throughout.

For Watson, therefore, 'The reader pities Clare profoundly, yet cannot but feel a certain contempt for the shallowness of his casuistry, and a keen resentment of his harsh judgment upon the helpless woman . . .'.⁸ By emphasizing the complex

7. W. Earl Hodgson, 'A Prig in the Elysian Fields', The National Review, 19 (April, 1892), pp.196-7.

8. The Academy (February 6, 1892), pp.125-6. The critic for The Review of Reviews (February, 1892), p.200, although not writing as extensively on Angel, made similar observations. Cf. Hardy's comments on Angel in his interview with Raymond Blathwayt, Black and White (August 27, 1892), p.240.

reaction one has towards Angel, Watson revealed greater insight into the subtlety of his characterization than Hodgson whose contention that the 'prig' was a new outlet for intolerance requires great qualification in the case of Angel Clare.

The criticism of Watson underscores a major development throughout these years: the development towards acceptance and appreciation on artistic and psychological grounds of characters who are not inherently attractive, such as, for instance, many of Dickens's heroes who, albeit often colourless, are attractive. Furthermore, critics came to realize that it was extremely difficult, but commendably so, to place the label 'villain' upon any of Hardy's characters, with the exception of Dare and possibly of Manston. Weakness, rather than vice, intentional or unintentional, was recognized to be the keynote of those characters who are often set in opposition to the steadier, homelier heroes. With Manston, Troy, Wildeve, Bob Loveday, Fitzpiers, and Alec, this was, in varying degrees, the weakness of a certain strain of sensuality or, as Helen Garwood aptly put it,

. . . the voluptuous, selfish type of man, or even woman, who is driven by his instincts rather than by his reason; and invariably creates misery without specially desiring or planning to do so.

The other characteristic weakness of a Hardy male is, as already noted, the weakness of 'priggishness', as exemplified by Knight, Angel, and, although to a lesser degree and in a different way but at a critical moment, by Clym Yeobright.

9. Thomas Hardy (1911), p.56. Cf. 'Recent Novels', The Morning Post, No.35,817 (April 6, 1887), p.2, on The Woodlanders, and Harriet Preston, The Century Magazine, New York (July, 1893), p.356, on Wildeve.

Hardy was especially commended for his insight into and interpretation of feminine character, qualities for which he is still justifiably highly esteemed. Beginning with Desperate Remedies, reviewers remarked that his delineations of women 'are studies of very unusual merit'.¹⁰ Similar praise was sounded time and time again throughout Hardy criticism and, by the time of The Return of the Native, critics were proclaiming that a character like Eustacia provided

. . . one of the completest and best studies of woman in literature. From the first superb scene, in which she stands amid the opaque shadows of the heath, to the despairful plunge into the stream which takes her from us, her action, her speech, her sudden steps of development are apprehended and set down for us by the hand of a great artist.¹¹

Critics also discerned that Hardy's subtlest and most complex characters were to be found among his heroines. In the earlier reviews, there were some reservations about the enigmatic quality so characteristic of a Hardy heroine. Their failure to conform to conventional feminine characterization--either the innocent, virtuous heroine of the Amelia Sedley type or the fascinating, but essentially evil, villainess of the Becky Sharp type--did, to begin with, puzzle critics. This puzzlement first came out most strongly in discussions of Ethelberta (Bathsheba tended to provoke either rigid hostility or effusive praise rather than puzzlement) and these discussions provide a good representative sampling--negative, positive, and neutral--of early reactions to a Hardy heroine. Some of the most censorious criticism came from Henry Alden whose perplexity was obviously the outcome

10. Horace Moule, The Saturday Review (September 30, 1871), p.441.

11. Vanity Fair (November 30, 1878), p.293.

of Ethelberta's failure to adhere to any recognizable fictional models: 'She is not intriguing enough to disgust, nor unselfish enough to attract. Her fortunes rather than herself interest the reader . . .',¹² Other critics perceived and praised the complexity apparent in the conception of Ethelberta's character.¹³ George Saintsbury came closest to twentieth-century interpretations of Ethelberta, praising 'the original conception of the heroine' as 'a happy and promising conception', granting that, 'The successive tableaux in which she appears are, also, for the most part striking and well imagined', but recognizing that the defect in her characterization lay in a failure of execution, a failure to unify these 'successive tableaux':

The worst of it is that they are very difficult to piece together, and have, as well as most of the characters who figure in them, a sort of shadowy and dissolving-view effect. We can't get any idea of Ethelberta, constantly as we have her before us; and as for the other personages, they are unsubstantiality itself. . . . Nevertheless, there is a good deal of power about it. Ethelberta's inconsistencies and vagaries are admirably drawn, and are quite susceptible of (though we must say they have not received) the touch which would¹⁴ blend them into a possible and complete character.

Critics early realized that Hardy's female characters could not be assessed by any simplistic moral criteria. Their capriciousness and volatility, yet their mysterious charm and fascination which prevented them from being classified merely

12. Henry M. Alden, 'Editor's Literary Record', Harper's New Monthly Magazine, New York, 53, No. 315 (August, 1876), p. 468. Cf. R.H. Hutton, The Spectator (April 22, 1876), pp. 530-1; The Graphic (April 29, 1876), p. 419; The Saturday Review (May 6, 1876), pp. 592-3. See quotations on pp. 60 (footnote 14), 79 of this study.

13. See, for examples, The Times (June 5, 1876), p. 5; The Examiner (May 13, 1876), pp. 544-6.

14. The Academy (May 13, 1876), p. 453.

as perverse 'flirts', was acknowledged from the beginning. Moreover, numerous critics believed that, in many respects, Hardy was innovative in his female characterization. The major quality recognized and emphasized as innovative was this mysterious and elusive charm, often attributed to the subtleties in her conception. So, for example, a reviewer of The Return of the Native commented that Eustacia is the 'masterpiece' in the novel and that the conception of 'such a woman affords precisely the material to suit a writer like Mr. Hardy, never happier than when revelling in intellectual and emotional subtleties'.¹⁵ Most critics would have argued that emotional subtleties, rather than intellectual, primarily characterized a Hardy heroine. James Barrie wrote particularly well on this point. He remarked that Hardy's heroines 'are usually delightful . . . but they are also riddles' and that they are distinctly original among fictional heroines, being 'the most interesting in their unconventionality, the most charming in their womanliness, and the most subtly drawn (with the exception of Mr. Meredith's) that this generation of novelists has given us'.¹⁶ That the subtlety of Hardy's female characters remained highly esteemed throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century is revealed by William Howells devoting two chapters to them in his Heroines of Fiction (1901). It was just this 'witchery', this elusive charm, upon which Howells concentrated, a quality, he contended, pertaining to all Hardy's women who 'are of a sisterhood, or at the most a cousinhood . . . with their strong individual characters there is a strong family likeness among

15. The Graphic (December 7, 1878), p.579.

16. The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), pp.64, 66.

them all . . .': This 'witchery' meant that it was futile to apply conventional moral criteria to them: 'Mr. Hardy's heroines are good or they are bad, or they are now good and now bad, according to some inner impulse from some agency deeper or more primal than conscience.'¹⁷

Another quality critics saw as differentiating Hardy's heroines from conventional heroines was an emphasis on their physical attractions, which included both their passionate nature and their sensuality. A reviewer of The Return of the Native for The Athenaeum intimated that, in this respect, Hardy was more French than English. Because Eustacia is motivated by her desire to gratify her passion, this reviewer believed that she 'belongs essentially to the class of which Madame Bovary is the type'; but he regretted that Hardy, having been restrained by 'English opinion' from depicting this type 'in its completeness', 'should have wasted his powers in giving what after all is an imperfect and to some extent misleading view of it'.¹⁸ Reviewers of The Trumpet-Major did not express such reservations, probably because the vein of sensuality is absent from Anne Garland's characterization. The passionate and impulsive qualities in her nature were seen to be, as Julian Hawthorne stated, 'eminently suited for literary purposes'. Hawthorne expressed dissatisfaction with feminine characterization as exemplified by Agnes Wickfield or 'any of Scott's pattern heroines', declaring that:

What we want, and what artistic beauty demands, is colour, warmth, impulse, sweet perversity, pathetic error;

17. William Dean Howells, Heroines of Fiction (New York, 1901), pp.177, 179. Cf. his remarks on Bathsheba, pp. 194-5.

18. The Athenaeum (November 23, 1878), p.654.

an inability to submit the heart to the guidance of the head, a happiness under conditions against which a rational judgment protests; and all this, and more, we get in Anne Garland and her kindred.

Hawthorne stressed, however, that Anne 'is selfish, as Mr. Hardy's heroines are selfish,--not wilfully or intellectually, but by dint of her inborn, involuntary, unconscious emotional organism'.¹⁹

Critics came to realize that this insistence upon his heroines' physical attributes prevented them from conforming to, as Annie Macdonell suggested, 'that statuesque and goddess-like dignity that women naturally wish to have regarded as the characteristic garment of their sex',²⁰ a view of women which men shared. Annie Macdonell is here making a valid and essential point: Victorian woman, especially middle-class, was considered to be the receptacle of moral and spiritual virtues which must be kept enshrined within a pure and cloistered domestic environment. It was to woman and the sanctity of his home that Victorian man returned after the temptations and potential corruptions of the outside world. This image of woman, epitomized by Coventry Patmore's 'The Angel in the House', is very far from Hardy's conception of woman. For Hardy, woman had not, as so many middle-class Victorian heroines had, this engrained innocence

19. The Spectator (December 18, 1880), p.1628. The reviewers for Harper's New Monthly Magazine (March, 1881), pp. 632-3, and Vanity Fair (November 27, 1880), p.300, expressed similar ideas and preferences. Cf. The National Observer (February 7, 1891), p.301. Most criticism of the passionate and impulsive nature of Hardy's heroines remained at this literal, surface level. Lascelles Abercrombie was one of the few to give any symbolic interpretations. See Thomas Hardy (1912), p.85.

20. Thomas Hardy (1894), p.99. For Annie Macdonell's perceptive remarks on passion, see pp.176-7 of this study. Cf. discussion and examples on pp.57-8 of this study.

and moral sense. The first critic to emphasize this innovative conception of woman was Kegan Paul in 1881. Describing Hardy's heroines as 'Undines of the earth' and noting their 'family likeness', he contended:

They are all charming; they are all flirts from their cradle; they are all in love with more than one man at once; they seldom, if they marry at all, marry the right man; and while well conducted for the most part, are somewhat lacking in moral sense, and have only rudimentary souls.²¹

The critic who wrote most perceptively and extensively on this point was, as noted in the third and fifth chapters, Havelock Ellis. In his 1883 article, Ellis insisted that one of 'those new things in literature' which demonstrated that Hardy could claim to rank with the best Victorian novelists was that 'he has given us a gallery of women--"Undines of the earth", they have been felicitously called--whose charm is unique; they have no like anywhere . . .'. His article well sums up the emphases that had been made and would continue to be made concerning the charm, the impulsiveness, the elemental nature, and the physical attractions of Hardy's heroines, but most important is his emphasis on Hardy's 'peculiar' and 'in a great degree new' 'way of regarding women':

It is . . . far removed from a method, adopted by many distinguished novelists, in which women are considered as moral forces, centripetal tendencies providentially adapted to balance the centrifugal tendencies of men; being, indeed, almost the polar opposite to that view. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that it is equally removed from the method of those who are concerned to work out Tertullian's view of woman as janua diaboli. Mr. Hardy's women are creatures, always fascinating, made up of more or less untamed instincts for both love and admiration, who can never help some degree of response when the satisfaction of those instincts lies open to them. . . . The charm of woman for Mr. Hardy is chiefly physical, but it is a charm which can only be interpreted by a subtle observation. Generally,

21. The British Quarterly Review (April 1, 1881), p.352.

he is only willing to recognize the psychological element in its physical correlative.

The only point made by Ellis which many critics would have opposed is the suggestion that Hardy's men possess the moral attributes and strengths that his women lack.²² It is, of course, the novels published after this article, especially those which do not contain a male character of which Gabriel Oak is the prototype--The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess, and Jude--which deviate most from this generalization. In his 1896 review of Jude, there are indications that 'the graver and deeper tones' of Hardy's later novels prompted Ellis to moderate his belief that Hardy's men provide the moral ballast lacking in his women; even the most superficial glance at the major male characters of his later novels (with the exception of Giles) would have shaken this belief.²³ By this time, he would surely have concurred with Barrie's statement in 1889 that, 'Mrs. Poyser said that women were made foolish to match the men; but Mr. Hardy's men are made irresolute to match the women'.²⁴

It is probably because of the innovative nature of Hardy's feminine characterization that critics began to take the extreme views of Hardy either as an apologist for woman or as a satirist with a low estimate of womankind. Under the Greenwood Tree and A Pair of Blue Eyes provoked milder res-

22. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.335, 358-9. Cf. Ellis's remarks elsewhere in this article (p.342) when he argued that 'it is with the men always that the moral strength lies'. For other relevant remarks by Ellis, see pp.94-5, 147-8, 156-7 of this study.

23. The Savoy (October, 1896), especially pp.38-41.

24. The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), p.66. This is an aspect of Hardy's fiction which Mrs. Oliphant attacked in her review of Jude. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (January, 1896), pp.140-1.

ponses than this latter reaction, but some critics discerned the vein of light satire in Hardy's feminine portrayals and found his attitude to woman at least a little disconcerting.²⁵ With Far from the Madding Crowd, the radical division of opinion over Hardy's attitude to woman, which was to continue throughout the remaining years of the nineteenth century and into the next, first occurred, several reviewers displaying vehement reactions to Bathsheba's character and conduct.²⁶ By 1879, a critic for The Atlantic Monthly, possibly Harriet Preston, felt compelled to come forward and defend Hardy against accusations

. . . of taking a low estimate of women, of having a cynically sharp eye for their foibles; but merciless as his insight sometimes seems, it is an insight which I should think women, even the most 'advanced', would recognize as, upon the whole, sympathetic. . . . I find him more or less keenly appreciative of the feminine situation as well as temperament.²⁷

The controversy which ensued is summed up, although probably overstated, by Edmund Gosse in 1890:

The unpopularity of Mr. Hardy's novels among women is a curious phenomenon. If he had no male admirers, he would almost cease to exist. . . . even educated women approach him with hesitation and prejudice. . . . there is something in his conception of feminine character which is not well received. The modern English novelist has created, and has faithfully repeated, a demure, ingenuous, and practically inhuman type of heroine, which has flattered womankind, and which female readers now imperatively demand as an encouragement. . . . But Mr. Hardy's women are moulded of the

25. See, for examples, Horace Moule, The Saturday Review (September 28, 1872), p.418, on Fancy; 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.2383 (June 28, 1873), p.820, on Elfride.
26. The greatest hostility is shown in 'Literature', The Observer, No.4363 (January 3, 1875), p.2. The reviewer for Scribner's Monthly, New York (March, 1875), p. 637, and R.H. Hutton, The Spectator (December 19, 1874), p.1599, made essentially the same points, but demonstrated more neutrality.
27. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (November, 1879), p.673.

same flesh as his men; they are liable to flutterings and tremblings; they are not always constant even when they are 'quite nice'; and some of them are actually 'of a coming-on disposition'.²⁸

A final consideration in discussions of Hardy's female characters has been suggested by those critics who referred to his women as 'types', the use of this term suggesting both implications of the word: the repetition of a certain kind of woman in Hardy's fiction and the representativeness of a character of a group having similar characteristics. These implications are intimately related, as the criticism of this aspect comprehended. As early as Far from the Madding Crowd, critics recognized an essential similarity between Fancy, Elfride, and Bathsheba; with The Hand of Ethelberta, they could add another woman to their sisterhood, one critic indeed remarking that Ethelberta is 'the literary twin-sister of Bathsheba'.²⁹ Alexandra Orr, in 1879, was the first critic to comment upon the repetition of male, as well as female, characters. Of the former, although she had few to compare, she did observe: 'Gabriel Oak represents one of the author's favourite types. He has worked it out carefully, and repeats it in "The Return of the Native" as Diggory Venn.' She also observed that Wildeve's character, especially 'an extemporised conscience in Wildeve's later proceedings . . . is on the pattern of Sergeant Troy's . . .'. She naturally wrote more extensively on the repetition of a certain type

28. Edmund Gosse, 'The Speaker's Gallery. VIII.--Thomas Hardy', The Speaker, 2, No.37 (September 13, 1890), p.295. Cf. J.M. Barrie, The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), pp.63-4.

