WOMEN AND THOMAS HARDY: A STUDY OF SEX-LINKED QUALITIES IN THE CHARACTERS

By

RUTH LAZELLE COUCH

Bachelor of Science in Education
Southern State College
Magnolia, Arkansas
1958

Master of Science in Education
Henderson State College
Arkadelphia, Arkansas
1961

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College
of the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
July, 1975

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Thesis Approved:

Mary Robertson
Thesis Adviser

Jane Marie Luecke

Don D. Wilson

Frank E. Ten Eyck

N. N. Durham
Dean of the Graduate College

PREFACE

This study is concerned with the analysis of the novels of Thomas Hardy. The primary objective is to determine the characteristics that Hardy attributed to the women of the novels and to arrive at a conclusion as to the presence of antifeminist attitudes.

The writer wishes to express her appreciation to her major adviser, Dr. Mary Rohrberger, for her assistance throughout this study. Appreciation is also expressed to the other committee members, Dr. Jane Marie Luecke, Dr. D. Judson Milburn, and Dr. Frank McFarland for their contributions.

Two typists, Susan Berry and Charlene Fries, deserve special mention for the hard work they did in preparation of drafts and final copy. In addition, appreciation goes to my co-workers at Arkansas State for their suggestions.

Finally, I wish to express gratitude to Dr. and Mrs. George Harrod for their continued encouragement and to thank my division head, Mrs. Wilma Beard, for her unceasing support during this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A reader of the novels of Thomas Hardy is soon aware of the great interest the author lavished on his women characters. Whether he is describing an elderly lady considered to be a witch and shunned by most of the community, or whether he is helping the reader to visualize the pastoral innocence and beauty of a preacher's daughter, the depth of the characterization suggests close attention. Careful attention to clothing, jewels, cosmetics, and other small features, as well as his involved descriptions of emotional reactions indicate a thoroughness of knowledge apparently gained by observing many types of women at close range. Indeed, some critics state that only one or two of his presentations of men are as effective as his women characters. Even the flaws in their individual characters, which he recognizes and deals with as objectively as he can, make them interesting and possibly even more endearing to him. Some critics have tried to trace this apparent partiality to his youthful experiences with young illiterate dairymaids for whom he sometimes wrote letters. In this close association, he could have learned secrets of the feminine heart which are not revealed to the average man. Other critics have mentioned his interest in his cousin, Tryphena Sparks, whose sharp intellect and independent spirit he frequently praised. A woman teacher was instrumental in awakening his intellectual interest. And his wife, for whom he professed a tender love and concern despite

her contempt for his intellectual ambitions and socially unacceptable ideas, must have had her part in his thoughts. Not deserving individual mention, but no doubt important, are a host of relatives and neighbors whose behavior he carefully observed from childhood.

Review of Scholarship

Numerous critics have commented upon this interest in his women characters. Charles Duffin, James Southworth, and Pierre D'Exideuil have all mentioned it--Duffin saying that he is "almost a specialist in women."[1] Evelyn Hardy says, "Hardy could penetrate a woman's mind and interpret her thoughts as well as he could his own,"[2] and she adds that he often wrote from the woman's point of view. Irving Howe in his studies of the novels declares that Hardy "liked women" and "could not imagine a universe without an active, even an intruding feminine principle."[3] Carl J. Weber in his Hardy of Wessex quotes Hardy himself: "The majority of women are quite worthy enough in nature to satisfy any reasonable being."[4]

Hardy's interest in women is paralleled by his compassionate concern about their welfare. Harvey Custis Weber commented upon some of his humanitarian concerns in statements that have almost a twentieth-century ring to them: "He maintained that it was unjust to make marriage the only career open to women and favored women's suffrage at a time when suffragettes were generally viewed as annoying oddities. He complained of the unrealistically sheltered education young girls received at teacher's [sic] colleges. . . . He approved a women's resolve to go by her own rather than her husband's name."[5]

Because of his great love of his women characters and his stated concerns for women's welfare, it seems natural that he should be allied on the side of the emancipators. The question of women's rights was much discussed in Hardy's time. Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman had presented the idea of equality.[6] A much more recent publication was J. S. Mill's On the Subjection of Women, in which Mill advocated the idea that many of the failings for which women have been traditionally penalized are merely qualities which social expectations have inculcated in them; these failings, he maintained, would be removed or minimized if women were allowed freedom in vocations and activities.[7] On the other hand, someone like Schopenhauer, who reasoned that a woman is incapable of logic because she is only an organism manifesting a Will to Live (or to continue life in her children), was a force opposing emancipation.[8]

Indeed, Hardy does show characters dealing with many of the problems inherent in the question of emancipation. Hardy's discussions of the ideas of equality in marriage, vocational independence, and greater opportunities for personal fulfillment put him in the vanguard of the supporters of late nineteenth-century emancipation. Lawrence and Eliot have commented upon Sue Bridehead as a terrifying specter of modernity, and M. Carter Brunson has a dissertation on the development of independence in Thomas Hardy's women.[9]

However, some critics also contend that despite his efforts at presenting emancipated women, Hardy seems to have presented women as basically inferior beings and viewed them more with pity than with respect. Despite all his concerns, he seems to have been so firmly rooted in the traditional stereotyped ideas that he kept presenting

women whose feminine weaknesses must cause them to fail or be seriously hindered in achieving personal liberation. He pictured women whose tendencies inevitably caused them to become victims.

Numerous critics present briefly the idea that Hardy's women possess certain handicapping flaws. Pierre D'Exideuil states this view succinctly: "Hardy . . . could not believe in the quality of the sexes; at no time had he an unlimited faith in the emancipation of women. In his eyes the young girl, even when liberated, was destined to become a matron. No progress, therefore, is possible. The picture which he draws of the conditions amid which the woman herself accords favor or submits to the choice suggested by Nature shows to what extent she is a serf."[10] Evelyn Hardy points out the extent to which Hardy follows traditional codes and suggests possibilities of interpretation: "Since Hardy himself never broke away from the moral code which many of his protagonists transgressed, it is worth considering whether he himself was not taken in by that which, in his novels, he affected to despise."[11] And Irving Howe states how completely Hardy was devoted to the traditional view of womankind. "At the deepest level of his imagination, Hardy held to a vision of the feminine that was thoroughly traditional in celebrating the maternal, the protective, the fecund, the tender, the lifegiving."[12] John Cunliffe in Leaders of the Victorian Revolution points out ways in which Hardy's women show sex-linked flaws: "His women are indeed magnificent creatures . . . but for steadfastness of will and sureness of judgement they are often lamentably deficient."[13] Helen Follett used even stronger words about Hardy's treatment of women: "His judgements of women are censurious in the extreme; indeed, his favorite

motif is the situation which might be of ideal felicity but for a woman's failure in constancy or candor."[14]

In addition to the idea that women have the failings traditionally imputed to them, Thomas Hardy presented characters whose conduct reinforced the idea that nature itself has endowed them with the destiny to be victims. In showing women as victims because of their nature, Thomas Hardy exonerated them from much of the blame for their conduct; yet this removal of blame only made him more compassionate toward them, not more likely to consider them as potentially independent humans. D'Exideuil points out that Hardy saw women as having no long-range control over their behavior: ". . . in reality, these decrees [as to how women will behave] are predetermined. They express the will to live. They are issued subject to a law of necessity. . . ."[15] Duffin discusses Hardy's women as victims also; he points out that although Hardy obviously loved his women characters, he allowed five of them to meet tragic ends and numerous others to suffer greatly. He suggests that the explanation of this seeming contradiction lies in Hardy's view of the realities of women's nature and life. "After all, he saw life as a very hard school, and if the women suffer more than the men it may be because woman is the weaker vessel. . . . It is not Hardy who treats women cruelly, but life--life as Hardy saw it."[16] And the life that Thomas Hardy saw in the late nineteenth century was hard for women, despite the small gains in career opportunities. Hardy stated that there was every need for sympathy and help for women in achieving miximum potential, but the characters he presented show that he still reflected the conventions of the life and customs he saw about him. While opinions were changing at this time, Thomas Hardy was controlled, in the last analysis,

by the idea that true liberation is not possible. Thus his characters, controlled by this view, must trip themselves up and fail to achieve their spiritual, mental, and legal freedom, although, as Duffin says, "Hardy is no misogynist, but true lover indeed."[17]

Hardy would have experienced many factors that might have predisposed him toward such a view. In an essay on nineteenty-century feminine stereotypes Jill Conway presents evidence indicating that the belief in women's basic inferiority was widely held. She mentions the influence of Comte and Spencer, both of whom derived the principles of social organization from biological models.[18] She refers to Spencer's statement "that sex differences could best be understood by assuming 'a somewhat earlier-arrest [sic] of individual evolution in women than in men; necessitated by the reservation of vital power to meet the cost of reproduction.'" According to this view, "Female energy expended in reproduction was not available for psychic and intellectual growth."[19] Conway devotes considerable attention to the biologist, Patrick Geddes, who presented in his book The Evolution of Sex (1889) the idea of large innate differences between the sexes. Conway writes, "Geddes was convinced that sex differences should be viewed as arising from a basic difference in cell metabolism." Thus he stated that the roles were fixed and that neither legislation nor inventions could change them. This idea led him to conclude that "the situation of women in society was not the result of acquired characteristics. It reflected the economy metabolism and its parallel psychic differentiation between the sexes." Conway indicated that Geddes saw "no human guilt to be felt over the inferior position of women" because "it was a function of natural laws which operated well beyond the boundaries of human society."[20] Although

he said that women should use all their potential, he seems to have considered them inferior to men in most ways. Hardy most likely was not familiar with this particular study, but it did reflect the views of many of the intellects of his time and place.

The Geddes study may have had limited circulation, but there was in the nineteenth century no scarcity of advocates for belief in the inferiority of women; and the works of many of these were widely read. Amy Cruse in her book The Victorians and Their Reading discusses some of these writings in her chapter "The New Woman." She mentions a Mrs. Ellis who wrote a popular series of books the overall title of which was Women of England. According to Cruse, Mrs. Ellis said that "'the first thing of importance is to be content to be inferior to men--inferior in mental power in the same proportion that you [sic] are inferior in bodily strength.'"[21] Although Mrs. Ellis supported education for women, she said that its aim was the production of suitable companions for men. Cruse also refers to the idea held by Spencer, of whom she says, "Herbert Spencer maintained that there could be no equality between the sexes since Nature had imposed such a heavy handicap on women."[22] Cruse further mentions a Miss Charlotte Yong, in whose book Womankind ". . . the old view of women's position was to a large extent maintained." Cruse quotes a typical passage from Yong: "'A woman of the highest faculties is, of course, superior to a man of the lowest; but she never attains to anything like the power of a man of the highest ability.'" Cruse also discusses the influence of Queen Victoria, who despite her own independent life style remained opposed to the ideology of the women's movement and expressed this opposition in powerful language.[23]

These materials, then, were representative of the views of large percentages of the readers and contemporaries of Hardy. Despite the lack of definitive proof of what Hardy had or had not read, it is likely that he was influenced by ideas like the ones in these widely read books.

I believe that a detailed analysis of Hardy's women characters according to frequently occurring sex-linked flaws instead of according to their traits that make them appear liberated could be of considerable interest today because of the renewal of interest in women's rights and problems during the sixties and seventies. After winning the right to vote in the twenties and entering the work force in great quantities in the forties, by the sixties women seemed to have beaten a hasty "retreat to the cave" indicated by the media's increased emphasis on domesticity as the ideal of womanly virtue and by the belief shown in popular culture that rearing a family is a woman's most admirable achievement. Percentages of women enrolled in colleges declined in proportion to percentages of men, and there were indications of low job aspiration. Betty Friedan with The Feminine Mystique in 1963 usually receives credit for precipitating the new interest in progress for women. Her analysis of "the problem that has no name" struck responsive chords among women of all levels and led many of them to some questions about whether or not the new domesticity was the answer to all of their problems as human beings.[24] Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex is a more critical analysis of the problems of women in societies in which men's values dominate.[25] As the interest in exploring one's individuality increased in the late sixties, the increased concern of women about their lot in life manifested itself in Kate Millet's Sexual Politics, an analysis of the ways women have traditionally been repressed.[26] Eva Figes' book

Patriarchal Attitudes discusses the ways in which women have been discriminated against because of the custom of masculine protection.[27] Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch, a less belligerent but equally positive statement, emphasizes the extent to which women are viewed as if they were simply incomplete males.[28] A spate of magazine articles has appeared in the wake of these and other major publications and has awakened women to consciousness. Another thrust of activity and interest is certainly evident in the struggle for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Although much has been written, and many injustices have been exposed and corrected, many people still believe that the real battles were won long ago and that the issues under consideration today are merely the results of the rantings of spoiled girls who want to have the advantages of both freedom and protection. Yet thinking women today are still concerned about the harm done by stereotyped views of women's temperament and talents, by barriers to high achievement in careers, by legal restrictions placed on them by marriage and other institutions, and by views that tend to present a woman as unworthy of existence apart from a man. These questions, far from being solved in the nineteenth century by writers such as Thomas Hardy who adumbrated them, are still real and living issues. A study of the traditional stereotypes Hardy presented in his women characters will show that he, despite his interest in more advanced views, was still firmly entrenched in the nineteenth century tradition. Like many a person in the twentieth century, he was subconsciously controlled by the old views and did not break away from them in spite of his conscious statements in favor of emancipation.