29. The World (April 19, 1876), p.20. Cf. Scribner's Monthly, New York (March, 1875), p.637, on Far from the Madding Crowd. For discussion of typical yet individualized characters, see pp.99-102 of this study.

of female in Hardy's fiction, although noting the variations on this type. She pointed out that they 'are invariably men's women' and that 'his idea of women is that of a pagan grace which does not require and often excludes the estimable' because 'their utmost passion is never dissociated from a nymph-like and perfectly spontaneous purity'. Alexandra Orr made an important point concerning the lack of 'the higher nature' among and with his women which critics who later censured Hardy for narrowness in both his conception and range of feminine creations would have done well to heed: 'If his judgments are . . . an artistic defect, and to some minds undoubtedly they are, they become so only by repetition.'³⁰

Most critics would have concurred with William Minto that Hardy was 'the exhaustive delineator of [Wessex] types-- milkmaid and noble dame, honest workman, visionary, and scapegrace' and that these types provided enough variations to prevent monotony. Minto stressed this variety as well as Hardy's concern with the 'inner life' of his characters:

There really is nobody who can be accused of repetition with less justice than Mr. Hardy. He is not the slave of any formula, either in character or in incident. And as it is with the inner life that he mainly occupies himself, his Wessex, though geographically it can be contained in a small map, is spiritually as wide as human nature.³¹

The only serious objection was made by George Douglas who, while conceding that Hardy's women are 'second only to Shakespeare's', did criticize their lack of variety:

They are, without exception, a young man's women. They charm the eye, fascinate, enthrall the spirit. But the

30. The New Quarterly Magazine (October, 1879), pp.426, 430, 414-6. This last remark reveals that she was one of those critics who realized that moral criteria were irrelevant when analyzing and assessing Hardy's heroines. This is also demonstrated elsewhere in her article (pp. 420-1) in her comments on *Elfride*.

31. The Bookman (December, 1891), pp.99, 101.

fact remains that it is by virtue of the capacity of passion, latent or at least suspected in them, that they interest, stimulate, appeal to or madden ourselves or the heroes of the books. . . . And, when youth is gone, then it is another side of womanhood which moves us. Then it is through her divine capacity, not for passion, but for affection, that she appeals to us, no longer in the character of the Foam-born Goddess, but in that of the Great Consoler. Now of this style of women, in the whole range of Mr. Hardy's novels, there is scarce a trace. I by no means urge it as a shortcoming, I merely state it as a fact.

He believed that Elfride and Viviette came near to this type of woman, but that 'among all Mr. Hardy's heroines . . . the softer charm of womanhood is perhaps best realised in the first *Avice Caro* . . .'.³² What Douglas was unconsciously requesting, of course, was the inclusion of a conventional heroine of the Agnes Wickfield type. This image of woman died hard, as Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse well illustrates. Despite this desire for the 'Great Consoler' which some critics obviously felt would have completed Hardy's gallery of women and men, most found enough variety to compensate for this lack and some even felt that such women as Thomasin and Marty South and, to a lesser extent, Elizabeth-Jane and Tess, although not fundamentally the embodiment of such an image of woman, did fill the gap. The detailed analyses of the variety and contrasts of both male and female characters within Hardy's novels separately and as a whole given by Lionel Johnson, Annie Macdonell, and Lascelles Abercrombie illustrate that critics did perceive the range and flexibility of the types among his characters.³³

32. The Bookman, New York (May, 1897), p.248.

33. See, Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), especially pp.193-222; Annie Macdonell, Thomas Hardy (1894), especially pp.90-113. Abercrombie made very similar distinctions as Johnson and Macdonell. He was, however, more interested in how these divisions affected methods of characterization, an aspect which will be discussed shortly.

Almost as much space was devoted to Hardy's knowledge of the rustic mind and way of life as to his insight into feminine character. Most discussions, as seen in the third chapter, were concerned with the question of truthfulness of character and speech.³⁴ Another aspect of Hardy's rustic characterization which was much discussed was the function of the rustics in a Hardy novel. Beginning with the first major novel which entirely relegated the rustic to a background position--The Return of the Native--it was 'comic relief' upon which most critics concentrated. The British Quarterly Review's critic, for example, remarked that these background rustics 'are well put on the stage, and afford a necessary relief to the painful tension of the real thread of the story'.³⁵ 'Comic relief' could be applied to the rustics in the novels until Tess when many realized that, if the rustics afforded any relief from the tragic intensity of the novel, it was rather of a 'pastoral' than a 'comic' nature. Thus, the reviewer for The Times commented that 'there is relief for seared emotions in the masterly setting of the tale', especially in the Talbothays dairy scenes, although he further noted that 'Talbothays is balanced by Flintcomb Ash--the "starve-acre" farm in which Tess serves a dreary term as field-labourer and general farm-hand'.³⁶ This reviewer observed that, by the time of Tess, rustic life was not simply being presented in idyllic terms and that there were very definite sinister overtones in its presentation. Most critics

34. See pp.58-9, 62-4 of this study.

35. The British Quarterly Review (January 1, 1879), p.242. For discussion of comic relief in Hardy's tragic novels, see pp.244-6 of this study.

36. The Times (January 13, 1892), p.13. Cf. The Review of Reviews (February, 1892), p.200.

totally disregarded this sinister cast which becomes, to a lesser degree in The Mayor of Casterbridge but distinctly in Tess, a sense of disintegration of the romance and comparative stability of an older way of life as represented by the rustics. In later Hardy criticism, the rustics came to be regarded as a chorus to the tragic action, an approach which could only be taken if these disturbing elements were ignored and if the rustics were viewed as A.H. Thompson viewed them:

They are perennial, of the earth The finger of fate touches them lightly: they are born, they delve and they die, they laugh and weep like the rest of men, but they have no enfeebling excess of joy, no carking load of sorrow. Their anxiety is mean, their pleasures are little. And so it is that through the shrewd utterances of these countryfolk, qualified for the office of spectators by the monotony of their existence, we learn more of the chief actors, we see the bitterness of their trouble in the light of this peaceful contrast.³⁷

Long before Abercrombie described Hardy's early novels as dramatic, critics realized that this dramatic quality was one which especially pertained to his methods of characterization. While critics usually defined dramatic presentation of character as revealing rather than describing, rendering rather than telling, there were other aspects which critics saw as essential to this method. One aspect was the use of contrasting characters, that is, the use of contrasts to accentuate differences between members of a certain group of characters, differences which accentuate as well certain qua-

37. The Eagle, Cambridge (October, 1895), p.52. Cf. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.134-5. Harriet Preston would have objected to the idea that 'the finger of fate touches them lightly', her concern being with the sense of unity given to life through the rustics. See the quotations on pp.81-2 of this study. The Westminster Review (March, 1892), p.347, and Edward Wright, The Quarterly Review (April, 1904), pp.515-6, both on Tess, were two of the very few critics to remark upon the changes in Wessex in the course of Hardy's fiction.

lities in a character to whom they are all related in a similar way.³⁸ The emphasis on dramatic use of contrast did sometimes lead to simplified and strained interpretations,³⁹ but remarks on contrast were generally perceptive and took into account subtleties which precluded rigid categorization of characters. While earlier critics, Lionel Johnson for instance,⁴⁰ gave constructive and illuminating accounts of Hardy's use of contrasting characters, it is Abercrombie's critical study which provides the most extensive and perceptive discussion of this aspect. Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, and The Woodlanders, Abercrombie believed, were the three purely dramatic novels:

The central group of characters in each is a set of four persons, two men and two women; and each group is composed of similar contrasts and similar resemblances. The tensions within the groups vary somewhat; and the characters, moulded by differing processes of external event, show differing developments. But the three stories begin with almost exactly the same set of ingredients; they are, in fact, three various experiments in the tragic compounding of the same ingredients.

Oak, Venn, and Giles 'are clearly brothers' in their steadfastness, faithfulness, and patient conduct. Set in contrast to them are Troy, Wildeve, and Fitzpiers with their 'sharp

38. Some of the earliest remarks on this method of characterization occurred in reviews of Far from the Madding Crowd. See, for examples, 'Novels of the Week', The Athenaeum, No.2458 (December 5, 1874), p.747; The Saturday Review (January 9, 1875), p.58.
39. See, for examples, George Saintsbury, The Academy (December 11, 1880), p.420, on The Trumpet-Major; 'Mr. Hardy's New Novel', The Daily Telegraph, No.12,627 (November 1, 1895), p.7, on Jude. In contrast, Edmund Gosse's remarks on Hardy's use of contrast in Jude demonstrate insight into the subtleties of his characterization. The St. James's Gazette (November 8, 1895), p.4; Cosmopolis (January, 1896), pp.61-5 (see quotations on pp.129-30, 207-8 of this study). Cf. Life, pp.272-3.
40. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), especially pp.187-8.

intellects, genteel manners, inflammable faithless passions, shallow good-nature, and flashy disdain for rusticity'. The women

. . . arrange themselves into similar oppositions: Bathsheba, Eustacia, and Grace Melbury, against Fanny Robin, Thomasin Yeobright, and Marty South; on the whole, capricious, passionate, self-conscious natures --not all impatient of their rural surroundings, but all interested chiefly in their own vanity and fine-ladyism--are set against patience, simplicity, and humility.

The pattern never repeats itself, Abercrombie continued, because other characters--notably, Boldwood, Mrs. Yeobright and Clym, Melbury and Mrs. Charmond--are introduced whose 'function in each story [is] as serious as that held by the representatives of the constant group'. With The Mayor of Casterbridge, Abercrombie realized, there was a change, this novel being 'Henchard's history', 'the tragedy of one man', rather than 'the emotional relationship combining a group of persons . . .'. Nevertheless, the dramatic method was still evident in that 'the book is engined with the familiar group-mechanism of the three other novels'. Tess and Jude, Abercrombie maintained, deviated from this 'familiar group-mechanism' because each was concerned with one central figure as in the epic form. Abercrombie did, however, note in passing the contrast between Arabella and Sue: 'Their manner of contrast . . . is of the kind he usually describes, but employed here in a completely new fashion--merely to show, you might almost say, that any kind of woman would be the ruin of Jude.'⁴¹

The dramatic method was associated with the objective rendering of character and, in opposition to it, was placed the descriptive method which allowed for more subjectivity,

41. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.108-25, 161. Cf. quotations on pp.201-2 of this study.

especially evaluative. As is the case today, and not having any Wayne Booths to check their biases, critics frequently assumed that the former was the more artistic method.⁴² It was generally acknowledged that Hardy's method, especially in his earlier novels, was predominately dramatic and many critics praised his skilful use of this method, particularly in rendering the psychological nature of his characters. One of the earlier critics to insist strenuously that Hardy was essentially a dramatic novelist was the reviewer of A Pair of Blue Eyes for The Examiner. Comparing Hardy and George Eliot, this reviewer stressed that, because they had different interests, 'there is a vast difference in their way of presenting character to their readers', Eliot's being 'analytic', Hardy's 'dramatic' or 'narrative'. This did not mean, however, that Hardy was not 'a masterly analyst of character'. He proceeded to make a distinction which would be voiced time and time again, not only in Hardy criticism, but in the general criticism of the last two decades of the nineteenth century: that is, that Hardy 'does not wield a scalpel, but resembles rather those daring pathologists of the Middle Ages who saw by direct vision into the interior of the human mechanism'.⁴³

42. A good example is Walter Besant, The Art of Fiction (1884), pp.22-3. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.58-60, 91-107, 127-32, and Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp. 97-112, deal extensively with this aspect, as well as the related aspects of the 'analytic' method and the controversies over novels of character and novels of plot which will be considered in the following pages.

43. The Examiner (October 13, 1877), p.1300. Cf. John Hutton, The Spectator (June 28, 1873), p.831; The Pall Mall Gazette (October 25, 1873), p.11 (both on A Pair of Blue Eyes); William Minto, The Examiner (December 5, 1874), p.1329, on Far from the Madding

The surgical imagery used by this reviewer reveals that, while acute psychological discernment was generally held in esteem, when it became too analytical, the method became associated with a certain scientific attitude for which the writer must be taken to task. Censure of this analytical, scientific attitude was generally founded on the assumption that it depended upon a cold, intellectual, aloof approach to character, but that the artist should treat his characters sympathetically and intuitively so that they interest as human beings rather than as studies. Criticism became especially vehement in the late 1880's and early 1890's, the remarks of Maurice Thompson well illustrating the absurdity to which some of this commentary was reduced. He referred to Hardy as a 'British Howells', an 'analytical realist', and, while conceding that Hardy is an 'expert in dissecting certain phases of human nature', concluded that 'analytical work never is great':

His purpose is always to be impartial and cold in the treatment of his dramatis personae, but in spite of himself, and notably in the 'Mayor of Casterbridge', he grows sympathetic and humane. Howells would call this a lack of nerve; I should say that it is following the highest canon of the highest art in fiction. Infectious sympathy and enthusiasm are of the essence of every form of true art.⁴⁴

The best criticism, naturally enough, was that which considered both the psychological and dramatic qualities of Hardy's fiction. The criticism of Ellis, Johnson, Abercrombie, and other reviewers cited reveals that critics did realize that a writer could be preoccupied with the inner

Crowd. For relevant quotations from these reviewers and others who praised dramatic presentation of character, see pp.89, 155-6, 181-2, 205, 260 of this study.

44. The Book News Monthly, Philadelphia (January, 1888), pp. 223-4. Cf. 'Jude the Obscure', The Literary World, Boston, 27, No.1 (January 11, 1896), p.3. For earlier criticism of this aspect, see quotations on pp.235-6 of this study.

lives of his characters, with the delineation of subtleties in emotions, thoughts, and motives, yet not resort to a painstaking, analytical method of presentation. Moreover, these critics did not fall victim, as did some critics, to the tendency to regard character and plot as separate entities. This tendency led to the classification of novels as either novels in which plot interest predominates, usually associated with sensation novels of the Wilkie Collins sort and termed 'novels of incident', or as novels in which character interest predominates. As inept as this criticism may seem today, the confusion may be explained by the fact that there were two forms of minor fiction in the last half of the nineteenth century which could be sharply contrasted and encouraged such classification: the action-packed novels of adventure and novels which were concerned with minute analyses of the inner workings of their characters. The latter was ridiculed by James Barrie in the remarks of 'an American novelist':

The story in a novel is of as little importance as the stone in a cherry. I have written three volumes about a lady and a gentleman who met on a car. . . .⁴⁵
Nothing happened. That is the point of the story.

These forms were carried to extremes by some minor novelists and, in these cases, they lost all literary interest or merit, but critics, despite the protestations of such writers as Henry James, still attempted to categorize the works of major novelists, using the touchstones of the works of minor writers.

45. J.M. Barrie, 'Brought Back from Elysium', The Contemporary Review, 52 (June, 1890), p.849. Minor novelists who were classified as 'psychological' or 'analytic' novelists include F.C. Philips, Mrs. Humphry Ward, Olive Schreiner, and Margaret Deland. See J.M. Barrie, The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), p.57; The Puritan, New York (July, 1899), p.343. The novels of Howells and Henry James were often unjustifiably classified simply as novels of character, critics attacking them for excluding plot or for having trite or insignificant action.

Again, the most fruitful criticism came from those critics who realized that Hardy, like any good novelist, did not separate these interests or, as Barrie wrote, 'he has little in common with Mr. Collins or the "American school", standing midway between them . . .'.⁴⁶ Most critics did realize that character, plot, and setting were integral and interrelated elements which, in a good novel, were worked into a unified, organic, harmonious whole.

Beginning with Desperate Remedies, Hardy's constructive skills were praised. In fact, of the five reviews of this novel in 1871, only John Hutton adversely criticized Hardy's ability to plot a novel. He censured Hardy's 'common-place' and 'clumsy' machinery,⁴⁷ these being defects of this novel which most Hardy critics singled out once they had examples of what excellent work Hardy was capable of producing. Of the four other reviewers, two favourably compared the novel to the work of Wilkie Collins because of what they considered to be the skilful working out of an involuted plot. These were the reviewers for The Graphic and The Morning Post, the latter remarking that the novel's 'form, its incidents, and its mode of working them out [are] in the manner of Mr. Wilkie Collins' and that the novel revealed 'much of the spirit and vigour peculiar to that writer . . .'. This reviewer further approved the 'mechanical novelty in the way in which the narrative is broken up into epochs rather than into chapters',⁴⁸ an element which the other two reviewers of Desperate

46. The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), p.57.

47. The Spectator (April 22, 1871), pp.482-3.

48. The Morning Post (April 13, 1871), p.3. Cf. 'The Reader', The Graphic, 3, No.74 (April 29, 1871), p.394.

Remedies (the reviewer for The Athenaeum and Horace Moule) also found praiseworthy. Moule believed the time divisions to be especially effective in the fire scene. He also asserted that, 'The plot is worked out with abundant skill', but would not, as had the reviewer for The Graphic, have categorized it as 'a novel of incident' because 'the essence of the book is precisely what it ought to be--namely, the evolution of character . . .'. Furthermore, while he considered the 'subsidiary writing of which the book is full' to be 'capital', he insisted that 'skill' was demonstrated in working his story together and that to isolate a 'separate incident out of the setting would do an injustice to the careful composition of the story'.⁴⁹

As this last point suggests, one of the first demands made of the novelist was that episodes and scenes be relevant and instrumental to the whole: unity of some sort must be demonstrated.⁵⁰ The criterion of unity was used throughout Hardy criticism. The scenes and episodes which reviewers found most difficult to justify in accordance with this criterion were the scenes concerned with rustic life and exchanges between the rustics. They realized that they were not simply interludes, but, nevertheless, they often seemed to be digressions rather than direct contributions to the advancement of the plot. Far from the Madding Crowd especially fell victim to such criticism.⁵¹ The critic for The

49. The Saturday Review (September 30, 1871), pp.441-2. Cf. The Athenaeum (April 1, 1871), p.399.

50. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp. 111-27, 134-5, Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.112-21, and Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel, pp.162-73, 227-41, stress the importance of this and give numerous examples.

51. For examples of such criticism and some defences, see

Saturday Review, however, did not find such a problem with this novel, arguing that these scenes did contribute to the plot and that the novel did have a unity of action. In contrast to Under the Greenwood Tree, which this critic and several others believed to be 'a series of rustic sketches' rather than a novel proper, the rustic scenes and dialogues in Far from the Madding Crowd

. . . are in keeping with the general character of the novel to this extent, that they are worked up with unusual skill and care. Each scene is a study in itself, and, within its own limits, effective. And they all fit into the story like pieces of an elaborate puzzle, making, when they are so fitted in, an effective whole. Mr. Hardy's art consists principally in the way in which he pieces his scenes one with the other.

He selected as an example the scenes leading up to Bathsheba's opening of the coffin, this scene being necessitated by 'the moral discipline through which his heroine has to pass to render her a fitting helpmate to Gabriel Oak':

And this, the most dramatic incident in the book, is brought about by what? By Joseph Poorgrass's innocently and naturally going into the 'Buck's Head' to warm himself at the kitchen fire. In this careful fitting in of the pieces of his puzzle, and in the use of trifling circumstances either to work up to the dénouement or to prepare the mind for the incidents which are to follow, Mr. Hardy shows his skill.⁵²

With The Return of the Native, there was more criticism of intrusive descriptive passages than of unconnected and unrelated rustic episodes. Critics who defended the inclusion of these descriptive passages tended to appeal to scenic and

pp.86-90, 106-7 of this study.

52. The Saturday Review (January 9, 1875), pp.57-8. For other reviewers who believed that Under the Greenwood Tree failed to attain unity, see, The Athenaeum (June 15, 1872), p.748; The Evening Standard (July 2, 1872), p.8. Several reviewers suggested that the episodes with Fancy and the vicar were somewhat inharmonious with a certain unity of atmosphere. See 'Some New Novels', The Pall Mall Gazette, No.2306 (July 5, 1872), p.11; Horace Moule, The Saturday Review (September 28, 1872), pp.417-8.

atmospheric unity. Henry Alden's criticism best illustrates this tendency. He referred to The Return of the Native as

. . . a descriptive and emotional novel of more than average artistic merit, which is chiefly displayed by a succession of powerful scenes and skillful or striking contrasts. His descriptions of the scene of the story, Egdon Heath . . . have many of the features of Rembrandt's paintings of fire-light, camp-light, and torch-light scenes, and, like them, the deep shadows of these artificial lights operate to invest a grim and commonplace reality with a romance that is fruitful of shuddering fancies and creeping half-fears. . . . The story is powerfully scenic rather than regularly and continuously dramatic. While many of its scenes might be represented upon the stage singly with great effectiveness, they are not knit closely enough together by the tie of a controlling interest, they contribute too slightly to the progress of the plot, and the influence which they exert upon the catastrophe is too remote or inconsiderable to render the story, as a whole, capable of successful dramatization or representation.)

Only in later criticism were such ideas to be counteracted by insistence on the thematic and symbolic importance of Egdon Heath.

Unity of action and unity of effect (to which scenic unity was considered to be the greatest contributor) continued to be major criteria by which Hardy's narratives were assessed. The Return of the Native became a touchstone for critics assessing by unity of effect. Lionel Johnson, for instance, wrote:

This fine economy in the use of words helps towards that general effect of gravity, seriousness, deliberation, which Mr. Hardy's work creates: you can no more miss a sentence, or give some hurried minutes to a chapter, than you can appreciate the proportions of a great Palladian building, if you omit to notice one of its orders. This unity of effect is, in my own judgment, the distinction of Mr. Hardy . . . which should constitute his securest claim to a lasting regard. . . . I readily confess, that I can as little question the pre-eminence of The Return of the Native, among Mr. Hardy's works, as that of King Lear, among Shakespeare's plays.

53. Harper's New Monthly Magazine, New York (March, 1879), pp. 627-8.

This effect was characterized by its 'singleness and simplicity', but was 'secured, only by an exquisite skill. To know, when an ornament, by its nature and place, will minister to the attainment of a general unity and simplicity in design, is the prerogative attribute of genius . . .'.⁵⁴

Johnson would have concurred with Coventry Patmore that this unity of effect was largely dependent upon unity of place, of which Patmore wrote:

No other novelist . . . has so well understood the value of unity of place. The scene of his drama is scarcely ever shifted; and this constancy to it, and the extraordinary fidelity with which its features are described and kept before us--as in the case of the great heath in the 'Return of the Native', and the old Roman town in the 'Mayor of Casterbridge'--give to the whole work a repose and harmony which are, in their kind, incomparable.⁵⁵

One of the most satisfactory discussions of unity in the early reviews of Hardy's novels is that of The Examiner's reviewer on The Hand of Ethelberta whose remarks, although perhaps not strictly applicable to this novel, do reveal a recognition of some essential elements in Hardy's fiction. He referred to The Hand of Ethelberta as an 'ideal comedy': 'It is a work of art, pervaded by a dominant sentiment, which colours every incident and every character.' This 'dominant sentiment' gives to the novel a unity of effect which permeates every aspect of the novel. This critic did not, however, believe the novel to be without unity of action, insisting that the unities of effect and action were distinctly inter-related:

54. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.45-6, 49. The passage quoted from G.H. Lewes on p.46 of this study well illustrates the general emphasis on the unities of action and effect.

55. Coventry Patmore, 'Hardy's Novels', The St. James's Gazette, 14, No.2130 (April 2, 1887), p.7.

Mr. Hardy's carefulness in construction and regard for dramatic unity is worthy of Ben Jonson himself. There is no straggling in the novel From whatever point of view we regard the work, we find deliberate artistic aims and unflinching fidelity of execution. One of the most striking features is the way in which pictorial effects are interpenetrated with the action, giving every chapter something like the vividness of a scene in a play. We are not only told what the person-ages say, but we seem to see the gesture with which they say it, and the furniture or the landscape round them.⁵⁶

By using this stage imagery, he captured an aspect of Hardy's fiction which critics have long since admired: the vividness and pictorial quality of individual scenes and episodes which contribute to, not detract from, the unity of the whole.

The appeal to the drama prevented this critic from concluding, as did Annie Macdonell, that Hardy 'is a writer not of even perfection but of great passages and great moments. But his moments have occasional power to give the tone to a whole book'. Such criticism is, of course, in one sense valid: in his minor novels, it is often these 'great passages and great moments' which give to them any power they may possess, but, in his best work, these 'great passages and great moments' contribute to, help to sustain, the power of the whole. Despite Annie Macdonell's contention that 'Mr. Hardy's chief narrative talent does not lie in the integral structure of his stories; but . . . in his rich invention of incident', she must have realized that this generalization did not pertain to all his novels. Thus she did make certain distinctions between his novels which somewhat modified this generalization:

'Under the Greenwood Tree', 'The Trumpet Major', and 'The Woodlanders' are not built on a dramatic plan, but they have complete pictorial unity. In 'Desperate Remedies', and 'Far from the Madding Crowd', of much more elaborate mechanism, the separate parts

56. The Examiner (May 13, 1876), pp.545-6.

fit in with rare precision. The three tragedies, 'The Mayor of Casterbridge', 'The Return of the Native',⁵⁷ and 'Tess' are of the traditional five act build.

Only with The Woodlanders did critics begin to give close attention to the thematic unity of Hardy's fiction. William Wallace, for instance, examined the way in which characters and incidents contribute to the central idea of the 'Unfulfilled Intention'. He insisted that the 'strong plot, diversified rather than marred by whimsicalities of incident' dramatized this idea, only objecting to 'the man-trap trick' which 'is too obviously a piece of hurried stage "business" to bring Edred and Grace together again'.⁵⁸ The novel which critics felt most suffered from a lack of thematic unity was Jude, the points which they raised being those which many twentieth-century critics have tried to reconcile. The reviewer for The Bookman succinctly stated the problem:

After you have read 'Jude the Obscure', your thoughts run in two separate channels cut by Mr. Hardy's two nearly separate purposes. . . . These purposes are wound in with the history of Jude and the history of Sue. Their histories are intertwined, but they are not quite inevitable to each other; and so, to a greater extent than in most tragedies, you can regard the two chief actors separately.⁵⁹

Another aspect of the plotting of novels which critics emphasized was the concept of the novel as a living organism. Kenneth Graham remarks that 'the idea of fiction as an organic structure which James expressed and so many others shared

57. Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.70-4. Lionel Johnson, 'Thomas Hardy', The Bookman, 7 (December, 1894), p.87, refuted Macdonell's contention that Hardy is simply a writer of 'great passages and great moments'.

58. The Academy (April 9, 1887), p.252. See quotations on p.199 of this study.

59. A.M., The Bookman (January, 1896), p.123. Cf. Edmund Gosse, Cosmopolis (January, 1896), pp.61-5 (see, for examples, quotations on pp.129-30, 207-8 of this study).

. . . remains in its essentials the characteristic theory of the time'.⁶⁰ Graham's mention of Henry James is important because James was one of the few reviewers who argued that a Hardy novel--Far from the Madding Crowd--did not have an organic structure. Censuring the novel's lack of economy, especially 'a large amount of conversational and descriptive padding', he criticized this novel for being 'inordinately diffuse, and, as a piece of narrative, singularly inartistic', and Hardy for having 'little sense of proportion, and almost none of composition'.⁶¹ Far from the Madding Crowd was subjected to harsh criticism in this respect from another nineteenth-century novelist, George Moore. He also believed that, in this novel, Hardy was guilty of 'conversational and descriptive padding':

Nowhere do I find selection, everything is reported, dialogues and descriptions. . . . The descriptions do not flow out of and form part of the narrative, but are wedged in, and often awkwardly.

Although this detracted from the creation of an organic whole, the real defect lay in plot construction. Moore believed, as did Hardy, that the failure to make of the novel an organism

60. English Criticism of the Novel, p.121. Graham also noted that the idea of the novel as an organism was often supported 'with the traditional Romantic metaphors drawn from botany and biology' and he used as examples Hardy's statement that, 'Briefly, a story should be an organism', and Lionel Johnson's that, in Hardy's 'greater books . . . phrase and scene and dialogue, incident and narrative and meditation, like the members of a body, do their part in their several places, for the general and common good' (p.115). The quotations are from Hardy's 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', Personal Writings, p.121, and Johnson's The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), p. 70. Henry James was perhaps the greatest exponent of the novel being an organism, this idea forming the basis of much of his critical writing. Excellent examples of this are to be found in The Art of Fiction, pp.13, 17-8.

61. The Nation, New York (December 24, 1874), p.423. See pp.106-7 (footnote 8) of this study.

was a general tendency of fiction at that time. He argued that this was particularly characteristic of the conclusions of novels and that Far from the Madding Crowd failed in just this way.⁶²

James's and Moore's censure was the exception and generally critics regarded Hardy's novels as having organic, and hence artistic, structures. As early as A Pair of Blue Eyes, the critic for The Saturday Review was proclaiming it 'one of the most artistically constructed among recent novels', 'one in which 'sequence and connexion are so delicately worked', praise to which Hardy somewhat uncharitably responded by remarking 'a quality which, by the bye, would carry little recommendation in these days of loose construction and indifference to organic homogeneity'.⁶³ Even a novel like The Mayor of Casterbridge which Hardy considered to have 'damaged more recklessly as an artistic whole' by the demands of serialization (but which 'he admitted later' to be 'quite coherent and organic, in spite of its complication')⁶⁴ had its defenders, on artistic grounds, for this very 'complication'. So, for instance, one reviewer of the new edition of The Mayor of Casterbridge in 1895 attributed this 'complication' to a structure based on the various interrelationships of the characters:

62. George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man (London, 1888), pp.266-70.

63. The Saturday Review (August 2, 1873), p.158; Life, p. 95. For further remarks illustrating Hardy's insistence on the importance of organic structure and his opinion that this was a quality which contemporary novels lacked, see Life, pp.291 (quoted on p.19 of this study), 363; One Rare Fair Woman, p.151.

64. Life, p.179.

No writer has a greater liking for creating unexpected situations, contingencies, and turning points than Mr. Hardy. The story turns back upon itself repeatedly. Henchard, his wife, Farfrae, Elizabeth Jane, Newson, and even Lucetta--each becomes at one time or another a disturbing element and does something upon which hinges the destiny of the others; yet the acts are made to seem the legitimate result of their characters and mutual relations.⁶⁵

Critics realized, naturally enough, that each novel had a unique structure or, as Abercrombie remarked, the 'formal mastery never repeats itself'.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, except for one aspect which will be discussed shortly, many critics would have concurred, although perhaps not in such superlative terms, with Harold Williams who wrote in 1911: 'In some aspects . . . in his constructive art, all other English novelists, "since the goodly art of novel-writing began", suffer by comparison with Mr. Hardy.' Williams, like many critics, believed that Hardy had made an important contribution to the art of novel writing. Generally, English novels contained 'many digressions and irrelevant episodes' and, consequently, 'one of the most marked characteristics of the English novel is formlessness'. In contrast, Hardy's 'instinct for design, proportion, and composition', which Williams attributed to his training as an architect, 'has been carried over into his work as a man of letters'. Thus, Williams concluded, 'To have raised the standard of workmanship in this respect is one of Mr. Hardy's fine achievements', workmanship demonstrated in 'simplicity' of 'design and composition' and in the relevance, balance, and proportion of the parts to the whole so that 'each book brings home to us

65. 'The Mayor of Casterbridge', The Literary World, Boston, 26, No.16 (August 10, 1895), p.244.