Thesis

Hardy's women have flaws which make them unable to function as mature, intelligent adults. Hardy's critics have tended to discuss the "emancipation" of his women, but I believe that each of his important women characters can be seen to possess at least one of the typical characteristics found in the nineteenth century stereotype of women and that in every case these characteristics contribute in a large part toward her difficulties or her downfall. Though Thomas Hardy pleads for better understanding of women, he presents women who are basically inferior to men and thus he never gives a picture of any truly emancipated woman. Among the main characters in his novels can be found examples of (1) the self immolators, (2) the excessively ambitious, (3) the vain coquettes, (4) the capricious ones, (5) the animals, (6) the witches, and (7) the exotics. Most of his women have troubles either based on these qualities or as a closely related result of one of them.

In examining these characters, I will consider each trait and attempt to show that Hardy presented these traits as inherent parts of the women's characters. For each trait I will present characters possessing it in marked degree and will show how the trait contributed to the person's downfall or hardship. I will use characters from the major novels and several minor ones. In some cases a woman may appear under more than one category, but always there will be one trait under which she is primarily categorized.

The women representing self immolation are Cytherea Graye in Desperate Remedies, Tess in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and Sue Bridehead in Jude the Obscure. Mrs. Yeobright and Tamsin in The Return of the

Native exhibit the quality, although to a lesser extent. The women whose problems lie in ambition are Bathsheba Everdene in Far From the Madding Crowd, Eustacia Vye in The Return of the Native, and Sue Bridehead in Jude the Obscure. The vain coquettes are Fancy Day in Under the Greenwood Tree, Elfride Swancourt in A Pair of Blue Eyes, Viviette Constantine in Two on a Tower, and Felice Charmond in The Woodlanders. The capricious women are Miss Aldclyffe in Desperate Remedies, Paula Power in A Laodician, and Lucetta Le Sueur in The Mayor of Casterbridge. A minor character, Mrs. Garland in The Trumpet Major, offers a comic parallel. I shall discuss the women portrayed as animals, witches, and exotics. I shall also include a discussion of one exception, a powerful woman who almost avoids all the problems represented above and does achieve career success. The animals are Suke Damson in The Woodlanders, Car Darch in Tess of the D'Ubervilles, and Arabella Donn in Jude the Obscure. Witches are Elizabeth Endorfield in Under the Greenwood Tree and Eustacia Vye in The Return of the Native. The exotics are the first Mrs. Manston in Desperate Remedies and Matilda Johnson in The Trumpet Major. Finally, the one invincible woman is the somewhat unconvincing Ethelberta Petherwin in The Hand of Ethelberta.

ENDNOTES

[1] Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and The Dynasts (Manchester: University Press, 1937), p. 235.

[2] Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography (London: Hogarth Press, 1954), p. 65.

[3] (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 108.

[4] (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 94.

[5] On a Darkling Plain (University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 193.

[6] (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967, first published 1791).

[7] John Stuart Mill, On the Subjection of Women (London: Longmans, Green, Reador, and Dyer, 1869).

[8] Eva Figes, Patriarchal Attitudes (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1971), pp. 121-123.

[9] Toward Fin de Siecle Emancipation: The Development of Independence in Thomas Hardy's Wessex Women. Dissertation Abstracts, 3138A.

[10] The Human Pair in the Work of Thomas Hardy (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 130.

[11] E. Hardy, p. 254.

[12] Howe, p. 108.

[13] (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1934), p. 216.

[14] Some Modern Novelists (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1918), p. 130.

[15] D'Exideuil, p. 114.

[16] Duffin, p. 238.

[17] Duffin, p. 238.

[18] "Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution," Victorian Studies, 14, No. 1 (September 1970), 47.

[19] Conway, pp. 47-48.

[20] Conway, p. 54.

[21] (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1936), p. 359.

[22] Cruse, p. 357.

[23] Cruse, pp. 358-359.

[24] (New York: Norton, 1963).

[25] (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

[26] (New York: Avon, 1971).

[27] (New York: Fawcett, 1970).

28 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971).

CHAPTER II

SELF-IMMOLATORS

The principle that women were destined for self-denial and self-immolation seems to have been accepted in the nineteenth century without much question. If a woman was taught that women were weak and stupid and that her best role in life was patience and long-suffering through which she could enhance the worth of her husband, then she might view her inborn tendencies to passivity and self-abnegation as virtues. If she had read some of the numerous materials such as Mrs. Ellis' Women of England, in which the writer recommended that wives consider self-sacrifice to be a woman's most important duty,[1] she would have found reinforcement for that idea. Just before the turn of the century Mary Wollstonecraft cried out against this belief. She quoted Rousseau as saying that women should be habitually restrained so that they will be tractable and not rebellious, willing to suffer injustices from men in order not to vex their masters further. Then she commented on the artificiality and ulterior motivation of such a submission: "Formed to live with such an imperfect being as man, they ought to learn from the exercise of their faculties the necessity of forbearance. . . . Of what materials can that heart be composed which can melt when insulted, and instead of revolting at injustice, kiss the rod?"[2] She went on to say that such treatment would dehumanize the woman and make her incapable of mature judgment. But her comments aroused little except criticism, and

the view prevailed that women had within themselves a basic urge to destroy themselves for others.

Although Hardy wrote sympathetically about women's need for self respect and preservation of personal selfhood, he presented a gallery of self-destroyers, women who submit even when other courses of action might have been more appropriate. They possess qualities that lead them to sacrifice themselves for others and to rush headlong into situations which cause harm to themselves and even to others, sometimes the very ones they are trying to help. Although a number of other characters possess this trait to a significant degree (for example, Marty South in The Woodlanders, Tamsin and Mrs. Yeobright in The Return of the Native, and at times Ethelberta Petherwin in The Hand of Ethelberta), I consider the following three to be the most conspicuous examples: Cytherea Graye in Desperate Remedies, Tess Durbeyfield in Tess of the D'Ubervilles, and Sue Bridehead in Jude the Obscure.

Cytherea Graye

A well-educated girl orphaned before her independence in the world was established, Cytherea is employed as personal maid to a domineering older woman, Miss Aldclyffe, who takes an almost abnormal interest in the fortunes of her young employee. Cytherea pleases her employer, unlike several previous maids who have failed. Cytherea falls in love with Edward Springrove, but Miss Aldclyffe encourages her to become interested in one of her favorites, Manston, who can promise financial security. Cytherea remains loyal to Edward until her brother Owen develops a serious health problem and must resign his job to be hospitalized. She then feels morally obliged to support her brother, and

marriage to Manston seems to be the only way. Like a typical self-immolator she says, "'I know that if only I were concerned, I should like risking a single future. But why should I please my useless self over-much, when by doing otherwise I please those who are more valuable than I?"[3]

Her brother, although genuinely sorry that his ailment has been the cause of the alteration in her fortune, states that many women look for financial security in marriage and do not worry about happiness; he suggests that she is being overly delicate in her obstinate refusal of Manston. His words of consolation to her fall short of their intended effect when he says, "'How many thousands of women like you marry for the same reason every year, to secure a home, and mere ordinary, material comforts, which after all go far to make life endurable, if not supremely happy?'" (p. 47).

Owen's attitude here seems similar to the attitudes of other Hardy characters on the subject of women's chances for happiness, a theme which is to recur more strongly in the later novels. Hardy, however, indicated that women more than men have an ability to accept unpleasant circumstances, for he said that "of all the ingenious and cruel satires that from the beginning till now have been stuck like knives into womankind, surely there is not one so lacerating to them and to us who love them, as the trite old fact, that the most wretched of men can, in the twinkling of an eye, find a wife ready to be more wretched still for his company" (p. 351).

Not only can a woman accept such a situation with equanimity; she receives satisfaction in such acceptance. Earlier Hardy has already prepared the reader to accept such an effacement when he described

Cytherea grieving over her lost love: "Perhaps the moral compensation for all a woman's petty cleverness under thriving conditions is the real nobility that lies in her extreme foolishness at these other times of distress; her sheer inability to be simply just, her exercise of an illogical power entirely denied to men in general--the power not only of kissing, but of delighting to kiss the rod by a punctilious observance of the self-immolating doctrines in the Sermon on the Mount" (p. 240).

Cytherea has made her decision. She will sacrifice herself completely on the altar of her brother's welfare. When with this resolve she lies down to sleep, her dreams are of torment. Images of death, punishment, and ritual sacrifices form themselves in her mind most naturally: "She was being whipped with dry bones suspended on strings, which rattled at every blow like those of a malefactor on a gibbet. . . . She could not see the face of the executioner for his mask, but his form was like Manston's" (p. 268).

She awakens to find an ice storm outside and sees the bending trees as an image of herself. At times she believes she is sacrificing freely, but at other times she senses the monstrous nature of the sacrifice, because she knows Manston enjoys her dilemma, "that fact of her being so helpless against the blows of circumstances which renders her so deliciously sweet" (p. 163). Even though she has dismissed any hope of marriage to the man she loves, Cytherea indulges in the luxury of self torture by reliving again and again the happy days of the past and forming bootless daydreams of the future: ". . . She could not help indulging in a woman's pleasure of recreating defunct agonies and lacerating herself in them now and then" (p. 257).

The death images of the dream, the juxtaposition of words indicating the enjoyment of suffering--such words as indulging, agonies, pleasure, lacerating--and the subtle ways in which he describes Cytherea's pain suggest a woman who, despite her efforts toward an energetic ambition and independence, has other qualities that cast her in the role of the martyr. Although Manston turns out to be a murderer and Cytherea is freed from him to be united with her lost love, her sick brother having recovered, Hardy set up a pattern which he was to expand and intensify.

Later heroines will not be so fortunate as Cytherea. Although Samuel Chew, in his major study of Thomas Hardy, shows little admiration for the character of this heroine and feels that there is little in her to suggest the type of character Hardy later developed, he does discuss her tendencies toward self-sacrifice and says that it is "a theme to which Hardy often recurs: animal selfishness against self-sacrificing devotion matched in a struggle for the possession of a loved woman."[4]

Tess Durbeyfield

No character Hardy created shows more clearly the tendency toward self-immolation than does Tess in Tess of the D'Ubervilles, the "pure woman" on whom Hardy lavished an abundance of admirable traits, physical attractiveness as well as spiritual purity. An innocent in an environment that betrays her at every turn, she seems to have a nature which brings about her downfall. Basically kind, she seems lacking in the hardness and self-respect that might have caused her to defend herself at all critical points. She has serious concern for her family, for abstract concepts of right and wrong, and for social standards. These

deep concerns, and her own fear that she may make unwise decisions, cause her to be self-sacrificing beyond the point that is best for herself and in the long run best for her family. A number of critics have pointed out the tendency in Tess to sacrifice herself. Charles Henry Duffin comments on Tess's main problem: ". . . her mind had the touch of yieldingness that was just necessary to allow the touch of animalism in her flesh to respond to great external pressure."[5] In her critical biography, Evelyn Hardy, while expressing also an admiration for Tess, discusses this quality: "Her simplicity and purity are adulterated with a strain likely to bring about her downfall no matter what circumstances attend her--the tendency towards martyrdom and self-sacrifice which Hardy has touched on in his feminine characters in previous novels."[6]

Pierre D'Exideuil comments also on the quality of yieldingness and self-surrender: "To strengthen yet further this predestination to downfall, Hardy adds to his heroine's character a trait very deeply rooted in persons of peasant stock: a readiness to surrender under the pressure of the desires which come roaming [sic] about her."[7] Tess displays this tendency in every crisis. The unselfish motive that causes her to give up her own welfare in favor of others causes her in turn to harm them instead of helping them and to bring down her own destruction upon her. Tess is a sufferer, one who flings her whole self onto the altar of useless sacrifice. She seems destined to do wrong no matter how hard she tries to do right. She sacrifices for her family, for whom she feels responsible as oldest daughter of irresponsible parents. She then places herself at the mercy of her husband, whose purity she overestimates and whose Christian charity she underestimates. She finally gives herself up to Alec, the man who seduced her during her age of innocence, partly

out of guilt because her beauty caused his downfall as a minister. Her last sacrifice is her greatest--she freely gives her life to fulfill the letter of a moral code that takes no human values into consideration. Evelyn Hardy discusses the extreme lengths to which Tess goes in giving up self and self-respect: "Her mute obedience to his [Clare's] wishes, which prevents her repeated attempts to be honest with him imply [sic] the longing of a passionate woman to be possessed and dominated by a more powerful mate. But there is also something abject, something unconsciously self-destructive in this passivity . . . only a despairing soul allows itself to be destroyed by someone else . . . by an inner unconscious consent. [She was] . . . the victim of her own strong sensuality, and on an insidious need to immolate herself under the deceptive guise of benefiting others."[8]

Early in the story the reader begins to sense Tess's attitude of self sacrifice toward her family. Tess, just home from a festive afternoon, feels keen remorse about neglecting her family. Tess contrasts sharply with her mother, whose "instinctive plan for relieving herself of her labors lay in postponing them."[9]

Tess shows further evidence of her willingness to sacrifice herself for her family when she volunteers to take the beehives to market after her father has disabled himself for the job by excessive roistering in celebration of his discovery of his supposed claim to nobility. Too proud to call on any of her friends to help her, Tess offers herself as a sacrifice for her father's failure, insisting on her ability to handle the job. When she awakens on the road, having gone to sleep at the reins and allowed their only horse to be killed, Tess at once takes all the blame, shifting none of it to her father, whose job it was to take

the hives to market in the first place. Although she has tried to help, she has brought disaster. She laments, "'Tis all my doing--all mine! No excuse for me--none! What will mother and father live on now?'" (p. 36). When the shiftless Durbeyfields rouse themselves and put off work in order to bury Prince properly, Tess shows the extent to which she is remorseful, for Hardy tells us that her face was "dry and pale as though she regarded herself in the light of a murderess" (p. 38).