66. Thomas Hardy (1912), p.115.

a single and cumulative impression'.⁶⁷

One element that critics early singled out as marring the sense of balance and proportion in Hardy's fiction was the inclusion of scenes which were too vivid, too intense for the context of the novel. Many critics discerned the fine differences existing between the legitimate use of dramatic effects for building up suspense, crises, and climaxes and the use of such effects as ends in themselves: that is, they recognized the differences between art and sensationalism, drama and melodrama. The severest criticism fell upon Far from the Madding Crowd. Desperate Remedies tended to escape censure, at least in the reviews of 1871, probably because the novel was not taken seriously as a work of art and was considered to be an adequate effort in the mode of Wilkie Collins. By A Pair of Blue Eyes, critics perceived that Hardy showed a distinct improvement in the handling of dramatic effects and that, if he were to make his name as a novelist, it would not be as a writer of sensation novels. So, for instance, John Hutton remarked upon 'the rapid strides' Hardy had made, especially praising him because 'he has discarded inexcusable sensation writing . . .'. Hutton did not ignore the cliff scene, but realized that the suspense was skilfully built up and handled.⁶⁸ With Far from the Madding Crowd, the great advancement in artistry made the highly dramatic scenes appear to some critics more glaring,

67. Two Centuries of the English Novel (1911), pp.284, 301-2. Cf. Edward Wright, The Quarterly Review (April, 1904), pp.499-501.

68. The Spectator (June 28, 1873), pp.831-2. Cf. The Athenaeum (June 15, 1872), p.748; The Saturday Review (August 2, 1873), p.159.

more sensational. The most adverse criticism came from The Westminster Review, a review which did acknowledge Hardy's great potentiality as a novelist, but concluded that Far from the Madding Crowd was primarily characterized by its 'sensationalism'.⁶⁹ Other reviewers emphatically declared that Hardy, although a highly dramatic novelist, clearly stood apart from sensational writers and most would have concurred with the reviewer for Scribner's Monthly who contended that, if Hardy were able to gain complete mastery over his predilection for vividly dramatic scenes and episodes, they would be a strength, not a weakness, in his art.⁷⁰

By the end of the 1870's, most critics believed that Hardy had attained this mastery. Thus Alexandra Orr insisted: 'With a single exception [Desperate Remedies] his novels are not sensational, though they contain highly dramatic situations.'⁷¹ Desperate Remedies continued to receive criticism for its unrestrained dependence upon sensationalism and melodrama and Far from the Madding Crowd for its over-wrought dramatic effects which marred the sense of balance and proportion. Havelock Ellis's and Harriet Preston's remarks well represent the most sensitive of these comments and, in general, they tally with twentieth-century estimates of these two novels. Ellis noted that Desperate Remedies 'is marred by those crude and unconnected attempts at emotional disintegration which are the characteristic of the sensational novel',

69. The Westminster Review (January, 1875), p.266.

70. Scribner's Monthly, New York (March, 1875), p.637. Cf. The World (December 2, 1874), p.16; The Figaro (January 16, 1875), p.11.

71. The New Quarterly Magazine (October, 1879), p.412.

while 'the grave faults which disfigure "Far from the Madding Crowd"' are revealed in 'an abuse of the splendid dramatic power' shown in some scenes, but which in others 'often degenerates into melodrama'. The storm scene and the scenes leading up to Fanny Robin's death, Ellis believed, were excellent in their 'subdued dramatic power'. The scenes which he considered to go beyond this into sensationalism and melodrama were those involving Boldwood: 'His mad passion for Bathsheba is marked by a crudity, a want of reality, an exaggeration which strikes a discordant note in the last volume of "Far from the Madding Crowd".'⁷² Harriet Preston also believed these same scenes to show 'an error of disproportion or incongruity, an incident too big for the canvas, too black for the general scheme of color'. She conceded that such scenes were suitable for 'high tragedy', but believed that the general impression of Far from the Madding Crowd was not powerful enough to sustain them.⁷³

As biographical information about Hardy became known, many critics began to attribute Hardy's ability to create balanced, harmonious plots to his architectural training. Lionel Johnson was one of the first to suggest an influence by appealing to architecture to describe certain characteristics of Hardy's fiction, but the most perceptive remarks on the influence of his architectural training came from William Phelps in 1909:

The intellectual delight that we receive in the perusal of his books . . . comes largely from the architectonics of his literary structures. One never loses sight

72. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.339, 345-6.

73. The Century Magazine, New York (July, 1893), p.355. For fuller quotation, see pp.81-2 of this study.

of Hardy the architect. In purely constructive skill he has surpassed all his contemporaries. His novels--with the exception of 'Desperate Remedies' and 'Jude the Obscure'--are as complete and as beautiful to contemplate as a sculptor's masterpiece. They are finished and noble works of art and give the same kind of pleasure to the mind as any superbly perfect outline. . . . He insists that a novel should be as much of a whole as a living organism, where all the parts--plot, dialogue, character and scenery--should be fitly framed together, giving the single impression of a completely harmonious building.⁷⁴

This emphasis on Hardy's architectural training was needed to counteract the view of Hardy as a writer of 'great passages and great moments', a view which tended to be upheld by those who emphasized the poetic quality of Hardy's fiction above all others.⁷⁵ Those critics who saw all Hardy's instincts and influences--architectural, dramatic, pictorial, poetic--coming together made the most pertinent comments. They were able to see how they all contributed to the creation of vivid and powerful scenes and descriptions which did not detract from the cohesive wholeness nor from the shape and pattern of a Hardy novel. A reviewer for The Times Literary Supplement in 1911, for instance, emphasized the instinct for and the influence of architecture and drama, particularly Greek tragedy, as revealed in Hardy's art. These

74. The North American Review, New York (October, 1909), p. 504. Cf. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), especially pp.41, 45 (see quotation on p.313 of this study).

75. The quotation is from Annie Macdonell, Thomas Hardy (1894), p.74. See p.315 of this study. She believed that, 'Mr. Hardy is first of all a poet . . .' (p.18). Cf. Annie Macdonell's remarks on Hardy's novels in her article, 'Thomas Hardy's Wessex Poems', The Bookman, 15 (February, 1899), pp.139-40. This is a minor trend in Hardy criticism, but it did culminate in reviews which reached extreme conclusions. See, for example, 'Literary Portraits. XII.--Mr. Thomas Hardy', Daily Mail, No.3504 (July 6, 1907), p.3. In content, this review reads very much like the 1905 article of Vernon Lee referred to and quoted on pp.52, 101, 109 of this study.

determined the "architectonic" quality of his novels, their 'design' and 'composition':

This sense of proportion, in which Mr. Hardy stands supreme among novelists, is the very note of the Greek tragedians. . . . Mr. Hardy's destiny was settled by Sophocles and the architect's office. He was certain from the first to take the drama for his model, and he has in fact produced the greatest dramatic novels in our language.

He saw the adherence to the unities, especially Hardy's observance of 'the central unity of action', and his subordination of minor characters to 'a strictly minor part' to be derived from Greek tragic models. This critic did not, however, ignore the poetry in Hardy's prose, a quality which he discovered manifesting itself in Hardy's concern for 'things primal and elemental, the eternal things in which poetry is most at home'.⁷⁶

This elemental, primal quality was recognized by some critics as not simply characteristic of Hardy's choice of subject matter, but as dictating the structure or form of his fiction. In 1903, A.G. Gardiner noted that the structures of Hardy's novels were reminiscent of 'the simple, elemental power of Greek tragedy' in their 'sublimity', in 'the strong, bold contour of the narrative', and in his choice of 'primitive peasants' and 'semi-barbaric women'. He likened the elemental quality in Hardy's fiction to Norse legends:

It is this intense insight into the beauty of simplicity, this passion for the native and the sincere, combined with the immensity of the stage on which the drama moves, that differentiate the Wessex tales from all other literature and suggest the elemental boldness of Norse legends--Norse legends touched with the shadow of modern thought.

76. The Times Literary Supplement (August 3, 1911), p.282. For further quotations from this article, see pp.101-2 of this study. Cf. 'Forces. XVIII.--Thomas Hardy, Novelist & Poet', T.P.'s Weekly, 5, No.138 (June 30, 1905), pp.813-4.

By concentrating on this elemental quality, Gardiner did not find the vividly dramatic scenes disproportionate. He acknowledged Hardy's 'amazing faculty for leading his narrative to tremendous crises, and of creating moments of unrivalled dramatic power', but insisted that 'this quality of dramatic intensity . . . is never strained, never sought for, but emerges from the movement of the story naturally, simply, inevitably'.⁷⁷ For Gardiner, therefore, atmosphere, structure, setting, and character were perfectly congruous, each contributing to a cohesive, artistic pattern in which everything was in proportion.

The emphasis on the integration of all aspects of Hardy's fiction was important because many critics, especially the earliest, regarded setting simply as a backdrop against which the drama of the characters was enacted; they granted that it might be a backdrop which threw the characters into greater relief, but it nevertheless was to remain merely a backdrop.⁷⁸ When Hardy's settings were approached in this way, critics were faced with the problem that their vividness often contended with the background position which they were required to retain. Such a problem is apparent in a review of The Mayor of Casterbridge which stated that 'Casterbridge is a mere background to his "man of character"; yet in the minds of many readers, we suspect, the background will remain clearly imprinted when the man and his character have faded away'.⁷⁹

77. The Daily News (March 5, 1903), p.8. Cf. Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), especially Chapter II and pp.187-9.

78. An excellent example of this in general criticism is Walter Besant, The Art of Fiction (1884), pp.9-10. For examples and discussions of the development away from this simplistic view of settings, see Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel, pp.214-8, 299-307.

79. The Pall Mall Gazette (July 9, 1886), p.5. Cf. 'Liter-

It is because Hardy's settings and backgrounds are so vivid and effective that they were valued in themselves. Moreover, their pictorial quality, their 'picturesqueness', encouraged critics to view them as they might a tableau or a painting, as separate and separable from the whole of the novel.⁸⁰ Even a generally perceptive critic like Annie Macdonell, while insisting that Wessex 'has been not merely a picturesque background to this tales' and that the scenery 'is always inevitable and organic', considered Hardy to be, as has been seen, a writer of 'great passages and great moments'. She regarded his landscapes as 'essentially pictorial' and 'sometimes dramatic', but her explanation of this dramatic quality did not take her much further towards an understanding of their integration to the whole of the novel:

His treatment of landscape is more than pictorial: it is sometimes dramatic. A very casual reading of the stories will leave in the memory, apart from general impressions, a larger number of clearly defined scenes in which time and place and circumstance agree to make a climax of picturesqueness, than will the works of almost any other writer of fiction.⁸¹

There was, however, a generally and tacitly understood assumption about the purpose of settings in Hardy's fiction which tended to modify and counteract this view, that is, the assump-

ature', The Critic, New York, 2, No.30 (February 25, 1882), p.53; 'Reviews', The Dublin Evening Mail, 64 (March 30, 1887), p.4.

80. One of the few reviewers to liken specifically Hardy's chapters to 'a scene in a play' was the reviewer of The Hand of Ethelberta for The Examiner, quoted on p.315 of this study. Nevertheless, this reviewer did insist upon Hardy's 'carefulness in construction and regard for dramatic unity' and did find the 'pictorial effects' to be 'interpenetrated with the action'. For examples of reviewers who praised the effectiveness of the separate tableaux, but criticized lack of unity, see the comments of George Saintsbury on The Hand of Ethelberta, quoted on p.293, and those of Henry Alden on The Return of the Native, quoted on p.313 of this study.

81. Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.13-4, 74, 155, 164-5.

tion that setting made an essential contribution to the creation of an atmosphere, a mood, which permeated the whole of the novel. Critics only found it necessary to come forward and make this point explicit when, in 1907, as was seen in the third chapter, Lindsay Garrett made some totally inept remarks concerning Hardy's use of descriptions, especially as regards setting. One critic to come to Hardy's defence was a reviewer for The New York Times who emphasized certain points which had been generally acknowledged and accepted throughout Hardy criticism. He insisted that 'it is always as a background for the human drama that the descriptions are employed', noting 'what vividness, what completeness, the author's careful painting of the landscape and toning of the atmosphere gives to the action'. As an example, he chose the Heath which, in The Return of the Native, sets the scene for a 'dateless, immemorial human drama'. He stressed that these observations were applicable to all Hardy's novels, that 'when he want to he colors his scenes magically with the very mood that answers to the action about to take place'.⁸²

From the first reviews of Hardy's novels, it was recognized that his settings, although admirable in themselves, were not simply accessories, but were integral parts of the novel and served various relevant purposes. John Hutton, in his review of Desperate Remedies, observed that Hardy made use of his settings to suggest the exertion of influences upon his characters' minds and to suggest certain mental states.⁸³ The

82. The New York Times Saturday Review of Books (July 20, 1907), p.454. For the comments of Garrett and the defenders of Hardy against his absurd accusations, see pp.87-9 of this study.

83. The Spectator (April 22, 1871), pp.482-3.

former interpretation of Hardy's use of setting is most relevant to Egdon Heath. Although the many implications of the Heath were only recognized in later Hardy criticism, one reviewer of The Return of the Native in 1879 did remark upon 'the power of fascination in Mr. Hardy's process of elaborate personification', insisting that 'the prominence given to the Heath itself is justified in the course of the story by the influence which it has upon those who dwell on and near it . . .'.⁸⁴ Later critics attributed both a narrative and symbolic function to the Heath. Edward Wright, for example, noted:

The informing idea of this novel consists of a subtle study of the influence which a vast stretch of rugged heath exercises over the minds of its inhabitants. The feelings, now of passionate attachment, now of blank weariness, which it provokes in the principal characters in the story give rise to the conjuncture of events involving the catastrophe.

With the marriage of Eustacia and Clym, Wright believed, Egdon began to take on even greater significance: 'Egdon Heath thereupon begins, like some dark spirit of tragedy working in secret behind the scene, to govern their destinies.'⁸⁵

Others discerned that setting was used by Hardy as a means of characterization, as a means of highlighting and underscoring certain characteristics or mental states of his personages. This did not become a common way of regarding Hardy's use of setting until the 1890's, although a few reviewers certainly anticipated it: John Hutton's previously mentioned observations concerning Desperate Remedies and a passing remark by a reviewer for The Atlantic Monthly in 1879 that, in The Return of the Native, 'the higher charac-

84. The Observer (January 5, 1879), p.6.

85. The Quarterly Review (April, 1904), pp.508, 510.

ters . . . are all touched with some hue of their wild surroundings', indicate that early reviewers did sense this to be an essential function of Hardy's settings.⁸⁶ What probably encouraged this approach to Hardy's use of setting was his very definite dependence upon it in Tess as a means of characterization. At least one reviewer of Tess commented that the landscape 'is always painted in tones that accord with the temper of the figures in it'.⁸⁷

As this became a common way of regarding Hardy's settings, it naturally necessitated a re-examination of nature in Hardy's fiction. Most realized that Hardy did not simply employ pathetic fallacy, but rather used setting as a means of conveying subtle relationships between his characters and nature. A good example is from M.M. Turnbull in 1903:

To Hardy there appears to be a subtle connection between Man and Nature. He regards her as a participant in man's life and thought, a mirror reflecting his moods and passions, a recipient agent or a partly humanised confidant. Egdon Heath plays its own part in the drama of the lives of the lonely heath-dwellers, while to the aliens it is an avenging fate.⁸⁸

In 1892, Janetta Newton-Robinson quoted a passage from

86. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (November, 1879), p.672 (possibly by Harriet Preston). Havelock Ellis must also have sensed that Hardy was using setting in this way. In his 1883 article, he quoted a passage from The Hand of Ethelberta, pp.246-7, as an example of Hardy's 'freshness of insight into certain aspects of Nature and human character', admitting that Hardy's 'charm--at all events in Nature-painting-- [is] singularly hard to analyze'. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp.351-2.
87. The National Review (February, 1892), p.851. Cf. A.J. Butler, The National Review (May, 1896), p.385 (partially quoted on p.143 of this study).
88. The Gentleman's Magazine (November, 1903), p.474. Turnbull went on to quote two passages from Tess to illustrate further these points. The passages quoted are from p.60 ('The mute procession . . . in time.') and p. 120 ('At times her . . . seemed they were.'). Cf. Anna Sholl, Library of the World's Best Literature, Volume 12, ed. Charles Warner (1897), p.6938.

The Saturday Review and commented:

'Elaborate landscape backgrounds in novels should fulfil two purposes They should indicate to the reader subtle inferences and thin shades of emotion too delicate and evanescent to admit of direct expression; and, further, they should play a part similar to that of the chorus in a drama, emphasising its central idea, rounding into unity the impression conveyed by the whole work, and suggesting, it may be, the presence of those vast mysterious forces by which human life is encompassed and directed.' These purposes are well fulfilled by Mr. Hardy's descriptive passages, which are never mere excrescences, but integral parts of the work.

Passages previously cited well illustrate that reviewers believed Hardy to have fulfilled the first of these two purposes. The concept of nature as a chorus in Hardy's fiction, both as a means of pointing a novel's 'central idea' and of suggesting 'vast mysterious forces', also became widely upheld during the 1890's. Again, Tess seemed to encourage such an interpretation. At the time of Tess's publication, William Watson perhaps wrote best on this aspect, providing a specific illustration which has long since been admired:

One of Mr. Hardy's especially poetic traits is his manner of sometimes using external Nature not simply as a background or a setting, but as a sort of superior spectator and chorus, that makes strangely unconcerned comments from the vantage-ground of a sublime aloofness upon the ludicrous tragedy of the human lot; and, in the scene of Tess's confession, a singularly imaginative effect is produced by kindred means, where Mr. Hardy makes the very furniture and appurtenances of the room undergo a subtle change of aspect and expression as the bride unfolds her past, and brings Present and Future ruining about her head . . .

Emphases such as these naturally led to greater concentration upon the thematic, symbolic, and philosophical, rather than the narrative and scenic, implications of Hardy's

89. The Westminster Review (February, 1892), pp.158-9. See p.116 of this study for her remarks on Egdon Heath.
90. The Academy (February 6, 1892), p.126. Cf. W.P. Trent, The Sewanee Review, Tennessee (November, 1892), p.22.

settings. While it was discerned relatively early in Hardy criticism that Egdon Heath was a symbol or personification of vastness in time and space and the trees in The Woodlanders of the 'Unfulfilled Intention', only later criticism made any intensive examination of the great suggestiveness of Hardy's settings. Lionel Johnson certainly prepared the way for such examination in his description of the 'symbol or image' which 'summed up and expressed in some one composite scene' his "'vision" of Mr. Hardy's works', a description emphasizing Hardy's 'sense of awe, in the presence of a landscape filled with immemorial signs of age; a sense of tranquillity in the presence of human toil, so bound up and associated with the venerable needs of human life'.⁹¹ Nevertheless, it was only in the early years of the twentieth century that ideas about the symbolic implications of Hardy's settings were brought together and developed. One of the best interpretations--a review in The Academy in 1909--illustrates this tendency. This reviewer remarked upon a 'power' which Hardy 'shares with few', that is, the power of 'investing' various elements of his landscapes and settings 'with a strange and prodigious significance' and mood. He selected as examples the Heath in The Return of the Native, the gargoyle scene in Far from the Madding Crowd, and Tess's 'first view of the Valley of the Great Dairies', noting that they are inseparable from the action and characters. Each of these scenes, he insisted,

. . . sets the keynote of the story, round which the dreams and desires, the passions and pains of human beings harmonise and modulate in varying complementary chords--often fluctuating into discords, the resolution of which is inaudible, lost in the outer silence and shadows.

91. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.64-6.

He discerned, however, that in a novel like The Trumpet-Major 'the scenery is more the casual accompaniment, beautifully suggested, but not an integral part of the story' and that, 'Considered as a story, this book seems to need the cohesion and dramatic power which are so prominently displayed in many of the others . . .'.⁹² From his previous remarks, he obviously believed that it was Hardy's skilful and subtle use of setting which largely contributed to this 'cohesion and dramatic power'.

Such commentaries, as brief as they might be, led to the more extensive analyses of Hardy's use of settings to be found in Lascelles Abercrombie's study and the many which were to follow throughout the twentieth century. Most important, they counteracted any tendency to regard Hardy simply as a writer of 'great passages and great moments' by treating his novels as unified structures in which each element--character, plot, and setting--has its proper and relevant artistic place.

92. The Academy (February 27, 1909), pp.823-4. For fuller quotation from the first passages cited, see pp.203-4 of this study. Another excellent article is that of Wilfrid Randell in 1907 who drew together many of the points raised throughout these pages. See p.89 of this study.

Chapter IX

Discussions of Point of View and Style

Of the two general considerations of technique remaining to be discussed--point of view and style--critics were much more concerned with the latter. There are several reasons for the relatively little attention given to point of view in both general and Hardy criticism. Most experimentation with point of view and narrative method occurs in the twentieth century. This is not to underestimate the achievements and influences of George Eliot and, more particularly, of Henry James in this connection, but, as a general critical interest of any importance, consideration of the techniques involved in point of view had to await the twentieth century. Most nineteenth-century discussions of these techniques are found directly and specifically in reference to works which challenged such discussion.¹ Hardy's fiction was not of the nature to challenge purely technical consideration of point of view. He was not a conscious experimenter and was usually content with the conventional third-person omniscient narra-

1. Kenneth Graham remarks: 'For the most part, Victorian critics visualize only three categories of narrative-method: that of the omniscient author, who writes predominately in the third person, perhaps with some first-person commentary of his own; the directly autobiographical method; and the epistolary method.' English Criticism of the Novel, p.121. Graham discusses criticism of these methods, pp.121-33. For earlier criticism, see Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.107-11. A good illustration of Graham's statement is Frederick Wedmore's discussion in 1899 of narrative method in the novel and short story. He added two methods to those mentioned by Graham--pure dialogue and the diary form--which, he contended, are only suitable for the short story. His article is included in Derek Stanford's Critics of the 'Nineties, pp.232-44. Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, pp.133-9, also remarks upon considerations of the "'indirect and oblique"' methods in discussions by Henry James, Paul Bourget, and Vernon Lee. Cf. Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel, pp.186-97, 256-74.

tor, although in the last twenty years critics have discerned and discussed Hardy's skilful exploitation of this method. Many nineteenth-century critics perceived Hardy's talents as a story-teller, even saw him as a teller of legends and ballads, but because his methods of narration were not original or innovative, they felt justified simply to praise these talents and to pass over with no further comment or attempt to discern the techniques involved in his excellent art of story-telling.²

Technical considerations of point of view usually concentrated upon the matters of objectivity and subjectivity which critics believed, as has been illustrated several times in this study, to be intimately related to the less technical questions of detachment, often deemed to be coldness or even cynicism, and sympathy.³ In essence, most discussions of point of view were primarily concerned with the qualities of the narrator which were revealed in his telling of the tale (and this narrator was generally assumed to be the novelist himself) rather than with the technical questions of the actual nature of this point of view.

The first point to be stressed, then, is that critics usually made no distinction between the dramatized narrator and the novelist himself. Although critics must have been aware of Keats's 'negative capability', few revealed any discernment of the implications of this principle which have

2. This is well exemplified by W.P. Trent's comments on Hardy's 'power as a narrator'. The Sewanee Review, Tennessee (November, 1892), pp.23-4.
3. For discussions of objectivity and subjectivity and the related questions of detachment and sympathy, see pp. 114-5, 135-6, 155-6, 180-5, 233-9, 306-8 of this study.

only been developed in the twentieth century. One of the few critics at this time to make a distinction between the author and the persona in a novel was Edward Dowden in his discussion of the "'second self"' in George Eliot's novels. Following Keats in stressing the sense of universality attained through the creation of a persona, Dowden discussed Eliot's dramatized "'second self" who writes her books, and lives and speaks through them'.⁴ The book which compelled critics to recognize that Hardy created definite personae was A Group of Noble Dames, but the various poses assumed in this collection of short stories failed to initiate discussion of the creation of dramatized narrators because of the similarity of these narrators and their similarity to the narrators of other Hardy novels.⁵

The two chief qualities which critics believed to characterize the narrators of Hardy's fiction--that is, Hardy himself--were the habit of regarding things in a vivid visual manner, and humour. As early as 1875, a reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd for Scribner's Monthly distinguished Hardy's 'peculiarly pictorial way of looking at things, and his quiet and cultured sense of humor' as qualities specifically pertaining to 'the point of view chosen by its author'.⁶

4. The Contemporary Review (August, 1872), p.403.
5. Several critics commented on this. See, for examples, 'Fiction', The National Observer, Edinburgh, 6, No.136 (June 27, 1891), p.150; 'Contemporary Literature', The National Review, 17 (August, 1891), p.845.
6. Scribner's Monthly, New York (March, 1875), p.637. A review of The Mayor of Casterbridge--'Belles Lettres', The Westminster Review, 70 (July, 1886), p.300--also specifically distinguished these two qualities as 'forming Mr. Hardy's charming accent personnel'. The emphasis placed on Hardy's 'peculiarly pictorial way of looking at things' has been illustrated in earlier chapters. See pp.90, 141-4, 326 of this study.

Reviewers of Hardy's novels from Desperate Remedies to Jude the Obscure remarked upon and emphasized these qualities, although in the later novels, much to the chagrin of some, they discerned a darkening of Hardy's humour, a certain grimness which moved it into irony, as distinct from the humour of the earlier novels.

The humour of Hardy's rustics appealed to critics from the beginning and, by 1874, a reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd is found to be commenting that 'the sly touches of humour for which Mr. Hardy's rustics are famous are as frequent as ever, and the gentle wisdom hidden under rustic parlance as pleasant as heretofore . . .'.⁷ Critics realized that the rustics were not the only source of humour and Hardy's use of metaphors, similes, and analogies were also remarked upon by critics.⁸ Hardy's humour came to be considered such a characteristic trait of his fiction that some critics attempted to account for it. In 1880, Julian Hawthorne, for example, referred to Hardy as 'inevitably and inadvertently' humorous and attributed this to Hardy's 'shyness, connected as it is with an almost morbid keenness of observation, [which] imparts to his humour a peculiarly delicate and delightful aroma . . .'. Hawthorne believed that Hardy 'never misses the comic aspect of a situation or episode', but insisted that he showed no malice: '. . . he never enforces it by a coarse or unsympathetic touch; the light falls gently and sweetly upon it, and passes on.'⁹

7. The Echo (November 28, 1874), p.2.

8. See, for examples, C. Kegan Paul, The British Quarterly Review (April 1, 1881), pp.359-60; Leon Vincent, The Bibliotaph and Other People (1898), pp.92-103.

9. The Spectator (December 18, 1880), p.1627.

Critics tended to be more appreciative of the bucolic than of the satirical humour of Hardy's novels.¹⁰ Generally, critics were not adamant in their dismissal of Hardy's social satire; most could accept it, although many felt that it was not Hardy's forte. What raised the spleen of many reviewers, especially in the later years of Hardy's novel-writing career, was his irony. The reasons for the hostile reactions are twofold: critics looked back to the delightful humour of Under the Greenwood Tree and Far from the Madding Crowd and lamented that the ironic attitude had completely overshadowed this humour; critics considered this ironic attitude to be a manifestation of Hardy's 'pessimism'. Although such criticism began in the 1880's,¹¹ the worst storm of criticism arose with Jude. Jeannette Gilder's remarks well illustrate the more hysterical of these reactions. She was particularly censorious of Hardy's 'bitterly pessimistic' standpoint, 'the superfluity of hopelessness in which Mr. Hardy loves to revel', qualities she saw manifesting themselves in his grim humour:

In one most important particular Mr. Hardy's genius seems to have suffered a positive eclipse. His bucolic humorists--one of the chief attractions in his earlier works--have disappeared entirely. Their witticisms are sour, cynical, and laboured. There is not a laugh in the whole book; only a few sickly or sardonic smiles.¹²

10. This tendency persisted into the twentieth century and is well exemplified by the remarks of Richard Burton, Masters of the English Novel (1909), p.267.
11. A reviewer of The Mayor of Casterbridge, for example, wrote: '. . . the humour is a trifle less genial--or shall we say more grim?--than it used to be. Altogether, the book leaves a most dreary impression. Its outlook is narrow, its tone is prosaic, and its last word is elaborately pessimistic.' 'Novels', The Guardian, 41, No.2121 (July 28, 1886), p.1115.
12. The World (November 13, 1895), p.15.

Hardy himself realized the nature of the adverse reactions to the ironic manifestations of his humour. What he wrote of the reactions to his verse could be applied to some criticism of his later fiction:

. . . Hardy had a born sense of humour, even a too keen sense occasionally: but his poetry was sometimes placed by editors in the hands of reviewers deficient in that quality. Even if they were accustomed to Dickensian humour they were not to Swiftian. Hence it unfortunately happened that verses of a satirical, dry, caustic, or farcical cast¹³ were regarded by them with the deepest seriousness.

The adverse criticism of Hardy's 'Swiftian' sense of humour certainly was vocal and often hysterical, but again, as was the case with the outcries against Hardy's 'immorality' and 'pessimism', the fervour of these reactions should not be taken as characteristic of the majority view. A great number of critics could sensitively, appreciatively, and sanely discuss the irony of Hardy's fiction which was so essential to his tragic vision.

The bulk of such criticism had to await the calmer atmosphere of retrospect, but there were a few early indications that, in the end, Hardy's irony was to find more acceptance and understanding than that demonstrated by Jeannette Gilder.¹⁴ The earliest critic to write extensively and perceptively on humour--bucolic, satirical, and ironic--in Hardy's novels is Annie Macdonell who devoted the sixth chapter of her Thomas Hardy to a discussion of Hardy as 'Humour-

13. Life, p.302.

14. See, for example, 'Magazines and Reviews', The Academy, 17, No.417 (May 1, 1880), p.323. Few critics commented upon the irony of A Pair of Blue Eyes at the time of its publication and not until Havelock Ellis's article in 1883 was any critic to take Hardy to task for what Ellis defined as its 'abuse of its chief excellence, its irony'. The Westminster Review (April, 1883), pp. 343-6.

ist'. Although her discussion becomes slightly confused by her failure to distinguish clearly between various manifestations of humour in Hardy's fiction--and their interrelationship perhaps justifies her not doing so--her remarks reveal an understanding and appreciation of the finally inseparable elements of humour and tragedy in Hardy's vision.¹⁵

In the late 1890's and early years of the twentieth century, the irony in Hardy's novels came to be more and more recognized and stressed. As was seen in the sixth chapter, critics began to associate Hardy's irony with a definite philosophy of life, but the source of this irony was interpreted variously by critics as the irony of fate, the irony of circumstance, and the irony of chance, and their reaction depended upon their own ideological standpoint as to the philosophy they saw informing Hardy's novels.¹⁶ Apart from ideological objections, the most frequent objections were 'moral'; irony was associated with a certain cynicism, a certain morbid curiosity in observing and depicting the suffering of man. Several reviewers actually saw Hardy as a 'Spirit Ironic' (although none was so obtuse as to see him as a 'Spirit Sinister'), absolutely devoid of the compassion and humanity of a 'Spirit of the Pities'.¹⁷ Most critics, however, saw how preposterous such a conclusion was. The 'satirical, dry, caustic, or farcical cast' of his humour may be more 'Swiftian' than 'Dickensian', but the great evi-

15. Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.117-36.