Tess's intense feelings of guilt over the death of the horse and her subsequent need to expiate her guilt feelings lead her to take actions she might otherwise have avoided, actions which later prove unfortunate for her. Her parents have been hoping she will go to seek her fortune among her newly-discovered relatives, but Tess is reluctant to go. She leaves unwillingly, and her leaving makes her vulnerable to Alex, the D'Urberville man her parents had expected to help her financially. By submitting to her parents' wishes, she harms herself and becomes unable to help her parents.

After her seduction and the birth and death of her child, she leaves home and works as a dairy maid. At the dairy she meets Angel Clare, to whom she is to make even greater a sacrifice of self. Tess's nature shows even in small aspects of her behavior, for she continually tortures herself about her guilty past, and, convinced she is not good enough for Angel, makes every attempt to get him to fall in love with one of the three other dairy maids, whom she considers purer and thus more deserving than herself, despite the fact that they are obviously less attractive and less personable than she. Hardy shows the reader one scene in which Tess is attempting to interest Clare in one of the other girls--either of them--instead of herself. She plays down her own charms and tries to

emphasize theirs. Although she mentions several points in which she believes they are superior to her, her words of self-condemnation are wasted, and Angel continues to admire her.

After his choice of her has become known, she continues to attempt to debase herself, this time to the dairymaids who have admired her prospective husband. Unable to tell them why she feels unworthy to marry Clare, she can merely cry alone, making resolutions which torture her even more. "She resolved, with a bursting heart, to tell her history to Angel Clare, despite her mother's command--to let him for whom she lived and breathed despise her if he would, and her mother regard her as a fool, rather than preserve a silence which might be deemed a treachery to him, and which somehow seemed a wrong to these" (p. 255).

Later, after the wedding, the memory of the three good girls returns to haunt her and reinforce her determination to tell him. "They were simple and innocent girls on whom the unhappiness of unrequited love had fallen; they had deserved better at the hands of Fate. She had deserved worse--yet she was the chosen one. It was wicked of her to take all without paying. She would pay to the uttermost farthing" (p. 284). Feelings of guilt toward her parents, her lover, and her friends combine to create her feelings of despair and to make her resolve to perform another deed to try to expiate her sins no matter what the expiation may cost herself and her loved ones. As the proposed marriage draws near, she tortures herself with her need to make the sacrifice to confessing her sin to Clare. She worries again each time she tries to confess and cannot do so. She writes him a letter, but she accidentally slides it under the carpet and he never finds it.

At last, when Angel makes a confession similar to hers, Tess finds the courage to tell him. She then receives the punishment she has been expecting. When he is completely unable to forgive, "She perceived in his words the realization of her own apprehensive foreboding in former times. He looked upon her as a species of imposter; a guilty woman in the guise of an imposter" (p. 293). Since she feels so great a guilt, she accepts his judgment without making any serious effort to change his mind. Complete self denial is her response to his rejection. She pledges to him that she will plan her life according to his plans: "'I shan't do anything, unless you order me to; and if you go away from me I shall not follow 'ee; and if you never speak to me anymore I shall not ask why, unless you tell me I may. I will obey you like your wretched slave, even if it is to lie down and die'" (p. 294). In the scene that follows, Tess is so absorbed in her complete self-denial that like a cat or a dog, she interprets his scolding as a reprimand she deserves and does not consider the possibilities for reconciliation. Here, as in the situations with her family when she makes efforts to save them through self denial and just makes things worse, she loses any chance she might have had for convincing Clare that he should not end the marriage. The tendency to self-immolation is so strong that she cannot preserve enough self respect even to plead a case for herself. Suicide is one possibility: she can drown herself in the river as a sacrifice, but she rejects this possibility because her suicide would make him a murderer. Again she thinks of committing suicide by strangling herself with a cord but does not, because she thinks that he, being wronged, should be the one to kill her:

> '. . . it was thought of entirely on your account--to set you free without the scandal of the divorce that I thought you would have to get. I should have never dreamt of doing it on mine. However, to do it with my own hand is too good for me, after all. It is you, my ruined husband, who ought to strike the blow. I think I should love you more, if that were possible, if you could bring yourself to do it, since there's no other way out for 'ee. I feel I am so utterly worthless! So very greatly in the way' (p. 306).

Hardy comments: ". . . she took everything as her deserts. . . . The firmness of her devotion to him was indeed almost pitiful: . . . she sought not her own; was not provoked; thought no evil of his treatment of her. She might just now have been Apostolic Charity herself returned to a self-seeking modern world" (p. 309). When Clare brings up the subject of future harm to their children or himself, she loses all hope that their marriage can be saved. Hardy here gives a commentary on the nature of women and their tendency to let themselves be sacrificed to circumstances: "Yet he [Clare] accepted the momentary presentment as if it were the inevitable" (p. 312). In the sleepwalking scene, when Clare picks her up and walks with her, she momentarily thinks that he may drop her into the stream and drown her. She expresses no concern for her own welfare, feeling that death at his hands would be an honorable fate. "So easefully had she delivered her whole being up to him that it pleased her to think he was regarding her as his absolute possession, to dispose of as he should choose. It was consoling . . . to feel that he really recognized her now as his wife Tess and did not cast her off

even if in that recognition he went so far as to abrogate to himself the right of harming her" (p. 317). He does not harm her; in fact, he is affectionate toward her, but when he awakens the next day, she dares not tell him what he has done for fear that he would consider his actions undignified or that he would think she was taking advantage of him. Had she told him of the sleepwalking event, perhaps he would have recognized the strength of his love and would have returned to her, but Tess has within her so little of self-preservation that she cannot tell him what has happened. When he finally leaves, she throws no difficulties in his way. She gives Clare complete control, on the assumption that he is best qualified to determine her punishment. Hardy comments on the tendency to self-destruction that she demonstrates here: "If Tess had been artful, had she made a scene, fainted, wept hysterically, . . . he would probably not have withstood her. But her mood of long-suffering made his way easy for him. . . . Pride, too, entered into her submission--which perhaps was a symptom of that reckless acquiescence" (p. 324). Another instance of immolation comes for Tess when she has to tell her mother about the breakup of her marriage, for which Mrs. Durbeyfield completely blames Tess. After all, Tess has failed to accept Mrs. Durbeyfield's advice not to tell her husband the guilty secret. Once again, Tess's desire to sacrifice herself for the good of others has caused only trouble and condemnation. Tess now has no financial support from either husband or parents.

Too full of a sense of worthlessness to resort to her in-laws for aid, since she feels that she deserves nothing from Angel's family, she persists in doing difficult farm labor to maintain her independence. Then her seducer, Alex, unexpectedly comes into her life again. He has

become an evangelist and has supposedly renounced women forever in his search for spiritual purity. Even though he is the man who has caused most of Tess's trouble, she feels guilty about the fact that her physical attraction appeals to him. When they first meet again, he is uncomfortable in her gaze, and his reprimand reawakens her old feelings of guilt about herself, "the wretched sentiment which had often come to her before, that in inhabiting the fleshly tabernacle with which nature had endowed her she was somehow doing wrong" (p. 395). He blames her for the attractiveness which distracts him from his spiritual vocation--he does not mean that she has done any specific thing but that her mere existence has made it impossible for him to continue his religious career. Yet he uses this belief in an effort to get her to share his life: "'You have been the cause of my backsliding,' he continued, . . . 'you should be willing to share it, and leave that mule you call husband forever'" (p. 422). Furious at his accusation, she hits him with her harsh workglove and brings blood, thus objectifying the guilt which she feels. "'Now, punish me!' she said, turning up her eyes to him with the hopeless defiance of the sparrow's gaze before its captor twists its neck. 'Whip me, crush me. . . . I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim--that's the law!'" (p. 423). She knows she is defeated, because Alex will count on her continued helplessness and unwillingness to resort to her in-laws. With Angel gone, she turns to Alex as her last hope of financial security.

By the time Angel has realized that he loves her and is ready to reclaim her, she has become Alex's mistress. When Angel comes back and asks Tess to live with him, her anger at Alex's betrayal is so great that she stabs and kills him in what turns out to be a sacrifice of her

own life both socially and physically. With Alex gone and with Angel reconciled to her, she spends an idyllic five days in his exclusive company, her joy tinged only with a small fear that his devotion may not last. Since his feelings are the only basis for her existence, she hopes she may not outlive his love for her. "'I would rather be dead and buried when the time comes for you to despise me. . . . Considering what my life has been I cannot see why any man should, sooner or later, be able to help despising me. . .'" (p. 498). At last, in their efforts to leave the country, they arrive at Stonehenge, a most appropriate place for her final sacrifice. Not satisfied merely to bring her to this location, Hardy then presents the grotesquely appropriate action of having her lie down upon the altar for her last nap. Recognizing the shortness of her remaining time, she makes no effort to escape her fate--as indeed she has acquiesced in every other horror that she has experienced. As she is to be carried away, she expresses resignation in terms that reveal her view of herself: "'It is as it should be. . . . This happiness could not have lasted. . . . Now I shall not live for you [Angel] to despise me'" (p. 505).

Tess's reply to her executioners, "'I am ready,'" seems typical of her responses in all critical situations. She is ready to give up a night's sleep to rescue her family financially. This willingness causes more self-hatred, for her trip to market causes the death of Prince. In her readiness to atone for the financial damage done, she sacrifices herself to go to her wealthy relatives, where she meets the ruin that is to follow her. She is ready to tell all to her husband, and ready to accept his harsh, inequalitarian judgment of her. At last she is ready to sacrifice her freedom and finally her very life. It is as if

the unremovable burden of guilt which she has borne from the first forces her to seek immolation of self. A better example could hardly be found of the trait of self destruction found in many women. Tess, failing to free herself from the trap of self-torture at any point (and in many situations a person with less instinct toward self destruction might have escaped) continues in the traditional pattern of the woman who is expected to take all blame for situations involving herself. "Wicked," the word she frequently uses, is a part of the way she and other Hardy women see themselves. Although they are capable of thinking of many advanced theories about their equality with men (in many of her more rational moments Tess is aware of the monstrosity of the crimes perpetrated against her), nevertheless the assumption that the man shall be considered right and the woman shall be considered wrong is firmly implanted in their minds. As with Tess, it motivates their actions to the extent of being destructive to their personal welfare.

Sue Bridehead

Although in Jude the Obscure Hardy presents a woman whose main characteristic is intellectual ambition, Sue Bridehead has traits of self-immolation also. Sue's numerous neurotic and individualistic tendencies, especially that of self-criticism, have received considerable attention. Robert Heilman suggests that she uses her self-degrading statements merely as ploys[10] designed to invoke pity and to avoid having to take a firm stand of any question, but the frequency and apparent sincerity of these remarks make it likely that they are true cries of her spirit. Later Heilman refers to "the tyrannical control of a single element in the personality--the self-blaming, self-flagellating impulse

which Sue now formulates in Christian terms but which has been part of her all along."[11] This characteristic is an important part of her make-up. It can be seen in her extremely uncomplimentary statements about herself, in her playing cat and mouse with Jude by arousing passion she does not wish to fulfill, in her regrets about the suffering she causes Phillotson in their unsatisfactory marriage, and in her return to a self-torturing version of Christianity when she tries to assuage the guilt she feels about the death of her children.

The weakness of purpose that will cause her to debase herself so harshly in her later career is foreshadowed early in the story when Sue dares to buy statues of Greek deities to decorate her rented room. Knowing that her landlady is Christian, she trembles at the thought of her discovery of this sacrilegious purchase.[12] So distraught over this blasphemy is she that she cannot sleep. The self-condemnation that she expresses here prepares the reader to expect the great number of self-derogatory references Sue makes toward herself in the rest of the novel.