16. See pp.211-2 of this study.

17. See, for examples, the quotations from William Dawson on p.182 and from The Saturday Review on p.236 of this study. As an example of Hardy's censure of such a stance as these critics accredited him with, see the remark in Life, p.200, dated May 29.

dence of the 'Spirit of the Pities' in the personae assumed by Hardy makes the humour of his works as different from that of Swift as that of Dickens. Nevertheless, the 'Spirit of the Pities' must not be confused with the kind of sentimentality found in much of Dickens's fiction. As 'Chelifer' remarked in 1895:

Hardy is pre-eminently dignified. If I should find any fault with him, it would be that he takes life seriously with too much persistence. The title of his short stories, 'Life's Little Ironies', is the keynote of his preachment. From his early work, 'A Pair of Blue Eyes', which ends with the meeting of two rival lovers at the grave of the woman who has married a third, through 'The Mayor of Casterbridge', whose hero's life circles from homeless poverty in youth through wealth and power back to the old condition and death, down to 'Tess', whose essential purity and passionate altruism lead her to an ugly fate on the scaffold--all, all is irony, softened, it is true, with love of the material world, with tender humanity--but yet bitter irony, relentless irony.¹⁸

Moreover, most critics realized that an awareness of the ironic incongruities of life was very different from an ironic attitude towards them: they recognized the difference between theme and point of view. As has been seen, some critics stressed the sympathetic, humanistic element in Hardy's attitude. A variation on this is found in Stephen Gwynn's criticism in 1901. He stated that, 'The perpetual centre of his contemplation is the tragically ironic contrast between human life as it looks to the individual and human life as it looks to the race', which involves a conflict between nature and society, but emphasized that Hardy is primarily 'occupied with the individual', that the 'personal interest' pre-

18. Godey's Magazine, New York (December, 1895), p.659. Mary Moss's remarks on the 'mental struggle' in Hardy between the intellectual 'ironic pessimist' and 'his indestructible human sympathy' which she saw cancelling the former are well worth noting here. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston (September, 1906), p.367. See the quotations on pp.228-9 of this study.

dominates in his fiction.¹⁹ Other critics, such as The Times's reviewer of Wessex Poems in 1899, stressed 'this tragic intensity of outlook, expressed in Mr. Hardy's fine prose' which, while focusing on the ironies of life--'The shadows of life cut off, of aims defeated, of withered loves'--has 'a stimulating, soul-bracing effect, as of some rough wind which, while it buffets, still gives fresh vigour to face the storm'.²⁰ For these critics and for many others, therefore, although Hardy's material was rooted in the ironies, the incongruities of life, his attitude, his point of view, was not simply that of the 'Spirit Ironic', but was one which could very often intensify and lift this material into tragedy.

Although some critics stressed associations between style and temperament, putting forward explanations based on considerations of temperament for idiosyncrasies in style,²¹

19. Literature (July 6, 1901), p.5. For fuller quotation, see pp.270-1 of this study.
20. The Times (January 5, 1899), p.10.
21. The influences that critics saw temperament exerting upon style have been noted in other contexts and some will again be revealed throughout the following pages. One was the influence of Hardy's microscopically observant vision which, although many critics admired, others saw as harmful. For discussion of Hardy's use of detail and the related subject of his ability to give a sense of breadth as well as minuteness, see pp. 86-91, 140 of this study. Another concern has been suggested in the comments on the growth of a more 'subdued' manner, characterized by sadness, sombreness, and a loss of buoyancy. Critics began to comment on this in reviews of The Woodlanders. Excellent examples are The Athenaeum (March 26, 1887), p.414, and 'Novels', The Daily News, No.12,834 (May 28, 1887), p.6. See, also, quotations on pp.218-21. Another aspect was the effect of Hardy's 'spirit of revolt' on his style, an aspect upon which critics of Hardy's later novels were often compelled to comment. Many would have concurred with Edmund Gosse, Cosmopolis (January, 1896), pp.68-9, quoted on p.125. See, also, quotations on pp.165-6, 221-3, 246-7 of this study.

discussions of style tended towards more purely technical and artistic interests than did discussions of point of view. In the earliest reviews, Hardy's style was the aspect of his fiction which received the most adverse criticism. His occasional grammatical lapses, awkwardness, coarseness or unpleasantness in detail, and, more particularly, his tendency towards elaboration, pedantry, and affectation, were all seized upon as stylistic peculiarities which needed modification or improvement. From Desperate Remedies to Far from the Madding Crowd, all these points against Hardy's style were raised and, indeed, it was in these early reviews that some of the most hostile reactions occurred.²² In the criticism after Far from the Madding Crowd, although critics continued to make these strictures on Hardy's style intermittently, many came to accept these qualities and even attempted to discover justifications and explanations for them. Thus, by the time of The Return of the Native, reviewers had begun to emphasize the virtues rather than the defects of his style and often what had been, in the earliest reviews, considered to be defects were re-assessed as virtues.

22. An early example of such criticism is The Athenaeum (April 1, 1871), p.399, on Desperate Remedies, which found fault with Hardy's style, grammar, and use of clumsy and coarse expressions. Not until the late 1880's, however, largely as a result of reactions to realism, did criticism of unpleasantness or coarseness become more frequent, although it remained a minor trend in Hardy criticism. See, for example, The Athenaeum (May 29, 1886), p.711, on The Mayor of Casterbridge, and quotations on pp.186-90 of this study. With A Pair of Blue Eyes and Far from the Madding Crowd, reviewers began to criticize Hardy's pedantry and affectation. See, for examples, John Hutton, The Spectator (June 28, 1873), p.831; The Saturday Review (August 2, 1873), p.158; The Graphic (July 12, 1873), p.36; The Times (September 9, 1873), p.4 (all on A Pair of Blue Eyes); and, one of the most hostile reactions to Hardy's stylistic idiosyncrasies, The Saturday Review (January 9, 1875), p.57, on Far from the Madding Crowd.

Hardy's pedantry and affectation are the qualities which, of all his stylistic peculiarities, created the most animosity. At first, these qualities were attributed to an imitation of George Eliot's style, especially in her later novels.²³

The reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd for The World well sums up this criticism. He began his review by asserting that this novel was 'abounding in affectations, full of mannerisms, and infected by a vein of mimeticism . . .'. This, he believed, was a result of Hardy's imitation of George Eliot's later manner--'that straining after curiously philosophic erudition in the matter of phrases'--which was all the more to be regretted because Hardy has 'his own singularly original ability': 'Mr. Hardy is a writer of such manifestly original power that he should scorn the affiliation of phrases and the adoption of style, upon the strength even of the most illustrious of exemplars.' He insisted that these 'literary idiosyncrasies' were not natural to Hardy, but

They are peculiarities which he has palpably foisted in upon his work, because he is a slave to the conviction that the slang of the laboratory and the jargon of the mechanics' institute are genuine notes of literary merit.

What this reviewer found most objectionable were his metaphors which 'are not literary; they are the pretentious coinage of a soi-disant science'.²⁴ This reviewer's objections

23. The worst wave of criticism of George Eliot's use of scientific and psychological language did not occur until the reviews of Daniel Deronda in 1876. See, for examples, Gordon S. Haight (ed.), A Century of George Eliot Criticism (1965; rpt. London, 1966), pp.95, 106, 117-9, 182; John Holmstrom and Laurence Lerner (eds.), George Eliot and Her Readers (London, 1966), p.141.

24. The World (December 2, 1874), p.16. Other reviewers who made similar objections to Far from the Madding Crowd include the reviewers for The Athenaeum (December 5, 1874), p.747; The Observer (January 3, 1875), p.2; The Times (January 25, 1875), p.4; The Westminster Re-

to Hardy's pedantry and affectation involved two considerations: it was an imitation of George Eliot's style and thus interfered with his own original abilities; it was not a 'literary', but a 'scientific' style. He obviously perceived that style was a unique quality of a writer, that element which differentiated a writer from all others. This was an idea which, at the beginning of his novel-writing career, Hardy had to learn. Hardy's Life records that, in 1875, he was reading 'again Addison, Macaulay, Newman, Sterne, Defoe, Lamb, Gibbon, Burke, Times leaders, etc., in a study of style'.²⁵ He came to recognize, however, as he wrote in 1887, that: 'A writer's style is according to his temperament, & my impression is that if he has anything to say which is of value, & words to say it with, the style will come of itself.'²⁶ At the time of Far from the Madding Crowd, reviewers perceived that Hardy did not yet recognize the importance of developing his own style and that he depended too heavily on imitation, conscious or unconscious, of the styles of other writers.

A frequent criticism and one which would continue to be made throughout Hardy criticism was that this 'scientific'

view (January, 1875), p.267; 'New Books', The Pictorial World, 2, No.49 (February 6, 1875), p.454.

25. Life, p.105.

26. Collected Letters, Volume One, pp.168-9. Cf. Personal Writings, pp.122-3. These remarks are very probably derived from advice that Horace Moule gave to him in 1863. See Robert Gittings, Young Thomas Hardy, p.69, and Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy, pp.356-7. It was also a dominant idea of the 'Decadents' of the 1890's who, as Jerome Buckley remarks, 'struggled to make a highly personal style the ultimate expression of their highly stylized personalities'. The Victorian Temper, p.229.

style was incongruous with his subject matter. R.H. Hutton, in his review of Far from the Madding Crowd, was the first to make this point, his objections being based on Hardy's 'blending' of his style 'which is an exaggeration of George Eliot's . . . with the substance of his drawings': 'But George Eliot never confuses her own ideas with those of her dramatic figures, as Mr. Hardy seems to us so often to do.'²⁷ Later critics, especially of Tess, defined this stylistic defect as inappropriateness to the characters or to the harmony of the whole. Andrew Lang, for instance, saw Hardy's 'defect of style' to be 'the use of semi-scientific phraseology' and 'psychological terminology' which are 'out of place' and 'inappropriate' when dealing with 'a very unscientific character, like Mrs. Durbeyfield', while William Watson, a generally sympathetic critic of Tess, believed that Hardy's 'over-academic phraseology'--'these nodosities upon the golden thread of an otherwise fine diction'--served 'no purpose but to impair the homogeneity of his utterance'.²⁸

Closely related to the criticism of Hardy's pedantry and affectation was the criticism of his tendency towards elaboration, his 'ingeniously verbose and redundant style', as Henry James, in his review of Far from the Madding Crowd, termed it. James's objections were a result of his concern for economy, conciseness, and unity which, he believed, Hardy's construc-

27. The Spectator (December 19, 1874), p.1598.

28. Longman's Magazine (November, 1892), pp.104-5; The Academy (February 6, 1892), p.125. Mowbray Morris, The Quarterly Review (April, 1892), p.325, and, in a more temperate vein, Richard le Gallienne, The Star (December 23, 1891), p.4, made very similar objections to the style of Tess. Annie Macdonell, Thomas Hardy (1894), p. 145, made this point generally concerning the style of his fiction.

tion and style did not demonstrate.²⁹ Although some reviewers, especially the earlier, believed that Hardy's pedantry and elaboration led to obscurity,³⁰ most came to regard them as a result of Hardy's desire to be as precise as possible, particularly in his descriptions. The reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd for Scribner's Monthly refuted the accusation that 'his elaborate descriptions' were 'affected', insisting that they were 'only an error of over-earnestness', although he did go on to suggest that this tendency should be 'greatly modified'.³¹ Again, the reviewer for Scribner's Monthly, despite even greater reservations, came to Hardy's defence with The Return of the Native. He compared Hardy to Browning in that

. . . he attacks the same thing again and again. The result is a wordiness, an apparent straining after strength and wealth of simile, which harms the book much more than the mere clogging of the current of the plot.

He found this 'a serious fault', but suggested that Hardy's 'prolixity is intentional' and that the manner was suited to the matter: '. . . the current of the story moves on as slowly as a weed-encumbered stream, or as slowly as the furze-cutters move who figure in it.'³² Later critics grew

29. The Nation, New York (December 24, 1874), pp.423-4. See quotations on pp.106-7 (footnote 8), 317 of this study.

30. One reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd, for instance, gave examples of Hardy's 'frequently obscure' and 'often expansive or, we may say, wordy' style. 'Far from the Madding Crowd', The Literary World, Boston, 5 (January, 1875), p.114.

31. Scribner's Monthly, New York (March, 1875), p.637.

32. Scribner's Monthly, New York (April, 1879), p.910. As an example of a critic who censured The Return of the Native for its 'besetting tedium of over-elaboration', see The Daily Telegraph (December 3, 1878), p.3.

more and more appreciative of these qualities of Hardy's fiction and what had been deemed simply pedantry and over-elaboration by earlier critics came to be regarded as the virtues of precision and a weighty, grave style.

William Henley's commentary in 1877 upon Hardy's style is one of the first judicious attempts to discern its characteristic qualities. He was more tolerant than many critics of what was deemed to be Hardy's pedantry and affectation, observing that Hardy's work is 'apt to impress one as with a mingled sense of culture and of force, of polish and of power'. Nevertheless, his conclusion that Hardy's 'work is remarkably bright and luminous, is rarely picturesque and vigorous', a consequence, he believed, of Hardy's 'acute, observant, apprehensive, analytic' mind, does not seem apposite, even for the novels prior to The Return of the Native.³³ It was just this 'vigorous' quality upon which critics began to concentrate.³⁴

While most critics acknowledged that Hardy's style did not possess the brilliance and sparkle of, for instance, Meredith's style, many conceded that his power and vigour, associated with a certain ruggedness or roughness, compensated for a lack of these qualities. Admiration for these qualities, however, sometimes led to erroneous conclusions about the care and attention which Hardy gave to style while writing and revising his novels: he was not simply, as a reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd for The Observer suggested, 'a dauber who throws on the colours, and arranges the figures,

33. London (September 29, 1877), p.212.

34. See, for examples, 'The Magazines for May', The Evening Standard, No.16,778 (May 2, 1878), p.3; The Graphic (December 7, 1878), p.579, both on The Return of the Native.

and manages the composition with a vast deal of reckless skill'.³⁵ Hardy was a more conscious and conscientious artist than this reviewer realized. By the time of The Return of the Native, some critics were associating this presumed 'reckless skill' with his vigour and power. The critic for The Contemporary Review, for example, although asserting that this novel 'is full of faults, full of power', insisted that:

He is an extraordinary writer; one of the rare class whose faults cannot be spared from their work. Where else are we to look for anything like the same amount of rugged and fantastic power; the same naturalness mingled with the same quaintness?³⁶

The Mayor of Casterbridge provoked the most diverse responses to the vein of roughness in his works. One reviewer contended: 'Mr. Hardy's style . . . is a little rough on the palate; its strength and directness are undeniable; but the author would seem to be no great adept at the art of blending.'³⁷ Henry Alden had no reservations in giving Hardy unqualified praise. He also perceived Hardy's roughness, but argued that this was part of 'his proper and peculiar charm', a charm which 'seems to exist apart from any beauty of style or felicity of phrase . . .'. He admired Hardy's frank, direct approach to his characters, stressing that 'his first sense of people is apparently not a literary sense, but something very much more natural'. Although Alden observed that, 'This absence of literosity . . . accounts for an occasional bluntness of phrase . . . and for here and there an uncouthness of diction--or call it awkwardness', he insisted that 'we

35. The Observer (January 3, 1875), p.2.

36. The Contemporary Review (December, 1878), pp.205-6.

37. 'The Book Market', The Daily Telegraph, No.9674 (May 27, 1886), p.2.

gain infinitely more than we lose by it'.³⁸ The reviewer for The Literary World explicitly associated Hardy's roughness and vigour, arguing that The Mayor of Casterbridge 'strikes us as might a bold charcoal drawing from the hand of a master' and that 'the very coarseness of stroke is an added strength'.³⁹

This emphasis on the rough vigour and strength of Hardy's art led to some overstatements concerning the inspirational quality of his genius. This is well summed up by the remarks of Arnold Bennett in 1904:

Meredith works consciously, Hardy unconsciously. . . .
Meredith, since his adolescence, never stumbles; Hardy frequently stumbles. But Hardy's stumbling is, ⁴⁰ all the same, divine. He is the child of pure genius.

The insistence upon Hardy's inspirational genius was also, as Bennett's remarks suggest, largely the consequence of emphasis on the highly esteemed qualities of spontaneity and lack of self-consciousness in art. In contrast to some early reviewers who had suggested that Hardy was too self-conscious in his imitation of George Eliot and in his 'over-earnestness', a self-consciousness which led to pedantry and affectation, other reviewers were emphasizing the spontaneity of his art. The stress upon Hardy's spontaneity in his novels became even more emphatic in reviews of his poems which many reviewers found too rigid.⁴¹ The most perceptive criticism was demon-

38. Harper's New Monthly Magazine (November, 1886), p.962.

39. The Literary World, Boston (June 12, 1886), p.198. For another excellent example of a critic who associated roughness and vigour, see the quotation from The Times (January 5, 1899), p.10, on p.254 of this study.

40. T.P.'s Weekly (September 23, 1904), p.392. An extreme example of this approach to Hardy's genius is found in the remarks of Violet Hunt, 'Books of the Day', The Daily Chronicle, No.15,377 (June 1, 1911), p.6.

41. See, for examples, 'Review of Books', The Times, No.

strated by those critics who did not confuse a lack of self-consciousness in the end product with inspiration, that is, by those who discerned that a great amount of deliberate artistry was involved in works which possessed the quality of spontaneity. Hardy himself was fond of emphasizing the principle of ars est celare artem and, while taking into account the charm derived from certain accidental, certain unintentional and perhaps inspirational elements, he clearly recognized the importance of deliberate and conscious artistry.⁴² From all the clamour over Hardy's self-consciousness and lack of spontaneity in the early reviews of his fiction, there emerged one critic--The Examiner's reviewer of The Hand of Ethelberta--who discerned the principle of ars est celare artem at work in his fiction. He insisted:

There is not a trace of hasty work in 'Ethelberta'; its dialogues, its descriptions, its general proportions, are as thoughtfully calculated and firmly worked out as a Dutch painting of the old school. Not that the novel is dull and laborious; on the contrary, it is full of life and spirit, bright all through with the sunshine of humour and fancy. The novelist has been at pains to conceal his painstaking, and has succeeded.

He contended that this was particularly apparent in Hardy's tracing of motives which showed 'a much more perfect conceal-

36,648 (December 26, 1901), p.6; 'The Poetry of Thomas Hardy', The Academy, 80, No.2029 (March 25, 1911), p.350. For discussion of spontaneity of style in another context, see pp.206-8 of this study.

42. While in Italy in 1887, Hardy wrote: 'In a work of art it is the accident which charms, not the intention; that we only like and admire.' Life, p.191. Nevertheless, a more characteristic and repeated idea is Hardy's notation in 1875: 'The whole secret of a living style and the difference between it and a dead style, lies in not having too much style--being, in fact, a little careless, or rather seeming to be, here and there.' Life, p.105 (emphasis mine). Cf. Life, pp.170-1, 285, 300-1, 384; Personal Writings, pp.79-80. For general interest in this matter, see Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel, pp.121-3, 144-58.

ment of the process' than was revealed in the work of George Eliot. For this critic, therefore, the seeming simplicity of the narrative and style concealed Hardy's 'deliberate artistic aims and unflinching fidelity of execution'; great care had been taken in the artistry, yet the novel was fresh and vital.⁴³

By the later years of Hardy's novel-writing career, most critics would have concurred with the reviewer of Tess who proclaimed that 'the art with which the story is told is . . . exquisite in its simplicity . . .'.⁴⁴ Except for those critics who believed that Hardy's pedantry and affectation were signs of contrivance, artificiality, and obscurity, most realized and emphasized that simplicity, even when veiling a great amount of artistry, was a hallmark of Hardy's style. This stress on simplicity was never derogatory, but rather underscored a recognition of a characteristic of Hardy's style which was appropriate to the elemental nature of his subject matter. Furthermore, critics early perceived that this simplicity was instrumental in heightening and intensifying the effect of his work.⁴⁵ It was just such simplicity upon which later critics, especially those who stressed the bardic quality of Hardy's fiction, concentrated. Frederick

43. The Examiner (May 13, 1876), pp.545-6. Cf. The Morning Post (April 6, 1887), p.2, on The Woodlanders.

44. P. and Q., 'Pages in Waiting', The World, 36, No.915 (January 13, 1892), p.23.

45. Good examples of this are The Figaro (October 29, 1873), p.7, and W.H. Browne, The Southern Magazine, Baltimore (September, 1873), p.370, on A Pair of Blue Eyes; Henry M. Alden, 'Editor's Literary Record', Harper's New Monthly Magazine, New York, 62, No.369 (February, 1881), p.474, on The Trumpet-Major. Hardy himself recognized the importance of simplicity in the creation of intensity. See, for example, One Rare Fair Woman, p.139.

Greenwood's eulogistic comments in 1892 well represent this tendency. He noted that, in Under the Greenwood Tree,

. . . we have the easy closeness of narration which distinguishes all his later stories--a merit which is seen to most advantage in the rhymes of the old ballad-makers; but close as the narrative is, it moves with the freedom of the water-brooks, and has the same unstudied kind of music--broken, unappealing, low of tone. The language in which it is cast abounds in telling touches ten words long Taken by themselves, they speak of the careful choice and setting of words which poets and epigrammatists are proud to acknowledge; but, flung without preparation or consequence into a stream of familiar verbiage, in which neither art nor effort appears, they look as accidental and unwrought as the gleaming pebbles in the water-brooks aforesaid And so it is, neither more nor less, with passages of description which no modern English writer (unless it be Mr. Ruskin) has excelled, and in scenes of intensest force and tragedy.

Later critics associated this simplicity with the weighty, grave style of Hardy--'the noble simplicity and classic reserve of his manner', as Henry Alden succinctly put it⁴⁷--qualities which gave dignity to his style as well as accentuating the elemental and universal nature of his subject matter. Lionel Johnson wrote most perceptively and extensively on these qualities in Hardy's fiction and it is worth quoting him at length because he well sums up what numerous critics had and would continue to stress when writing on Hardy's style.⁴⁸ Johnson observed that 'Mr. Hardy's way of writing

46. The Illustrated London News (October 1, 1892), p.431.

47. Harper's Weekly, New York (December 8, 1894), p.1156.

48. The general increased interest in style in the 1890's is revealed by the great number of critics who now gave more than a mere passing reference to stylistic concerns. During the 1890's and early years of the twentieth century, many critics were in accord with Johnson in emphasizing Hardy's simplicity, dignity, gravity, and austerity. One of the earliest critics to anticipate Johnson's emphases is William Minto, The Bookman (December, 1891), p.100. A few of the many reviewers who demonstrated similar interests as Minto and Johnson are William Sharp, The Forum, New York (July, 1892), pp.

has certain qualities of Egdon: the rigid, sombre, air of its soil, its combination of vastness and compression, are matched by Mr. Hardy's close, reticent, and weighty style'. Throughout his The Art of Thomas Hardy, Johnson continually referred to 'that general effect of gravity, seriousness, deliberation, which Mr. Hardy's work creates . . .'. He isolated numerous ways--by no means all stylistic--by which this effect was attained and maintained. One of the chief ways it was achieved, Johnson believed, was by his 'fine economy in the use of words'. Johnson also stressed that the 'singleness and simplicity of effect are secured, only by an exquisite skill' and that the 'steady progress in seriousness of presentation' in his novels, 'the increasing gravity', was accompanied by a 'progress towards simplicity' always characteristic of those writers who are 'not content with the more facile beauty'. Johnson associated this simplicity and seriousness with severity and austerity:

The style of Mr. Hardy is a deliberate and a grave style: his thought falls into phrases and paragraphs of a Latin massiveness. Rarely can it be called supple, agile, brilliant Rather, Mr. Hardy cultivates a sustained equability, like that of the Roman writers: he gives us the comfortable sense of dealing with realities. . . . the measured expressions, one with another, each contributing its just service, compose an organic whole. There is no hurry: none of that haste to be concise and tense, which makes a cluster of excited epigrams do the work of many rich and thoughtful pages. The genius, which gets at the ultimate simplicity of things, their vitality, their reality, knows with what care of expression, at what expense of space, in what tone and key, to communicate its apprehensions of each several thing . . .

583-4, 589-90; W.P. Trent, The Sewanee Review, Tennessee (November, 1892), pp.9, 23; W.B. Columbine, 'The Poems of Thomas Hardy', The Westminster Review, 152, No.2 (August, 1899), p.180; George Douglas, The Bookman (January, 1900), pp.111-2; William Dawson, The Makers of English Fiction (1905), pp.211-6, 223-5; Harold Williams, Two Centuries of the English Novel (1911), pp.301-3.

For Johnson, therefore, Hardy's 'form is proper to his subject' and 'much, doubtless, of the dignity of the work comes from its occupation with dignified natures', with characters of elemental passions and 'conscious, in a deep and fearless way, of the great, commanding verities, life and death, love and hate . . .'.

Perhaps the most valuable of Johnson's comments on Hardy's style are those concerned with Hardy's use of scientific language. Johnson justified this use by emphasizing precision, Hardy's 'accuracy of description', rather than pedantry. He contended that Hardy was one of those writers 'who have the desire strong upon them, to find the exact expression for their thought; though the quest should lead them to explore the vocabularies of the sciences, the arts, the metaphysics'. Johnson's remarks are very far from those of the reviewer of Far from the Madding Crowd quoted earlier who suggested that Hardy worked with 'reckless skill'. Indeed, Johnson insisted that Hardy's 'vocabulary, simple or learned, is employed with scrupulous care . . .'.

If any limitation can be found in Johnson's commentary on Hardy's style, it is that, in his insistence upon its precision and austerity, he fails to take into account the richness and suggestiveness of much of Hardy's writing. Despite his contention that Hardy 'delights in the immense resources of our traditional speech' and that 'he knows, how much strength and beauty spring from the simplest words, well chosen and well consorted by the scholar's discrimination', he continually directed attention to Hardy's austerity. Thus he found that in 'his greater books', his tragic novels, 'Mr. Hardy preserves, with scarce a lapse into less austere a

style, the accent of stateliness and of solemnity, unsoftened and unrelieved by the gentler spirit of sympathy, so frequent a companion of the delicately austere'. Johnson's most extreme remarks concerning Hardy's austerity occur when, comparing Hardy with Wordsworth, he wrote:

Both have so solicitous an impartiality and indifference in their dealings with the world, so perfect a loyalty; each to his sense of righteousness and truth, that their very virtues provoke us to some anger: we exclaim against this austerity, this iron mood, ⁴⁹ this unamiable serenity, this unbending dignity . . .

The emphasis on Hardy's precision and austerity which followed took several forms. The least satisfactory is that expressed by Henry MacArthur in 1897 who probably, like Johnson, reacted against Hardy's austere style, but, unlike Johnson, found it pedestrian and prosaic. The preconceptions arising from MacArthur's belief that Hardy represented 'the dominant school of Realism' are obvious throughout his discussion of Hardy's style. He argued that, as a stylist, 'Mr. Hardy can barely be said to rank with the highest', having 'neither the erratic brilliance of Mr. Meredith nor the subtle charm of Mr. Stevenson'. MacArthur described Hardy's style as 'slow-footed':

. . . it lacks alertness and vivacity. He is far from being a flawless writer; crudities of phrase abound; his diction is sometimes distressingly scientific; his touch often ineffectual and fumbling. Often, indeed, he strikes out a profound aphorism, but the crispness and polish of epigram are usually lacking. At best his style may be described as a useful one.

MacArthur went on to suggest that, in some passages, it is revealed that 'behind the realist in Mr. Hardy there is the poet; and indeed a fine imaginativeness runs like a thread

49. The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), pp.122-3, 45, 49, 56-7, 72-3, 83, 80, 87, 75, 77, 181.

of gold through the homespun texture of his work'. This, he believed, to be especially true in the revelations of 'the poet's fine feeling . . . for the external world . . .'. Nevertheless, MacArthur came to the extremely questionable conclusion that, despite this feeling, 'his defects of style prevent him from adequately rendering her moods, and what he gives us is a photograph rather than a picture'.⁵⁰

MacArthur's remarks represent an extreme reaction to the scientific spirit which is apparent in much of what Hardy writes, a spirit particularly in evidence in Hardy's desire to be as precise as possible when rendering the appearance of things. As was seen previously, this desire brought down severe censure from early critics for his habit of over-elaboration and, in later criticism, some were still suggesting that: 'Possibly . . . Mr. Hardy is too much of a philosopher to be always a perfect writer of tales. His method at times becomes too deliberate, too slow, as his style becomes somewhat dragging and over-elaborated.'⁵¹ With William Minto in 1891 and Lionel Johnson in 1894, critics began to praise, as Minto expressed it, Hardy's 'strong predilection for scientific precision of description, couched in the most learned scientific language'.⁵² Critics, such as Johnson, also realized that, in his desire to be precise, Hardy exploited, not

50. Realism and Romance (1897), pp.11, 18-9. In contrast to this should be placed Lascelles Abercrombie's remarks which, while very close in their implications to those of MacArthur, are more satisfactory because he distinguished between the 'logical force' of Hardy's style in the purely narrative parts and the 'exciting force' of his style in the natural descriptions and rustic dialect. Thomas Hardy (1912), pp.54-60.

51. The Pall Mall Gazette (May 22, 1891), p.2.

52. The Bookman (December, 1891), p.100.

only the vocabulary of science, but of numerous other disciplines. In 1912, two reviewers of Hardy's Wessex edition--Wilfrid Randell in The Academy and an anonymous reviewer in The Saturday Review--gave detailed accounts of, as Randell remarked, 'the range and remoteness of his allusions and metaphors', a result of 'the microscopic vision with which Mr. Hardy sees nature as well as humanity'; examples were drawn from Hardy's allusions to science, mathematics, engineering, architecture, art, literature, mythology, and legend to demonstrate this 'range and remoteness'.⁵³

The precision gained through Hardy's use of allusions and elaboration of details continued to astound critics and prompt comment, but some critics began to suggest other qualities than precision that were attained through them. A reviewer for Alma Mater, for instance, saw them as giving a unity to his work. He distinguished 'the main characteristics of his style' as

. . . its fulness which arises from his anxiety to make you feel and see every object just as he felt it and saw it. He will at all costs make you take the same standpoint and gain the same impressions as himself--because that is necessary for your proper appreciation of his story. His descriptions are never otiose, never merely beautiful embroidery in patches. They connect in a curious subtle way the history and minds of his characters with the natural scenes they move in, and the natural forces which enter from their surroundings into their souls.⁵⁴

Jane Findlater, in 1904, noted Hardy's 'constant and elaborate use of simile as a method of heightening effects', citing several examples to illustrate Hardy's 'vividness, minuteness without prolixity . . . free use of words wherever derived,

53. The Academy (October 26, 1912), pp.535-6; 'Reviews. Hardy's Allusions', The Saturday Review, 113, No.2956 (June 22, 1912), pp.781-2.