The next instance of her self-contempt comes when she is beginning to understand Jude's feeling toward her. Because she is used to associating with men and boys in a merely companionable way, she has been slow to comprehend the effect of his passion for her. "'It is all my fault. Everything is my fault always'" (p. 166), she tells him as she realizes she has inadvertently played the part of a tease. After he explains to her that their heightened relationship is partially his responsibility too and accepts the fact that she belongs to another man (Mr. Phillotson, to whom she is engaged), she still feels it necessary to write him a self-condemning note begging him to see her again and repeating her apology for wrong-doing. "'Forgive me for my petulance yesterday! I

was horrid to you: I know it, and I feel perfectly miserable at my horridness. . . . Keep me as your friend . . . with all my faults'" (p. 167).

After this abject apology, she dares to ask Jude to participate in her wedding by giving her away to his rival. After all her grief about hurting him, she turns right around and does the thing almost certain to hurt herself as well as him. Jude wonders about this action: ". . . was Sue simply so perverse that she willfully gave herself and him pain for the odd and mournful luxury of practising long suffering in her own person. . .?" (p. 184).

The marriage to Phillotson, a reasonable man some fifteen years older than she, is an act of immolation in itself. Having been dismissed from school with the shadow of a scandal over her head, she feels that she has to go through with the wedding despite the fact that after she became engaged she had fallen in love with Jude. She has feared the opinions of the public and has been afraid of what would happen should she change her mind. So she brings herself to the altar practically as a sacrifice to convention, thinking she will be able to accept the marriage in time. But omens are not favorable: Hardy speaks of her in terms not quite fitted for a bride: ". . . the slim little wife of a husband whose person was disagreeable to her, the ethereal, fine-nerved, sensitive girl, quite unfitted by temperament and instinct to fulfill the conditions of the matrimonial relation with Phillotson, possibly with scarcely any man. . ." (p. 282). The union, which was formed out of regard for mere convention, is distasteful to her, but she tortures herself by continuing it until her nerves rebel. After returning from a trip home, she finds that she can no longer tolerate their relationship

and takes up residence in cramped quarters under the stairs sleeping on some old rugs from which she has improvised an uncomfortable bed. Further, once the decision is made to sever the relationship, she cannot proceed in a self-respecting manner; her guilt feelings do not allow such action.

When Phillotson, waking up in the middle of the night to find his wife gone, discovers her huddled in the closet like a little animal, he begins to admit to himself what he has suspected but refused to believe. He now knows that she is utterly repulsed by his physical person. He reacts with a mixture of hurt pride and desire to rebuke her. Has he not, he reasons, done everything possible to make her happy? She has nothing to complain about, surely. Instead of trying to defend herself, however, she merely blurts out, "'It is wrong and wicked of me, I suppose!'" (p. 233). Despite her attempt to get him to understand some small part of her feelings, she nevertheless thinks the failure to fulfill the vow is hers and continues to castigate herself for it. "'I am in the wrong. I always am!'" (p. 235). After he agrees to allow her to live independently in his house for a while, she replies, "'I do not deserve your kindness'" (p. 237). Although she has felt guilty about the disgust she feels for her former husband, she feels equally guilty about bringing him unhappiness. During his illness she visits him and talks with him freely. She apologizes again, saying, "'I have been so wicked--as to do what I have done'" (p. 265). She is legally free now but cannot use her freedom. Instead she says to Jude, "'I have an uncomfortable feeling that my freedom has been obtained under false pretences!'" (p. 270).

Her remorse about her own thoughts, about hurting Jude, and about ruining Phillotson's life is completely eclipsed later on after she and Jude have a family out of wedlock. Jude's child by his first marriage, a dismal, prematurely old little boy, is distraught when he learns that there is to be a fourth child in the family. He believes Sue is wicked to have another child. Sue cannot explain that she did not want a baby. She only exclaims, "'Oh, why should nature's law be mutual butchery!'" (p. 323). Bewildered, he kills his little brother and sister and then commits suicide, thinking he is helping his parents. Sue, thinking that she has been the cause of the deaths, now has something concrete on which her vague but very real guilt feelings can rest. Her belief that she is wicked has finally been confirmed--she has, in her own mind, caused three deaths. The need for repentance is so great that she can now devise numerous methods of self-torture. She feels that "'fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word'" (p. 357).

As Sue continues to take the blame for the deaths of the children, her self-mortification takes the form of a joyless submission to the outward forms of the punitive Christianity which she has previously rejected on an intellectual basis. "'We must conform! All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. . . . It is no use fighting God'" (p. 360). "'We should mortify the flesh--the terrible flesh--the curse of Adam'" (p. 362). "'I cannot humiliate myself too much. I should like to prick myself all over with pins and bleed out the badness that is in me'" (p. 363). These and numerous other outcries indicate her desire to blame and punish herself. Finally Jude discovers her in church, a heap at the

foot of the cross, sobbing away in a repentance that can never be resolved by forgiveness. Here she refers to herself as "'a vile creature--too worthless to mix with ordinary human beings'" (p. 369). Her remorse about living out of wedlock with Jude leads her to believe that she must renounce him, for she feels guilty about having aroused passions she is unable and unwilling to fulfill. And yet her propensity for doing harm seems merely to have increased, for to leave Jude now will be just another act in the series of cruelties she sees herself destined to continue doing, and punishing herself for, throughout her life. Indeed every action she takes now causes her to feel remorse. Sue cannot look rationally on what has happened and maintain a course consistent with her intelligence, for her tendency to immolate herself causes her to continue to kill her spirit with remorse.

It becomes clear to her toward the last that the only right course of action is to renounce even the domestic relationship with Jude and go back to her legal husband. This solution will have the double effect of fulfilling the letter of the law and of punishing herself by making a sacrifice to Phillotson and to the conventionality she feels has triumphed. She admits that she has no love for Phillotson but feels that returning to him will be suitable punishment. "'I shall try to learn to love him by obeying him'" (p. 380). Hardy in recording their remarriage ceremony shows her own role in the torture to which she is committing herself when he mentions ". . . the self-sacrifice of the woman on the altar of what she was pleased to call her principles. . ." (p. 388). The marriage is not consummated for a few weeks, during which time she suffers hideous remorse whenever she is tempted to go back to Jude. Finally, when she submits to Phillotson, the atmosphere is more

like that of a funeral than a wedding. Even the neighbors know what her attitudes are and realize that she has given herself to her husband as a punishment for feelings toward her lover (p. 422). Her loss of respect is complete when the coarse Arabella, Jude's first wife, to whom he has returned, has the privilege of declaring that Sue, despite all her frenzied religious protestations, has found no peace.

So the sensitive young woman, extremely intense in all her doings, has never been able to overcome her tendency to punish and degrade herself. In Sue's case it is a highly developed sense of remorse which drives her to self-flagellation for most of her deeds, even the ones she does from unselfish motives. Indeed wicked seems to be the term she uses to describe herself most frequently; and although at times she may be using it in the self-seeking hope that someone may contradict this judgment, the number and vehemence of such outcries lend credence to their sincerity. Although Hardy describes her mind as radiant and her theories as sound, like many another of his heroines she cannot free herself from the tendency to immolation that, in addition to harming those about her, makes her thoroughly unable to follow through on her advanced ideas of how life should be lived.

Summary

These three women, then, show the quality of useless denial of self. Cytherea is important because she foreshadows Hardy's more mature treatment of self-sacrificing women. This early character does immolate herself, but her sacrifice involves nothing more than making a change in the man with whom she is to fulfill her life plan as a woman. Tess and Sue, on the other hand, use their tendencies to self-sacrifice in ways

that do not reinforce women as predominantly sexual entities. Tess sacrifices herself to a principle of unnatural physical purity. Unlike Tess, Sue attempts to rebel against standards of morality and at first uses her intellectual powers effectively. But when she finds herself in situations requiring action rather than philosophy, she is as helpless as Tess. She immolates herself to the ideal of an unnatural intellect. Fancy pursues the concrete success of wifehood; Tess and Sue have pursued abstractions and have been destroyed.

ENDNOTES

1 Amy Cruse, The Victorians and Their Reading (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1936), p. 339.

2 Mary Wollstonecraft, "The Rights of Women," in Female Liberation, Robert Sapler, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 135-136.

3 Thomas Hardy, Desperate Remedies (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1871), p. 267. All page numbers from Desperate Remedies refer to this edition.

4 Thomas Hardy: Poet & Novelist (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Bryn Mawr College Press, 1921), p. 30.

5 Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and the Dynasts (Manchester: University Press, 1937), p. 220.

6 Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography (London: Hogarth Press, 1954), p. 231.

7 The Human Pair in the Work of Thomas Hardy (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 110.

[8] Evelyn Hardy, p. 234.

[9] Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Ubervilles (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1891), p. 20. All page numbers from Tess refer to this edition.

[10] "Hardy's Sue Bridehead," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 22 (1966), p. 311.

[11] Heilman, p. 316.

[12] Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1923; first published in 1895), p. 184. All page numbers from Jude refer to this edition.

CHAPTER III

THE AMBITIOUS: CAREER WOMEN, INTELLECTUALS, AND AESTHETES

To what extent should a woman be ambitious, and in what direction should her ambition, if any, run? To what extent is she capable of being independent? These were questions being discussed in Hardy's time as well as today--and then, as now, they were not successfully resolved. Amy Cruse in her study of the reading of the Victorians discussed women's desire to expand their accomplishments. Mentioning their interests in education, the professions, government, and reform movements, she concluded that "the ambitions and claims of the aspiring women varied according to the individual."[1] John Stuart Mill's tract On The Subjection of Women (1869) discussed a common attitude of the age, the belief that a woman who searches for independence is probably incapable of maintaining it, partially because of deficiencies within herself. Vanity, capriciousness, desire for conformity, and limited intellect are some of the forces mitigating against such an accomplishment. And according to beliefs Mill was trying to refute in his tract, the ambition itself may be a danger, because it may unsuit the woman for accepting the station in life she must have in her narrow society. Cruse discussed the works of Herbert Spencer and some of the women who wrote books of advice to women. Two such authors were a Mrs. Ellis and Miss Charlotte Yonge. All three of these writers discussed the heavy handicap

placed on women by nature, and all implied that this handicap disqualified them from achievement. The writers implied, however, that achievements outside the home were unwise anyway. These writers represent a conservative force opposed to the idea of women seeking satisfaction in areas not related to their improvement as wives and mothers.[2]

Hardy presented three women characters for whom ambition is important. These women express in words and in deeds a desire for a life different in some significant way from that of the majority of their associates. They have some talent or ability and consciously attempt to use it. They seem to recognize their superiority to the other women around them. Although other Hardy women at times show tendencies toward ambition, the three main examples are Bathsheba Everdene in Far From the Madding Crowd, Eustacia Vye in The Return of the Native, and Sue Bridehead in Jude the Obscure. His ambitious women are seriously handicapped by flaws, or harm themselves and possibly others even through the use of this ambition.

Bathsheba Everdene

Although there are stirrings of ambition in Elfride Swancourt in A Pair of Blue Eyes (she has had a novel published and reviewed) and other early characters, Bathsheba Everdene in Far From the Madding Crowd is the first one who displays this quality to an interesting degree. Henry Charles Duffin in his criticism of the novel says of her: "There is nothing subtle or wonderful in Bathsheba's nature. . . . Bathsheba is prose, and pedestrian at that. Yet she is a fine character."[3] Part of what makes her so fine is the ambition to be independent which reveals

itself strongly but which is endangered by her desire for flattery and her instability.

Benjamin Sankey, in a discussion of the major novels, says of Bathsheba that she "is a puzzling combination of personal strength and feminine weakness. She has freshness and charm, good intentions, even a sense of responsibility."[4] Irving Howe considers her "striking" but says that she realizes the limitation placed on her achievements by the fact that she is a woman.[5] Albert J. Guerard in a discussion of the women of the novels says that she "becomes almost a symbolic figure of resourcefulness and endurance" and that "she is the first of Hardy's heroines to face her life at all squarely."[6]

James Granville Southworth, in his chapter devoted to Hardy's women, mentions several major interests he had in their qualities. One of these interests is "that restless period . . . when she is passing from late adolescence into young womanhood, when she is longing with a mad impulse for larger, freer life."[7] Bathsheba is in this stage of life when the reader meets her. Perched on top of a wagon of household goods, she is arguing with the gatekeeper about the passage charge. Gabriel, who is to become important later in the story, pays the charge for her, and she goes on through in a huff, too piqued about losing an argument to be grateful to the man who has paid her charge. The reader thus expects Bathsheba to perform other acts asserting her independence. And, though Gabriel knows she has this quality, he is willing to accept it. Hardy analyzes Gabriel's line of reasoning in a statement that applies to the other women characters as well as to Bathsheba: "The only superiority in women that is tolerable to the rival sex is, as a rule,

that of the unconscious kind; but a superiority which recognizes itself may sometimes please by suggesting possibilities of capture to the subordinated man."[8]

Bathsheba's attitude toward marriage and men is one important way in which she shows her desire to be independent. She announces to Gabriel, when he is discussing the possibility of marriage, "'I hate to be thought men's property in that way, though possibly I shall be had some day'" (p. 33). A rather untypical statement this would have been before mid-century, revealing as it does a highly developed consciousness of herself as a person and not as prospective chattel. She admits, however, that she has been influenced by the emphasis prevalent in her milieu when she counts the advantages of such a union: "'A marriage would be very nice in one sense. People would talk about me and think I had won my battle, and I should feel triumphant, and all that. But a husband . . . he'd always be there. . . . Whenever I looked up, there he'd be. . . . I shouldn't mind being a bride at a wedding, if I could be one without having a husband. But since a woman can't show off in that way by herself, I shan't marry--at least not yet'" (p. 33). Oak considers her remarks nonsense, for he has never before met a woman able to see through the desire for attention that doubtless has passed for love on too many occasions. He is not even able to appreciate her desire for freedom, to realize that to a person of her temperament the thought of having a person with her at all times might be a terror instead of a consolation, and to understand that a woman could possibly consider her worth diminished by a person who possessed her, no matter how benevolently.