54. Alma Mater, Aberdeen (November 28, 1906), p.63.

and with it all exquisite selection'.⁵⁵

As these passages reveal, there was an awareness that precision, a scientific quality, was not the only effect created by Hardy's predilection for elaboration of details and use of allusions. The suggestiveness, the texture, and the poetic quality of Hardy's writing were also discerned. There were, however, critics who took the opposite approach to those who insisted upon Hardy's precision. This is most apparent with those who concentrated upon the poetic effects and emphasized the dreamy atmosphere created by Hardy's style, disregarding the sense of realism. An extreme example of this insistence on Hardy's creation of an atmosphere at the expense of precision and a sense of reality is Vernon Lee's explication de texte of a passage in the sixteenth chapter of Tess.⁵⁶ Lee first commented upon the great number of adjectives in this passage which, she insisted, did not contribute to precision or vividness, but proved only to be 'redundant and vague. We are being told all about the locality, not what is necessary for the intelligence of the situation'. She argued that this was conducive to skipping sentences because 'you are pretty sure to receive the same information in the next; and if you skip both, you have a chance of hearing all you need later on. This makes it lazy reading; and it is lazy writing'. She criticized Hardy's writing, as demonstrated in this passage, for not possessing 'the active quality' which 'is not due so much to a richness

55. Jane Helen Findlater, Stones from a Glass House (London, 1904), pp.150-3.

56. Tess of the d'Urbervilles, pp.141-2 ('However, Tess found at least . . . phlegmatically waiting . . .').

of words--of verbs--expressing action, as to the presence of words, and arrangements of sentences, forcing the reader to think'. Thus, 'the weakness and vagueness' of this passage, Lee concluded, were a result of 'the lack of complexity of tense and logical form (meaning as these do activity of realisation, memory, foresight, comparison, and causality on the reader's part)' and 'the number of unnecessary qualifications'. All this created 'that impression of slovenliness and lack of interest to which I have already so often adverted'.

Vernon Lee went on, however, to contend that

. . . these faults may also lend themselves to that total impression of lazy, dreamy, sensual life among lush vegetation and puzzled rustics . . . which it has been the work of Hardy's genius to put before us. Trees, grass, and haystacks do not move about; sheep, cows, and bulls do not think; the pale moon nights, the long, sultry noons are made for dreams. And Stevenson, Meredith, or H. James would scarcely be what we want for such subject-matter.

Suddenly, Lee is no longer censuring Hardy for slovenly, imprecise, and vague writing, but praising him for using his language to create a definite languorous atmosphere:

The woolly outlines, even the uncertain drawing, add to the impression of primeval passiveness and blind, unreasoning emotion; the faults of Hardy are probably an expression of his solitary and matchless greatness.⁵⁷

It is to be regretted that Vernon Lee did not consider another passage of a very different atmosphere--the market scene in The Mayor of Casterbridge, for instance--in order to verify her conclusion of Hardy's 'solitary and matchless greatness'

57. Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), 'The Handling of Words. T. Hardy', The English Review, 9 (September, 1911), pp. 231-41. The interpretation of this passage coincides with her general impression of Tess and Hardy's fiction as a whole. See the quotations from her 1905 article on p.101 of this study. For other critics who stressed the dreamy atmosphere created by Hardy's style, see The State (May 27, 1886), p.251 (quoted on p.142 of this study); 'Reviews. Time's Laughingstocks', The Saturday Review, 109, No.2829 (January 15, 1910), p.78.

of style. Furthermore, it would have been beneficial if she had considered passages such as the one she examined--and there are many, especially but not exclusively, in the sections concerned with Talbothays Dairy--in the context of the whole of the novel which, as one reviewer of Tess remarked,

. . . has a rush and movement new to Mr. Hardy, though it contains, perhaps, no such passage of concentrated effort as the description of Egdon Heath in 'The Return of the Native'. The resistless sweep of 'Tess' is, indeed, one of its chief merits.⁵⁸

This statement may seem to contradict Vernon Lee's exegesis of a specific passage, but both contain insights into differing aspects of Hardy's style which critics found difficult to reconcile.

As illuminating as Vernon Lee's analysis is concerning one element of Hardy's style, it ignored Hardy's ability to be precise and accurate when the occasion demands. Nevertheless, the conclusions she reached, revealing as they do an awareness of Hardy's consummate skill in creating an atmosphere, are a refreshing change from the over-emphasis on his austerity and scientific spirit. Not that the poetry, the suggestiveness, and the rich texture of Hardy's writing had never been discerned: most critics had recognized, contrary to what Henry MacArthur asserted, that Hardy's style was more than simply 'a useful one'. In 1878, for instance, William Henley, in his review of The Return of the Native, had compared Hardy to Victor Hugo as revealing 'the same extraordinary apprehension of the significance of nature as a whole and in detail, the same power of cumulative poetry, the same fine habit of observant imagination', and many critics were to

58. The Bookman (February, 1892), p.179. Cf. Alfred Noyes, 'Thomas Hardy's Epic', The Daily Graphic, 73, No.5670 (February 14, 1908), p.1 (Supplement).

follow his lead in discerning and perhaps even emphasizing the poetic qualities of Hardy's prose style.⁵⁹ What was rare, although certainly not impossible, was to find a critic who could reconcile the austerity and the richness, the precision and the suggestiveness, the realism and the poetry, of Hardy's writing. In essence, what was rare was a critic who could discern not simply the flexibility of Hardy's style which allowed him to move freely between narration, description, and dialogue (this was generally conceded), but who could discern his ability to blend and fuse what were considered to be disparate and conflicting qualities. One of the few critics to perceive this was Janetta Newton-Robinson who, in 1892, wrote:

Beneath the repose of his rural scenes throbs a strong pulse of passion, a dramatic intensity of vision, which give significance to the most homely detail. The descriptions are those of a poet and an artist in words, the pictures being none the less faithful for the essentially imaginative manner in which they are conveyed, while the language used is picturesque, yet precise, avoiding stale conventional formulae of expression, and at its best terse and even epigrammatic, without loss of lucidity and fulness of suggestion.

She attributed this style to certain temperamental qualities in Hardy:

Mr. Hardy has no direct descent from any other novelist. His method is poetical rather than psychological, yet there is a sound basis of thought and analysis in all his work, and his perception of fine shades of feeling

59. London (November 23, 1878), p.498. Other examples include The Westminster Review (June, 1887), p.384, on The Woodlanders (partially quoted on p.238 of this study); Francis Thompson, The Daily Chronicle (December 26, 1891), p.4, on Tess (partially quoted on p.77 of this study); Israel Zangwill, The Pall Mall Magazine (February, 1896), p.332, on Jude ('the Greek calm of Hardy's style . . . masks a volcanic turbulence of revolt'); George Douglas, The Bookman, New York (May, 1897), p.248, on The Well-Beloved; William Lyon Phelps, 'Incomparable Wessex, Again', The Book Buyer, New York, 14 (May, 1897), p.412, writing generally.

and evanescent moods is of the quickest. . . . Despite his verve and spontaneity he is always restrained and master of himself; but he is a nervous writer, and his sentences glow with inner fire, for he strangely unites the freshness of an Elizabethan author with a gloomy pessimistic impressiveness which belongs solely to the present century.

Thus, she concluded that, 'His mingling of poetry and realism, of imagination and precision, of wayward bizzarrie and winning grace is strangely fascinating . . .'.⁶⁰

It was seen in the fourth chapter that many critics realized that Hardy could not be simply classified as a realist. Janetta Newton-Robinson, in her remarks on Hardy's style, paved the way to a better understanding of why this was so. She was able to see both sides of Hardy--the realist and the poet--not as separate and conflicting, but as dependent upon each other, one informing the other, so that what emerged was a style which defied labelling or classification. Such commentary undoubtedly anticipated the criticism beginning in the mid-twentieth century, especially with writers like Albert Guerard, which discerned and analyzed the 'anti-realist' tendencies in Hardy's fiction--the grotesque, melodramatic, improbable elements that are a source of intensification and poetry and create effects very different from those attempted or attained by the staunch realists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

60. The Westminster Review (February, 1892), pp.153-5, 164.

Chapter X

Conclusion

It is appropriate that the last chapter concludes with a quotation from a woman critic. One of the persistent assumptions about Hardy criticism, one which began to be upheld during the middle years of Hardy's novel-writing career by such critics as James Barrie, is that Hardy's most abusive and least astute critics were his women reviewers.¹ It has been revealed that this assumption is unfounded: the vituperation of Jeannette Gilder is simply not representative of the criticism offered by Hardy's women reviewers. The remarks of Alexandra Orr (who wrote the earliest general study of Hardy in 1879), Harriet Preston, Annie Macdonell, Janetta Newton-Robinson, Mary Moss, Vernon Lee, Helen Garwood, and, one can safely assume, some of the anonymous critics quoted throughout, show that Hardy's novels received perceptively appreciative and constructively critical discussions on matters concerning morals, philosophy, realism, tragedy, and artistry from his women reviewers.

That Hardy was indiscriminately maligned by his female reviewers is one of the minor assumptions made about Hardy criticism that this study has sought to dispel. There were always those who approached Hardy's novels with rigid prejudices, but many of his male critics reveal the same flexibility as his female critics. This flexibility has not usually been acknowledged as a characteristic of Hardy criticism or

1. Barrie and other critics usually attribute this to a dislike of Hardy's heroines by his women readers and reviewers. See J.M. Barrie, The Contemporary Review (July, 1889), pp.63-4, and quotations on pp.298-300 of this study.

of general criticism at this time. Naturally enough, as the novel became accepted as a legitimate genre, some critics, in an over-zealous attempt to further its respectability, insisted that certain rules did or should dictate the art of novel writing and that this art could be analyzed and judged in accordance with these rules. Even among later critics there were some who still reacted against the flexibility of novel criticism, claiming that this flexibility could never result in anything but a chaos of preferences, opinions, and impressions, and called for systemization of the principles governing the writing and assessing of fiction.² Nevertheless, most critics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, while recognizing the need for 'general principles', also recognized the dangers of pedantry and sterility which could arise from the rigid adherence to rules and, consequently, displayed a certain scepticism of the value of 'absolute standards' in novel writing and criticism.³

Critics will probably always be divided over the value of such flexibility, but for Hardy's critics it proved to be advantageous rather than detrimental. Although all areas of Hardy criticism were beneficially affected by this flexibility, it is in discussions of morality and tragedy that the greatest advantages can be discerned. In discussions of morality, it was seen in the fifth chapter, this flexibility

2. See, for examples, Walter Besant, The Art of Fiction (1884), especially pp.3-4, and A.C. Benson, 'Fiction and Romance', The Contemporary Review, 100 (December, 1911), pp.792-805.

3. See discussion and quotations on pp.52-3 of this study. A.C. Benson, The Contemporary Review (December, 1911), p.803, mentioned in the above footnote, recognized these dangers. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, pp.222-3, discusses the flexibility of general novel criticism.

contributed to the expansion of the range of subjects deemed suitable for inclusion in novels by concentrating on the ideas of treatment and the quality of the creating mind. Furthermore, it allowed for greater distinctions being made between inartistic and obtrusive didacticism and general morality by concentrating on a novel's pervasive moral atmosphere and its interest in broad moral concerns which made an appeal to sympathy and an intuitive moral sense of the reader. These developments characterize both Hardy criticism and the general criticism at this time. Concepts of tragedy were also undergoing changes as critics began to accept and examine the less traditional aspects of Hardy's tragic novels, particularly the role of external influences in determining a course of events and the qualities of his protagonists which differentiated them from those of classical tragedies. Hardy and his critics contributed to the increasing flexibility throughout the years 1871 to 1912 and prepared the way for even greater changes and refinements later in the twentieth century.

The most important influence helping to bring about this increased flexibility was the general controversy over realism in the late 1880's and early 1890's. As regards Hardy criticism, this controversy took two directions. First, there were those who either vehemently defended or vehemently attacked realist tenets on moral, philosophical, tragic, representational, and artistic grounds. Those who believed that Hardy was writing in a realist strain supported or opposed his art in accordance with their own position in relation to the general controversy. Although this resulted in inflexibility on the part of some critics during the most heated discussions,

it did prove valuable inasmuch as certain important ideas and issues were subjected to a much needed debate. Secondly, there were, even during the peak of this controversy, those who recognized that Hardy was not simply a follower of French realists and their American and English imitators and who, therefore, attempted to discern what qualities distinguished him from these realists.

This was the most important and influential development throughout these years. At first, many reviewers associated Hardy with the realists. This was largely because of his representationalism, his tendency to deal with contentious moral issues, his philosophical stance which appeared to be deterministic, and his preference for tragic and ironic resolutions to his plots. As suggested, however, from the beginning, some discerned that Hardy could not be categorically aligned with the realists. Throughout the years 1871 to 1912, this recognition grew. Concentration shifted from emphasis on simple representation to emphasis on, or at least recognition of, the importance of the general, the type, the universal, and, finally, the symbolic value of his fiction. Some early reviewers had decried his melodrama, but later critics, realizing that Hardy was not a rigid representationalist whose predilection for melodrama marred his art, discerned the legitimacy of his melodramatic and grotesque effects. In the areas of morality, philosophy, and tragedy, critics perceived that Hardy did not concentrate on the sordid and gloomy aspects of life for their own sake and most came to realize that, in this respect, his characters and plots greatly differed from those of the realists. All these considerations, as seen in the eighth and ninth chap-

ters, had a decided influence when critics discussed and analyzed Hardy's artistry and techniques and contributed to the movement towards a more formal approach to his novels.

The evolution of these ideas prevented Hardy criticism from becoming static. Furthermore, it resulted in the diversity of Hardy criticism throughout these years. This diversity does not simply reflect an inability of critics to arrive at any definite conclusions or a general consensus of opinion about Hardy's fiction, although this is certainly an element; it rather reflects a predominant characteristic of all aspects of his art--the provocative quality which encourages a variety of responses and a variety of interpretations. Twentieth-century criticism has often been used as a touchstone throughout this study and this is because, once the hostile clamour over some of Hardy's novels had subsided, the subtler, more discriminating approaches which had always existed, but which had sometimes almost been buried under this hysteria, were able to surface and develop in a more fertile soil. Only then were the true merits and limitations of Hardy's art fruitfully discussed. This discussion did not, however, have to await the twentieth century. Those with narrowly moralistic and philosophical objections may have been the most vocal, but generally the critics of Hardy's novels between the years 1871 and 1912 reveal much greater perceptivity and diversity than is usually supposed.

It is to be regretted that the great clamour over his immorality and pessimism deafened Hardy to the discerning and constructive criticism which was being produced. He consequently became, as Granville Hicks observes, 'The Thin-Skinned Man of Letters'. Nevertheless, the assumptions

arising from Hicks's conclusion that 'Hardy was nearly forty years old and the author of five novels before he ceased trying to shape his work according to somebody else's interpretation of what the public wanted',⁴ need, as was seen in the first chapter, much qualification. A great number of critics did discern Hardy's aims and ideals as a novelist and did analyze and assess his fiction in accordance with them. Wordsworth writes that 'every author, as far as he is great and at the same time original, has had the task of creating the taste by which he is to be enjoyed: so has it been, so will it continue to be'.⁵ Many of Hardy's critics were flexible enough to re-adjust their tastes when necessary and to accept and appreciate his originality.

In the first chapter it was suggested that Hardy yearned for true appreciation and true understanding. This he received, not posthumously, but during his own lifetime and during the years of his novel-writing career. The majority of his critics reacted to his novels with perceptivity, with true appreciation and understanding of their defects and merits. The moralistic and philosophical denunciations of his fiction may have seemed to Hardy to be the dominant note of criticism; in actuality, the major characteristic governing the critical reception of Hardy's fiction from 1871 to 1912 is an invigorating and rewarding concern with various concepts of the art of the novel.

4. Granville Hicks, Figures of Transition (New York, 1939), pp.123-4.

5. Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, p.210.

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