Bathsheba's attitude is further revealed when Boldwood presses his suit upon her. One part of her feels responsible for the predicament that she is in as object of his attentions, because after all, his courtship has come about as a result of her sending him an affectionate valentine when she was in a whimsical mood one boring Sunday afternoon. But she cannot accept his proposal: "Had she felt, which she did not, any wish whatever for the married state in the abstract she could not reasonably have rejected him. . ." (p. 148). In connection with this incident Hardy mentions the conflict of her "thoughtfulness against her impulsive nature under a deliberative aspect. . . . Many of her thoughts were perfect syllogisms; unluckily they always remained thoughts. Only a few were irrational assumptions; but, unfortunately, they were the ones which most frequently grew into deeds" (p. 149). Some of the rustics approve her desire for independence, one of the men expressing the sentiment thus: "'I don't see why a maid should take a husband when she's bold enough to fight her own battles, and don't want a home; for 'tis keeping another woman out!'" (p. 171).

Yet Bathsheba has hardly set up a pattern of independent behavior when she lapses into the most trivial clichés in speech and behavior. After talking with Gabriel some moments, she throws away a large part of her argument in order to discourage him: "'I want somebody to tame me; I am too independent; and you would never be able to, I know'" (p. 34). The very independence which she has valued so highly a few moments ago she now states she would like taken away by a dominating husband. Surely if anyone is looking for a woman in English literature who is ready to claim herself as a person, Bathsheba proves to be a disappointment when she begins to scorn her own independence.

Later, when Boldwood very logically and predictably continues to urge her to marry him, her strain of independence asserts itself. She has enjoyed her position as head of the farm and is not yet ready to buy social approval at the price of freedom. Hardy analyzes her situation in a way that points out Bathsheba's tendency toward independence: "It appears that ordinary men take wives because possession is not possible without marriage, and that ordinary women accept husbands because marriage is not possible without possession; with totally differing aims the method is the same on both sides. But the understood incentive on the woman's part was wanting here. Besides, Bathsheba's position as absolute mistress of a farm and house was a novel one and the novelty had not yet begun to wear off" (pp. 148-49). Bathsheba is a business woman, controller of her destiny (at least her immediate destiny), and despite the suitability of Mr. Boldwood, she cannot yet bring herself to give up her independence. The remarkable point here is that she at least recognizes the desirable aspects of her present situation, unlike most of her contemporaries in literature and life.

But, although Bathsheba has quite creditable leanings in the direction of independence, a swashbuckling soldier is the one who finally leads her into a marriage which appeals to her at the time but which she soon begins to consider degrading. Troy simply circumvents her intellect and appeals to her on a physical level. Hardy comments upon her loss of independence and strength and shows that as an independent woman she has taken a greater downfall than an average woman. "Bathsheba loved Troy in the way that only self-reliant women love when they abandon their self-reliance. When a strong woman recklessly throws away her strength she is worse than a weak woman who has never had any strength to throw

away. One source of her inadequacy is the novelty of the occasion. She has never had practice in making the best of such a condition. Weakness is doubly weak by being new" (p. 214). All her efforts toward self-reliance have failed, and their failure is the more painful to her because of her previous strength. After a brief time of what passes for happiness, Bathsheba very rapidly becomes enlightened about the nature of the man to whom she has so capriciously consigned herself. He has all the faults that would cause her to be shamed in the community --he drinks excessively, he is slack in work, he manages the workers poorly, he runs up gambling debts, and he is unfaithful to his proud wife. It is just as Bathsheba has feared in her more rational moments. She sees herself caught in a trap she has sprung herself, a prisoner of the very conventionality and submissiveness she has previously loathed.

> Her pride was indeed brought low by despairing discoveries of her spoliation by marriage with a less pure nature than her own. She chafed to and fro in rebelliousness, like a caged leopard; her whole soul was in arms. . . . Until she had met Troy, Bathsheba had been proud of her position as a woman; it had been a glory to her to know that her lips had been touched by no man's on earth. . . . She hated herself now. In those earlier days she had always nourished a secret contempt for girls who were the slaves of the first good-looking young fellow who should choose to salute them. She had never taken kindly to the idea of marriage in the abstract as did the majority of women she saw about her . . . that she had felt herself sufficient to herself, and had in the independence of

> her girlish heart fancied there was a certain degradation in renouncing the simplicity of a maiden existence to become the humbler half of an indifferent matrimonial whole--were facts now bitterly remembered (p. 315).

To give up her freedom for a whim is bad enough to Bathsheba, but to give it up for someone who is now contemptible in her eyes is unbearable.

Bathsheba's disposition dictates an act of rebellion. If she despises her husband to the extent that he is a humiliation to her, why not just get rid of him? The idea has tempting possibilities and appeals to her sense of freedom at first. But then she decides that separation would humiliate her too much to compensate for her regained independence --after all, she has already faced the ultimate degradation. "'It is only women with no pride in them who run away from their husbands. There is one position worse than that of being found dead in your husband's house from his ill-usage, and that is, to be found alive through having gone to the house of somebody else. A runaway wife is an encumbrance to everybody, a burden to herself and a byword--all of which make up a heap of misery greater than any that comes by staying at home--though this may include the trifling items of insult, beating, and starvation . . . stand your ground, and be cut to pieces'" (p. 351). Here, Bathsheba is asserting herself, but in so doing she consigns herself to a submissive position.

In addition to her attitudes toward marriage, she shows her desire for independence by her determination to run the farm immediately after she inherits it, while she is still single. She wants to command the respect of her subordinates even if she must use harsh methods. She

decides not to hire a bailiff after dismissing the former one for thieving, and the men are amazed that they will be answerable directly to her. She has already displayed a praiseworthy calm in an emergency involving a fire (p. 753) that indicates firmness of purpose and desire as well as ability to carry on independently. The conclusion of her first address to her workers re-establishes her faith in her own powers: "'Now mind, you have a mistress instead of a master. I don't yet know my powers or my talents in farming; but I shall do my best. . . . Don't any unfair ones among you (if there are any such, but I hope not) suppose that because I'm a woman I don't understand the difference between bad goings-on and good. . . . I shall be up before you are awake; I shall be afield before you are up; and I shall have breakfasted before you are afield. In short, I shall astonish you all'" (p. 493).

Bathsheba's next indication of her ambition for independence comes when she whets up the courage to go the farmer's market, where she will doubtless be the only woman present in a business capacity. She begins by talking first with men she knows but decides that she must not worry about the social amenities if she is to succeed in business. Her reception there is rather mixed: "Those of the farmers with whom she had no dealings (by far the greater part) were continually asking each other, 'Who is she?' The reply would be--'Farmer Everdene's niece; took on Weatherbury upper Farm; turned away the baily, and swears she'll do everything herself.' The other man would shake his head. 'Yes, 'tis a pity she's so headstrong,' the first would say. 'But we ought to be proud of her--she lightens up the old place. 'Tis such a shapely maid, however, that she'll soon get picked up'" (p. 103).

In dealing with workers, one of the most decisive moves she makes is to fire the man who loves her. Gabriel has done an unacceptable thing; he has criticized her for deceiving Boldwood. "'I cannot allow any man to--to criticize my private conduct!'" (p. 154) she declares as she sends him away. This decisive stroke proves that she will now allow anyone's opinions to bind her but that she will make her workers accept her authority without question. However, the nature of the criticism that she has refused to accept is rather illuminating; since the charge is quite true, she has reinforced her authority at the price of indulgence in personal whim and has made herself vulnerable to one of the most valid questions anti-feminists frequently raise against women in positions of responsibility; can they be objective enought to keep their feelings from causing them to be unfair? In this case Bathsheba fails the test, and her failure is brought home to her in a humiliating way: soon afterward she has to call Gabriel back to perform surgery on a number of ailing sheep because he is the only qualified person in the vicinity. When first asked, he refuses because of her previous conduct which he considers discourteous. The proud mistress resorts to the oldest of all clichés; she breaks down into tears in the presence of all her subordinates, unable to maintain her composure and doubly stung by the knowledge of her emotionality. She finally decides that she must take the advice of one of her own workers: "'I wouldn't cry about it, miss. Why not ask him softer like?'" (p. 160). Only the courteous suggestion of this hired man prevents her from humiliating herself further. Finally, when she rehires Gabriel after he saves the lives of her sheep, she has lost her position of power and is practically begging.

A small incident at shearing time shows how Bathsheba's use of her authority is mixed with the instability traditionally associated with womanly nature. Bathsheba appears in a new, beautiful riding habit and deliberately allows Gabriel to see her walking with his rival, Boldwood. Gabriel, trying not to interrupt his work at the same time he is taking in this spectacle, nicks the sheep and makes it bleed. Bathsheba immediately shifts out of her role as temptress and into her role as chief authority: "'O Gabriel! You who are so strict with the other men--see what you are doing yourself'" (p. 170). Since Oak is aware that Bathsheba knows it is her fault that he has injured the sheep (just as she has also wounded him), her harsh remonstrance could make the reader ready to relegate Bathsheba to the category of women incapable of just use of authority because of their inability to control their feelings. A comment of Hardy's regarding a later incident is equally true here: "Bathsheba, though she had too much understanding to be entirely governed by her womanliness, had too much womanliness to use her understanding to the best advantage" (p. 214).

In working with the women of the household, Bathsheba is just as temperamental. Bathsheba often confides in Liddy, her personal maid, but she is by no means hesitant about using Liddy to gratify her own whims in a most inconsistent fashion. Liddy (as well as the other servants) must agree with her, must give her flattering opinions when asked solemnly to swear to the truth, must keep secrets completely, must not engage in idle gossip with the other workers, must approve of the people she likes and disapprove of the people she dislikes. One evening, after Bathsheba has been completely captivated by Troy, she returns to overhear her employees as they are making her the subject of their

discussion. Furious at such a personal indignity, she reprimands them and tells them how much she hates Troy. Maryann along with the others agrees to hate him too, such an agreement seeming to be the most practical. But Bathsheba scolds her for such a statement and reminds Maryann of her earlier statement of admiration. Maryann's answer for her change of opinion is an interesting reflection on Bathsheba's use of authority for her own interests: "'Yes, miss, but so did you. He is a wild scamp now, and you are right to hate him'" (p. 223). However, Bathsheba cannot accept that either and at once vows to fire anyone who criticizes him. Liddy has reprimanded her for her fierceness but feels envy for her mistress' force: "'I wish I had half your failing that way. 'Tis a great protection to a poor maid in these illegit'mate days'" (p. 227).

Bathsheba Everdene, the first of the heroines tending toward ambition and independence, appears to be free from womanly submissiveness. She shows this freedom by her interest in running the farm and by her reluctance to be possessed by a man. She has some quite advanced ideas on marriage, and she reveals these attitudes in her conversations with her first love, Gabriel. In these conversations she indicates a decided preference for managing her own life rather than being managed by someone else. She also is unreceptive to the idea of marrying just for prestige, although such a thought does enter her mind. She horrifies the community by taking over the management of her farm with no other supervisor and proceeds with a drive that seems adequate to establish herself as an independent farmer. Yet her ambition is incomplete, for she does eventually give in to the very dependence she is inclined to despise. Her ambition shows a desire to use power in a whimsical way merely to control others. This ambition is not adequate for true

emancipation. Once she renounces a large part of her ambition and accepts the role of wife and possible childbearer, she has the minimal reward of a placid, if not happy, life.

Eustacia Vye

Excessive ambition of a drastically different type is found in Eustacia Vye in The Return of the Native. Eustacia is not ambitious for achievement, nor does she feel any desire to earn a living. Her ambitions are more aesthetic, more exotic and less practical than those of Bathsheba. She loathes the commonplace: the people among whom she lives, the heath that is her home, and even the silly and meaningless customs of the local residents. She is rebellious, desiring change above all else. Yet she waits for some great outside force to come along and provide for her a way of life suited to her abilities. Bathsheba is chastized in the course of fulfilling her ambitions because of the personality deficiencies that she cannot overcome, but at the end of the novel she has at least endured. On the other hand, Eustacia's ambition, of a far vainer sort, is a destructive one. Because she indulges her yearnings for the remote (or who tries to do so), Eustacia forfeits the real and present satisfactions of life where she is for the vaporous promise of a better life far away, but in so doing she forfeits existence itself. Eustacia is an expression of the idea that a woman's desire for a style of life beyond her available means is a destructive force. She knows she is superior intellectually and artistically, and she refuses to accept the small rewards that real life could offer, preferring her life of dreams.

Like Madame Bovary, she has visions of life in Paris and imagines herself enjoying the dress, the manners, and the activities of wealthy people living outside her community. Of her it might be said, as Gustave Flaubert said of Madame Bovary, that "all her immediate surroundings, the wearisome country, the middle-class imbeciles, the mediocrity of existence, seemed to her exceptional, a peculiar chance that had caught hold of her, while beyond stretched as far as eye could see an immense land of joys and passions."[9] Like Madame Bovary also, she seems unwilling to enjoy life with a husband who cannot help her enter the social life she thinks she would enjoy. Finally, like Emma Bovary, she dies while still young without having achieved either her wild ambitions or the modest success possible in her environment.

Eustacia's excessive ambition can be seen in her attitudes in several aspects of life. She desires excitement and change in an unspecified way, willing to try experiences for their novelty alone. She longs for passionate love without even being sure what kind of lover she wants. She desires travel and the cultural expansion it would bring but has only the vaguest notions of how to plan a journey. And she would like to live in great financial and social security, but she is unwilling and unable to take even the simplest steps toward insuring such security. She has ambitious dreams but no ability to materialize them. She fails because she is not able to come to terms with existence and to see that a woman, no less than a man, needs to make concrete efforts towards achieving success instead of just having shadowy aspirations in that direction.

Early in the novel, Eustacia's personality causes her to stand out from all the others in ways that incite envy as well as admiration.

Physical beauty is one of her enviable qualities, but, standing alone against the moor, she is more than a beauty--she takes on some of the qualities of a deity and also of royalty. Her dress, her manners, even her speech proclaim her to be "absolute queen here."[10] Everything about her suggests the remote in time and quality. "Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies, and tropical midnights; her moods recalled lotus eaters . . . , her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea; her voice, the viola . . . her general figure might have stood for that of either of the higher female deities" (p. 69).

Hardy describes her in terms rather foreign to the average dweller on the heath and thus sets her apart from her fellow human beings. Her intellectual qualities also set her apart from the others, especially from the other women. She is comparatively well educated and has considerable intelligence and forwardness of spirit. She thinks on a large scale: "She seldom schemed, but when she did scheme, her plans showed rather the comprehensive strategy of a general than the small arts called womanish" (p. 74).

David Eggenschwiler considers Eustacia a royal, godlike person, but he mentions her failure to accept reality and calls her "a vain, naive, arrogant daydreamer, a girl whose passion so exceeds her imagination and experience that she cannot conceive of adequate objects for her desire."[11] By comparing her to a courtly pretender he satirizes her ridiculously high and unspecific aspirations. She represents the courtly love tradition gone to seed--she has all the conventional notions of what is necessary to an elevated life. But, as he points out, she is almost completely unable to translate any of her glorious ideas into concrete realities and thus is doomed from the start. Like Madame

Bovary she feels that she is "as good as all the women who . . . [are] living happily."[12] Yet, beside the other women, whom she scorns and considers culturally beneath her, Eustacia is indeed inferior and immature. She never translates her dissatisfaction into real plans for remedying her restricted situation.

Eustacia shows her restlessness and ambition first in her general discontent with numerous aspects of her environment. Like some women of her day and many others in a later age, she is aware that her present situation is a very inadequate one which she might well examine critically. Her circumstances, compared with those of the average woman of the time and place, are fortunate, but they allow her time for introspection and depression. Her grandfather provides little supervision and calls her to only the vaguest accountings, so she is free to indulge her fantasies. She seeks the unusual even in the most commonplace. For example, "She only valued rest to herself when it came in the midst of other people's labor. . . . To relieve the tedium [of Sunday] she would overhaul the cupboards. . . . But on Saturday nights she would frequently sing a psalm. . ." (pp. 72-73). Her desire to flout the custom of resting on Sunday represents her rebellion against the customs and situations that displease her. Through her everyday activities she gives further indication of her unhappiness. "She suffered much from depression of spirits, and took slow walks to recover them, in which she carried her grandfather's telescope and her grandmother's hourglass--the latter because of a peculiar pleasure she derived from watching a material representation of time's gradual glide away" (p. 74). She vows on numerous occasions that she hates the heath and that it has been the spiritual and cultural death of her. Yet when a friend, Venn, tells her

that she could for a very small expenditure of energy support herself in a locality with all the cultural advantages she seeks, she refuses. "'I knew it meant work,' she said, drooping to languor again" (p. 96). Completely unlike Bathsheba, she is unwilling to pay any price whatsoever for the liberation she desires, and this unwillingness to act makes her unable to achieve even a part of her ambitions.

In the matter of love, Eustacia can become very little more specific about what she wants than she can about life in general. "To be loved to madness--such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover" (p. 71). No realistic standards guide her in her choice of lover; she wants a man who is great enough to meet her set of abstract requirements. Her dream of the great one who will come and be worthy of her love is such a typical childish fantasy that is places her in the category of courtly buffoon or caricature. Her grandfather, Captain Vye, seems to have a good grasp of the situation: "'Perhaps if Miss Eustacia had less romantic nonsense in her head it would be better for her'" (p. 110).

Eustacia's notions of the abstract, wonderful lover are highly susceptible to fluctuation from outside causes, especially the opinions of others. Finding that her fantasy-figure, Wildeve, whom she has idealized into the desired romantic lover, has come to her because he has been spurned by Tamsin, a girl to whom Eustacia considers herself vastly superior, Eustacia decides that he is not ideal, that maybe she is doing Wildeve a favor in paying attention to him. "The sentiment which lurks more or less in all animate nature--that of not desiring

the undesired of others--was lively as a passion in the super-subtle, epicurean heart of Eustacia" (p. 104). She cannot marry him at once upon finding that her rival has rejected him, despite the fact that the marriage would be one way of escaping "'this doghole of England'" (p. 105). The romantic tradition demands that she attract a man desired of others, and her ego fully supports the tradition. "Her lover was no longer to her an exciting man whom many women strove for and herself could only retain by striving with them. He was a superfluity" (p. 106). That the one she thought she loved may in fact become her bears no weight--if the fantasy must be destroyed, reality, even pleasant reality, is meaningless.

The flimsiness of her sentiments toward Wildeve is made obvious by the ease with which she can shift them to another object which seems more glamorous. When Clym Yeobright returns from the outside world Eustacia covets so strongly, she overhears herself mentioned as a suitable partner for him. "It was like a man coming from heaven. . . . That five minutes of overhearing furnished Eustacia with visions enough to fill the whole blank afternoon" (p. 111). Her day is so unscheduled that she feels quite justified in taking her afternoon walk in the direction of his home. If Wildeve no longer fits her romantic specifications, she will waste no time seeking his replacement.

As time goes by, Eustacia finds herself married to this prodigy, Clym Yeobright; and she nourishes a hope that he will spirit her away to the glamorous capitals of the world where she can experience her ideas of what life should be like. Though Clym insists on his scheme of becoming a teacher and states that he no longer yearns for the faraway, Eustacia cannot give up her hope, and she taunts him with it.

The shock of his loss of eyesight is a discouragement but a challenge to him; however, to her, it is the final blow to her ambitions. "Suppose he should become blind. . . . That dream of 'beautiful Paris' was not likely to cohere. . ." (p. 254). Her concern is all for her ambitious escape, hopeless as the chances seem. She cannot even bring herself to muster any encouragement for her husband, who is doing his part to add to their income by furzecutting, a day-laborer's job that carries no prestige but that gives Clym a sense of worth. She cannot reconcile herself well enough to provide him a home that will help him recover easily. He has a sense of gratitude for the work, but she can feel only resentment. When he says that they are fortunate, she replies contemptuously, "'In comparison with slaves, and the Israelites in Egypt, and such people!'" (p. 256). His calm acceptance of their plight intensifies her unhappiness.

The difference in their viewpoints is further revealed one day when she goes to the field and hears him singing, unaware of her presence. She feels only disappointment about her own fate, not sympathy for him. "To see him there, a poor afflicted man, earning money by the sweat of his brow, had at first moved her to tears; but to hear him sing and not at all rebel against an occupation which, however satisfactory to himself, was degrading to her, as an educated lady-wife, wounded her through. . . . It was bitterly plain to Eustacia that he did not care much about social failure; and the proud fair woman bowed her head and wept in sick despair at the thought of the blasting effect upon her own life of that mood and condition in him" (p. 259). When she explains this view to him, he chastises her for basing her love on appearances and material prosperity only. But she turns off his remarks by saying that

his forced questioning about the sincerity of her love may cause the death of such love as she still feels. She will not deny that she believes her chances in life have been ruined by the very marriage that she had thought would be the means of fulfilling all her hopes. He sums up rather succinctly the attitude with which she had first come to think about him: "'I suppose when you first saw me and heard about me I was wrapped in a sort of golden halo to your eyes--a man who knew glorious things, and had mixed in brilliant scenes--in short, an adorable, delightful, distracting hero'" (p. 262). Eustacia is not able to deny the truth of his assertion.

Later, when she is talking to her former lover, she shows her excessive concern with the appearance her husband has taken on since his misfortune. "'Ah! you don't know how differently he appeared when I first met him, though it is such a little while ago. His hands were as white and soft as mine; and look at them now, how rough and brown they are! His complexion is by nature fair, and that rusty look he has now, all of a color with his leather clothes, is caused by the burning of the sun'" (p. 287). She worries also about what her former companions will say about her when they remember her youthful ambitions. White hands, good complexion, all these superficial endowments that Eustacia values so highly, are evidence of her great immaturity and her lack of respect for other human beings. She is, despite her great intellectual and artistic sensitivities, just an adolescent dissatisfied with her time and her place, unwilling to make the best of a fate she has created for herself. "'Do I desire unreasonably much in wanting what is called life--music, poetry, passion, war, and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world. . . ? I thought I saw

the way to it in my Clym'" (p. 289). She is vague about these ambitions, and she knows too little of any of these things even to desire them intelligently. They are just ideas picked up from her romance reading.

Her dissatisfaction finds no outlet in any real action. Finally she gives up all pretense that she loves him or that she sees any hopes for their relationship. She feels that escape is the only possible course of action. "'He's not <u>great</u> enough for me to give myself to. He does not suffice for my desire. . . ! O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!'" (p. 362). Like many another adolescent girl, reared in circumstances that gave no scope to her creative abilities and made no requirements on her energies, she can utter only the most general and nonspecific statements of her overpowering goals. She wants a lover who is great, but in reality no one could have fulfilled her requirement. A character from history of literature seems fitting, but only because time and distance have removed all the objectionable qualities that are obvious in the men she has had a chance to give herself to. Eustacia, left alone a large part of the time and never given a chance to check her dreams out beside reality, gives herself over completely to a dream so unspecific she can hardly even visualize it herself. She has rejected one man because of the advent of someone she believed greater, and she has found him a greater disappointment than she now thinks the first one would have been.

Eustacia, the pseudo-connoisseur of life, the beauty, the dreamer who seeks after a way to leave the dismal heath, has staked everything on her marriage to a man who has proved incapable of helping her fulfill her excessive and vague ambitions. There remains yet one humiliation, and it is not long in coming. The man she has forsaken in search of a chance of escape now comes into an unexpected fortune, and he with his wife, Tamsin (Eustacia's former rival), will use the money for the very travel she covets. At once her interest in him revives: "Though she was no lover of money she loved what money could bring; and the new accessories she imagined around him clothed him with a great deal of interest" (p. 306). She begins to review his prospects at once, seeing him as an object and not a person. "This man, whose admiration today Eustacia had disregarded, whose good wishes she had scarcely taken the trouble to accept, whom she had shown out of the house by the back door, was the possessor of eleven thousand pounds--a man of fair professional education, and one who had served his articles with a civil engineer" (p. 307). This information about his finances will be of interest to her later.

As Eustacia continues to brood over the increasing misery of her marriage to Clym, one further blow falls: Clym discovers his wife's rudeness to his mother and believes (with considerable reason) that the shock of this rudeness hastened the older woman's death. Eustacia comes to realize that escape from him is her only answer. But, as usual for this unrealistic young woman, she has decided on escape before she has settled any means for translating her schemes into reality. Wildeve has agreed to help her financially in getting a start on her escape, but her idealized approach toward life forbids accepting his offer. "To ask

Wildeve for pecuniary aid without allowing him to accompany her was impossible to a woman with the shadow of pride left in her: to fly as his mistress--and she knew that he loved her--was of the nature of humiliation" (p. 361). Eustacia cannot even accept help from a devoted friend and former lover unless such aid is on honorable terms according to her own ideas of honor.

Because she cannot compromise with reality, she is doomed to death. David Eggenschwiler in his article points out the ambiguity of her life's end; he emphasizes the fact that Hardy does not tell the reader whether she has taken her life or has accidentally fallen into the pond. According to the author the heath dwellers agree that death becomes this heroine, and he gives a detailed description of the beauty and magnificence that she possesses in death. Indeed such a resolution is the only one possible for this intelligent and sensitive woman placed in a position in which she cannot develop her good qualities. She is certainly correct in assuming that she was capable of much, but neither she nor the world about her can find any means for her to achieve according to her capabilities. In her, Hardy has presented a woman experiencing the stirrings of the desire for freedom. She wants to achieve a life of culture and intellectual activity beyond that of her neighbors. She wants to rebel against conformity for its own sake. She wants to use her own superior powers in ways her neighbors cannot even vaguely understand. But this character has within the seeds of her own destruction: her daydreaming is never backed up by any concrete means of achieving her ambitions. And so she becomes ridiculous in her lack of knowledge of the realities of life. David Eggenschwiler commented on her desire for "music, poetry, passion, and war" as the stuff of which life is made

and has added that this short-sightedness is based on her learning the chivalric formula and never experiencing any of the things in it.[13] Despite her beautiful and promising beginning, Eustacia proves herself to be no more freed from traditional shackles than many another nineteenth century woman. Her ambition is a more destructive one than Bathsheba's, for she is willing neither to give up what cannot be had nor to make any personal sacrifice for that which, though difficult, might be attainable. The woman who never has been given any chance to discover how to put her talents into use, has never had anything required of her but to look elegant, and has never planned to assume any part of her own financial responsibility, as is the case with Eustacia, can be expected to react childishly, making demands only, and taking no responsibility. Hardy has here shown a woman who through her inability to come out of her dream world brings upon herself ostracism, misfortune and death.

Sue Bridehead

In her early years, before the tragic events that force her to yield to her tendencies toward self-immolation, Sue Bridehead displays many of the qualities of intellectual ambition. For young Sue, the important thing is to retain one's personal and intellectual integrity. A well-read young lady, Sue constructs her inner world of needs and refuses to conform to society's ways of fulfilling them. Her ambition is within her own mind and not in any outward achievements such as romantic adventures or business accomplishments. When she is not placed in situations involving self-sacrifice, she appears rather liberated. Critics often present Sue as an example of modern, emancipated womankind.

William H. Hyde in his analysis of the novel says of her: "Sue Bridehead may seem to many a reader, as she does to the early Jude, a striking model of advanced womanhood, aligning herself with Mill and striving to attain a high and beautiful level of existence."[14] He also mentions her "pride of intellect." Robert Heilman mentions her mental superiority: "In all ways she is allied with a tradition of intellect. . . . She is influenced . . . by Shelley as intellectual rebel, by Mill's liberalism, and by the new historical criticism of Christianity. Rational skepticism, critical intelligence are her aims. . . ."[15] C. H. Duffin says, "A woman of spiritual quality, born to live a life of fine passion, she made intellect her star. . . ."[16] Herbert B. Grimsditch comments on her intellectual interests: "From the intellectual point of view, Sue Bridehead is by far the most highly developed woman in Hardy's pages."[17] However, Grimsditch and Heilman, as well as others, suggest that Sue's intellect is theoretical rather than practical and that, as she herself admits, this intellect becomes useless in crisis. So the spiritual, brilliant woman is incapable of using her intellectual ambitions in ways that will not destroy her. Although her physical life does not end when the novel does, it might as well, for she is, in effect, dead. Her intellect and her highly keyed aesthetic sense have caused only suffering for her. Endowed with qualities that seem wrong for a woman in a male-dominated world, she has no hope for survival. Her scholarly interests and her personal integrity have made her unfit for life on the terms which life presents.

From the very first, Sue gives evidence of being a person of great refinement. When her cousin Jude first meets her, she is engaged in work indicative of association with things highly spiritual and intellectual:

She is an illuminator of Christian texts in a bookseller's shop. Jude perceives at once that her years in London and Christminster have "taken all the rawness out of her," and that she has reached a rather high "pitch of niceness."[18] The activities Sue chooses on an afternoon holiday further reveal her refinement, for on her solitary walk she takes a book with her, and she is able to recognize the images of Roman deities that a peddler is bringing around. Her purchase of two of these images attests to her interest in the classics. And when, fearful of what her Christian landlady will say about the purchase, she quotes A. C. Swinburne's lines about the "pale Galilean," she shows herself to have a ready familiarity with the poetry of her times. Jude's recognition of her mental qualifications is one reason he gives for desiring further acquaintance with her: "'I can see that she is exceptionally bright; and it is partly a wish for intellectual sympathy. . .'" (p. 115).

Despite the fact that Sue's ambitions are more abstract than materialistic, she does make some concrete plans toward earning a living. She begins by working as a pupil-teacher, and Phillotson, her employer (later to be her husband), is impressed, calls her "bright," and says that she is an excellent teacher (p. 123). She goes to training school with a reasonable plan in mind, although a rather prosaic one for a girl of her spiritual propensities. Her discussion of this plan with Jude is not without a certain consciousness of intellectual superiority. "'See how independent I'll be after the two years' training. I shall pass pretty high, I expect, and Mr. Phillotson will use his influence to get me a big school'" (p. 158).

Several other evidences of her knowledge of her mental superiority can be seen in her attitudes toward her religious and intellectual

heritage. On going to Christminster to see a model of Jerusalem, she shows little interest in it, saying that it has little to offer in comparison with the cities of classical antiquity. Yet the next day she is able to sketch it in great detail, remembering much more about it than Phillotson can despite his much more reverential interest. Her reply when questioned about the completeness of her sketch shows a little pride of mind, perhaps unconscious, but real nonetheless: "'I hardly did [look at it], but I remembered that much of it'" (p. 127). She apparently is not worried about the fact that she has shown a better memory than the man has. Not much later, she proves her superiority to Jude by a casual listing of her readings: "'Greek and Latin classics . . . , Lempriere, Catullus, Martial, Juvenal, Lucian, Beaumont and Fletcher, Boccaccio, Scaron, De Brantôme, Sterne, De Foe, Smollett, Fielding, Shakespeare, the Bible, and other such. . .'" (p. 176). Jude is the second man she has unabashedly vanquished intellectually. She criticizes his ideal of education in Christminster by saying that it is "'new wine in old bottles'" (p. 180) and suggesting that it will have to change or become extinct. So unfettered is her mind at this stage that she has no compunctions about attacking the very symbol of learning. She teases him about being in his "Tractarian" stage of development and hints that she passed that point many years ago (p. 181). She offers to cut up his New Testament and put it into chronological order, and she horrifies him by criticizing the synopses at the beginnings of each chapter. Her sense of superiority comes to the fore in a statement she makes to Jude about her desire to share her gifts: "'I did want and long to ennoble some man to high aims, and I . . . thought that man might be you'" (p. 183).

As her mental qualities continue to reveal themselves, her desire to examine her own life begins to assert itself more strongly and her thoughts turn like a searchlight on details of her own situation in addition to aspects of theoretical belief. She has, in a burst of materially ambitious practicality, agreed to marry Phillotson since they can be a good teaching team and together can have an excellent income. Since Sue's advanced views and suspect activities have alienated her from her father, she asks Jude, who after all is a cousin of hers, to give her away. The letter in which she makes this request includes a biting comment expressing her unhappiness over the status of woman and reflecting her opinion that this aspect of the ceremony is degrading to an independent person: "'It seems to me very humiliating that a give-away should be required at all. According to the ceremony as there printed, my bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure; but I don't choose him. Somebody gives me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any other domestic animal. Bless your exalted views of woman, oh churchman'" (p. 204).

When she and Jude visit the church where she is to be married, she has him march down the aisle with her just to savor the experience. "'I like to do things like this,' she said in the delicate voice of an epicure in emotions. . . . 'They are interesting because they have probably never been done before'" (p. 207). Her desire for personal independence and her search for unusual experiences show the uniqueness of her character. Later, married and then separating, she shows her independence by refusing to take money from her former husband (p. 281).

Sue's attitude toward love and marriage is perhaps one of the most interesting manifestations of her ambition to maintain personal integrity

and independence. Her desire for discussion of ideas leads her to associate with men in ways almost free from traditional constraint, to enjoy their company as friends and not as lovers. Her desire to be conscientious and reasonable leads her into marriage even though she knows at the time that she does not love Phillotson. Although on the one hand she can glibly quote Mill, "'She, or he, who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the apelike one of imitation'" (p. 269), she cannot rid herself of the power of convention even though it forces her into a marriage she does not want. On the other hand, on the night that she secludes herself in a closet and Phillotson questions her, she admits that she knew her marriage was a mistake but that should could not act upon her intelligence in the matter: "'I was a coward--as so many women are--and my theoretic unconventionality broke down'" (p. 267). Sue equates herself with typical women--the only difference is that she, unlike most women, recognizes her weakness. In an earlier discussion with Jude about the unhappiness of her marriage, she has said, "'I daresay, it happens to lots of women, only they submit, and I kick. . . . When people of a later age look back upon the barbarous customs and superstitions of the times that we . . . live in, what <u>will</u> they say!'" (p. 258). Her forwardlooking comment about the grimness of social conventions is worthy of her keen perception, but it is a perception upon which she is not qualified to act even while it disqualifies her from action of a more conventional nature. Her husband, thoroughly conventional and yet compassionate, reveals at least a partial understanding of her situation when he tells Jude, "'I cannot answer her arguments--she has read ten times as much as I. Her intellect sparkles like diamonds, while mine

smoulders like brown paper. . . . She's one too many for me'" (p. 276).

Sue's questioning intellect leads her to doubt the value of perpetuating human life. After Sue and Jude, still unmarried, have taken in Jude and Arabella's precocious son, have had two children of their own, and are soon to have another, Sue is tearfully ineffectual in explaining their situation to Jude's son. She expresses no humility about the violation of society's code; rather, her lament is something ominously close to the idea of the will not to live. "'It seems such a terribly tragic thing to bring beings into the world--so presumptuous--that I question my right to do it sometimes'" (p. 375). Her brilliance now has begun to be diminished by the circumstances in which she has lived, and both she and Jude have greatly attenuated their personal ambitions. Their mismanagement of their children appears as gross stupidity. The oldest boy, nicknamed Father Time because of his seriousness, seems to echo some of the views forming dimly in Sue's mind about not asking to be born, and about its being better to be out of the world than in it. Sue is completely unprepared to deal with him, and her refusal or inability to explain to him why she is having another baby is a part of the total weight of worry that finally brings about little Time's suicide. The child can express the absolutely logical premise that it seems better never to have been born, but he lacks the stability needed to counteract such pessimism, and Sue does not have the means to help him.

After the deaths of her children, Sue's intellectual strength begins to give way. She laments her search after wisdom and her efforts to put abstract theories of right living into place in real life, where they do not always fit and may even be worse than unstudied efforts.

She is aware of a hideous reversal in her entire view of life and of the gaping contrast:

> Vague and quaint imaginings had haunted Sue in the days when her intellect scintillated like a star, that the world resembled a stanza or melody composed in a dream; it was wonderfully excellent to the half-aroused intelligence, but hopelessly absurd at the full waking; that the first cause worked automatically like a somnambulist, and not reflectively, like a sage; that at the framing of the terrestrial conditions there seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity . . . those ideas were now exchanged for a sense of fleeing from a persecutor (p. 413).

Somewhat later, Hardy says of her: "She was no longer the same as in the independent days, when her intellect played like lambent lightning over conventions and formalities. . ." (p. 416). And Jude, the lover she has finally almost brought round to her way of thinking, expresses surprise as well as doubt about women's intellect: "'What I can't understand in you is your extraordinary blindness now to your old logic. Is it peculiar to you, or is it common to woman? Is a woman a thinking unit at all, or a fraction always wanting its integer. . . ? Can this be the girl who brought the pagan deities into this most Christian city . . . ? --quoted Gibbon, and Shelley, and Mill? Where are dear Apollo, and dear Venus now?'" (p. 424). In one of his last statements about her, when he hears that she has finally completed the return to her legal husband,

he makes a telling observation about the precariousness of woman's situation: "'--she was once a woman whose intellect was to mine like a star to a benzoline lamp; who saw all my superstitions as cobwebs that she could brush away with a word. Then bitter affliction came to us, and her intellect broke, and she veered round to darkness. Strange difference of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably'" (p. 484). Hardy is capable of disclaiming the speeches of his characters, but this speech seems representative, since it is consistent with Hardy's other remarks about the constitutional inferiority of woman. But if it is Hardy's view, it is representative of the age, for women of high intellectual aspirations were looked upon with great suspicion as physically frail or abnormal beings whose minds, far from being a help to them in achieving full potential, only limit or bar them in fulfilling the only role available to them. Thus such intellect becomes a hindrance.

Hardy presents a woman of beautiful mental endowments. She goes out into a world for which she is unprepared. He shows her making the most conscientious efforts to apply her knowledge to her way of living. He reveals her brief efforts at financial independence and shows that she fails because the school she attends has rules running counter to her fine nature but which other girls, far less well endowed, are able to observe as a matter of course. He shows her marrying a good, practical, stable, well-intentioned, mature gentleman, with whom many a nineteenth-century girl could have had what went for happiness--marrying him and then failing. He shows her allying herself to Jude and yet never being able to succeed in achieving either happiness or conventional respectability. Then the author shows her as a mother; and here she

commits the most glaring mistake of all, while girls incapable even of questioning their places in the universe achieve at least reasonable success. Her tendency to self-immolation operates in tension with her tendency to ambition and negates it. She finally loses the one most important quality she has, for she is no longer capable of the intellectual questioning which has been her glory and her destruction.

The woman of ambitions does not normally succeed in Hardy's world, because Hardy does not portray women who are able to use their intellects wholesomely. Hardy's women have vocational, aesthetic, and intellectual ambitions, but the ambitions cannot work favorably for them.

ENDNOTES

[1] The Victorians and Their Reading (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1936), p. 337.

[2] Cruse, pp. 339-359.

[3] Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and the Dynasts (Manchester: University Press, 1937), p. 229.

[4] The Major Novels of Thomas Hardy (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1965), p. 24.

[5] Thomas Hardy (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 55.

[6] "The Women of the Novels," in Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, Albert J. Guerard, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 64.

[7] The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1947), p. 59.

[8] Thomas Hardy, Far From the Madding Crowd (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1874), p. 26. All page

numbers in parentheses in the section on Bathsheba Everdene are from this edition.

[9] Gustave Flaubert, Two Famous Novels of Gustave Flaubert Madame Bovary (New York: The Book League of America, n.d.), p. 36.

[10] Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (New York: The Heritage Press, 1942; first published 1878), p. 60. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Eustacia Vye are from this edition.

[11] Eustacia Vye, Queen of Night and Courtly Pretender," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 25 (1971), p. 445.

[12] Flaubert, p. 41.

[13] Eggenschweiler, p. 418.

[14] "Theoretical and Practical Unconventionality in Jude the Obscure," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 20 (1965), p. 156.

[15] "Hardy's Sue Bridehead," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 22 (1966), p. 319.

[16] Duffin, p. 226.

[17] Character and Environment in the Novels of Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 132.

[18] Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1923; first published 1895), p. 104. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Sue Bridehead are from this edition.

CHAPTER IV

VAIN ONES AND COQUETTES

In the nineteenth century a woman's personal appearance was still critical to her socioeconomic security. A comment by Mary Wollstonecraft in the late eighteenth century applies equally to the nineteenth. She said that women "are made slaves to their persons, and must render them alluring that man may lend them his reason to guide their tottering steps aright."[1] The cumbersome amount of clothing the women wore, the elaborate hairstyles they affected, and the stratification of clothing styles by socioeconomic status all reflect the concern with women's physical appearance. Since at that time the typical woman was financially dependent upon her husband, the degree to which a woman could use her looks to win a suitable husband bore crucial significance in her life, for it might determine the course of her future. Therefore, women who used artifice to improve their appearances might receive tangible rewards. On the other hand, clothing was expensive and cosmetics were taboo; and the woman who gave too much attention to such interests sometimes was considered frivolous and vain.

Hardy's women characters mainly solve this dilemma by giving great concern to their appearances and calculating the effects upon men. Hardy describes most of his women in great detail, becoming so specific about figure, hair, complexion, and clothing that critics have mentioned these descriptions when discussing his insight into the minds of women.

Samuel Chew in his discussion of Hardy's women sees their desire for attractiveness to men as an inborn trait and implies that the women pursue the goal of beauty and desirability without knowing that its purpose is to insure their selection as wives and thus as perpetuators of the species.[2] Most of the women, despite some twinges of conscience about vanity, are quite bound by their vanity; and some of them even allow it to become a determining factor in their destinies. In four novels Hardy gives specific treatment to the question of a woman's concern with physical attractiveness. In three of them the woman avidly tries to be alluring; in another, she suffers because age has taken away part of her beauty. Fancy Day in Under the Greenwood Tree and Elfride Swancourt in A Pair of Blue Eyes allow vanity to dominate their lives. Viviette Constantine in Two on a Tower suffers because of loss of attractiveness. Felice Charmond in The Woodlanders devotes much time to the improvement of her appearance, and vanity dominates her activities and her decisions.

This type of woman begins to appear early in Hardy's works. She is the vain, frivolous coquette, the flirt who is more concerned about her clothing than her boy friends, and more concerned about her boy friends than about an individual lover. She has affinities with the purely capricious women which I shall discuss later, but her capriciousness is seen more specifically in her deliberately flippant treatment of men and her constant preoccupations with clothing and with making a good impression. Desmond Hawkins in a discussion of Hardy's women characters presents her as part of the pattern into which the Victorian coquette fits: "Fancy (and several other similar characters) are not much more than routine heroines, sweet and coy little dears in gingham, Victorian calendar-faces appropriately tinted with the vague pinks of Romance."[3]

Later he comments on "how innocently Hardy accepted the Victorian formula of the heroine as a particularly luscious kind of strawberry."[4]

Fancy Day

Hardy first presents Fancy Day to the reader by having a group of rustic men discuss her personality and appearance. Her name itself suits a coquette. Since he frequently gives characters names that represent their qualities (for example, he names a strong man Oak and a witch Endorfield), the reader can assume at once from such a name that the girl is pretty, well dressed, and probably trivial and artificial. Fancy indeed does have these qualities. One of the rustics sets forth both her personality and her possibilities as a man-chaser when he calls her as "neat a little figure of fun as ever I see, and just husband-high."[5] As Fancy becomes somewhat better known in the community, Tranter Dewey believes the parson will be the victim of her whims: "my belief is she'll wind [the parson] round her finger, and twist the pore young feller about like the figure of eight. . ." (p. 18).

The first time the reader encounters Fancy is at a party in the home of Tranter Dewey, whose son Dick is one of the objects of Fancy's attention. Hardy describes her appearance in complimentary terms, then proceeds to give a description that reflects upon her personality: "This [beautiful appearance] was softened by a frequent thoughtfulness, yet not so frequent as to do away, for more than a few minutes at a time, with a certain coquettishness; which in its turn was never so decided as to banish honesty" (p. 48). He adds that she is "a flower among vegetables."

The reader gains another insight into Fancy's appearance and her attitude toward it when she shows Dick her new muslin dress. She determines to wear it despite the fact that most working girls in the community wear only the plainest clothing. When Dick warns her that the vicar may openly condemn her for such proud dress, Fancy says most calmly, "'I think I can manage any vicar's views about me if he's under forty'" (p. 109). Confident in her ability as a coquette, she is prepared to defy tradition in order to present herself more attractively to the public. In saying this to Dick she is working upon him at that very moment by making him jealous of the vicar, and Dick drives home wondering, "Was she a coquette? The balance that she did love him and that she did not was so nicely struck that his opinion had no stability" (p. 111). When Fancy has finally, after various flirtations and solemn repentances, agreed to go with Dick to let him talk to her father about their plans, the question of personal appearance is uppermost. She humiliates Dick about his coat, telling him that it is not good enough for the occasion, and finally extracts a promise from him that he will wear his best one. Having secured this promise, she turns to the more interesting subject of what she should wear. The dress is settled after trivial objections to several that he has suggested, and then she asks his opinion as to whether she should wear a hat or a bonnet. Dick announces his preference for a bonnet because a hat would be "'rather too coquettish and flirty for an engaged young woman'" (p. 143). Then, although she has previously agreed that she will wear the bonnet, she feels compelled to change her mind, for she says, "'After all, the hat would do best; hats <u>are</u> best, you see. Yes, I must wear the hat, dear

Dicky, because I ought to wear a hat, you know'" (p. 148). Although he dislikes this behavior, he does not lose his temper.

Some weeks pass before Fancy has a chance to reveal further how flirty and clothes-conscious she is. It is autumn, and Dick would like for the two of them to go nut-gathering. But Fancy makes him wait because she wants to sew on a dress for Sunday so she can give the right impression. Since he will not even be at church on that Sunday, he justifiably feels neglected and is disappointed to think that she should value the opinions of others more than the time spent with him. He goes nutting alone, but the activity is far from enjoyable, and he can do little but think about shallowness and vanity: ". . . far from being the simple girl who had never had a sweetheart before, as she had solemnly assured him time after time, she was, if not a flirt, a woman who had no end of admirers; a girl most certainly too anxious about her frocks; a girl whose feelings, though warm, were not deep; a girl who cared a great deal too much how she appeared in the eyes of other men. 'What she loves best in the world,' he thought, 'is her hair and complexion. What she loves next best, her gowns and hats; next best, myself, perhaps'" (p. 150). Truly flirtatious, Fancy searches for him in the woods and repents melodramatically in a flood of tears and poetic rhetoric. Although she dares to criticize him at first for having left her, she does withdraw that charge. And Dick, seemingly armorless against all her methods, forgives her eagerly. The coquette trick has worked. Fancy has caused Dick to tolerate behavior which he does not approve.

Hardy allows Fancy to show her vain and flippant qualities further when her father announces his opposition to her wedding plans. With the frivolous person's typical preference for the prohibited, Fancy discovers

her feelings have intensified as soon as she has seen Dick as elusive or unavailable: She "loved him more for the opposition than she otherwise would have dreamed of doing" (p. 164). Acting upon the advice of the community witch, she starves herself and gives every evidence of beginning to pine away for want of love so that her father will then be forced to permit their match. This procedure succeeds completely. Her father comes to her sickbed and consents to the marriage. But Fancy's whims are by no means exhausted, for she pretends that she does not want to defy her father: "'I don't want him like that; all against your will, and everything so disobedient'" (p. 172). Fancy's father is as vulnerable to her techniques as any other man is, and he gives her permission to marry.

Dick, after all his humiliations, has not yet succeeded in winning Fancy. He has become too available again--he has removed the lure of the forbidden from himself. One rainy day as she sees him walking over to visit her, she meditates on his personal appearance: "'I like Dick and I love him; but how plain and sorry a man looks in the rain, with no umbrella, and wet through'" (p. 181). Before the afternoon is over, Fancy has become engaged to the vicar, who also has come over for a visit. Fancy decides quickly that this engagement is foolish and sees the necessity for breaking it. Her vain and coquettish nature is well shown in one line of her letter to the vicar: "'You praised me, and praise is life to me'" (p. 189). Because of her dependent status, Fancy's abilities as a coquette may determine the course of her life.

She is indeed a coquette to the last. On her wedding day her concern with her attire is obvious to the spectators. One grandfather in the congregation is heard to say, "'I wonder which she thinks the most

about, Dick or her wedding raiment'" (p. 204). The other grandfather agrees but writes the matter off as a typically womanish reaction: "'Well, 'tis their nature. Remember the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?"'" (p. 204). And so this grandfather dismisses her folly as scripturally justified and does not sour the occasion with ill humor over what he feels is a typically feminine failure.

Her interest in her clothing is one aspect of her coquettishness, but there is another. She has never told Dick about her short-lived engagement to the vicar, and as Dick stands gloating over their happiness, she knows now she can never tell him. Yet she would love to be honest with him, as honest as she knows he is with her. As he gives his expressions of happiness, her coquette's mind finds a way for her to keep her secret and be honest at the same time. He says: "'We'll have no secrets from each other, darling, will we ever? - no secret at all.' 'None from today,' said Fancy, and thought of a secret she would never tell" (p. 204).

This coquette has maneuvered herself into a wedding, meeting all the problems bravely, and just as bravely creating problems where none had previously existed. Her beauty, her concern over dress, and her desire to play games with love have here resulted in nothing more than a few tears, a number of hindrances to reasonable courses of action, and several very perplexed people. Fancy is, as Desmond Hawkins says, difficult for Hardy to "propel . . . around the floor somehow,"[6] and she is basically a trivial character. But in the pattern set up here, the reader can see the tendencies to vanity and coquetry that are to

have more somber results in the stories of Hardy's later women characters.

Elfride Swancourt

Feminine vanity is a major part of the theme in A Pair of Blue Eyes, in which Elfride Swancourt's most impressive characteristic dictates the title. The author introduces her by emphasizing the color of her eyes, ". . . blue as autumn distance."[7] She is socially inept, appalled at even the prospect of entertaining a business guest alone. Despite this lack of poise, she is by no means unaware of herself as a physical entity, for she reveals this awareness by her description of the young guest to her father: "'His face is--well--pretty; just like mine'" (p. 11). Her father does not comment on this self-admiring note because his interests are in business, but the stage is set for the young lady to show to a greater extent her concern about her personal appearance. When the young guest, Smith, arrives at the vicarage, Elfride charms him completely by her simplicity and her attractiveness. She is not without a feeling of success in having been able to make an impression, and the author says that her feelings are "the least of woman's lesser infirmities--love of admiration" (p. 20).

One day after the friendship of Elfride and young Smith has deepened, she gives him an unusual personal responsibility. While they are horseback riding, she is so concerned with her finery that she wants him to take responsibility for seeing that she does not lose her earrings: "'These earrings are my very favorite ones. . . . It would be doing me knight service if you keep your eyes fixed upon them, and remember them every minute of the day, and tell me directly when I drop

one'" (p. 58). When the events of the day bring distractions, Smith forgets the earrings and one is lost. Elfride's fury reveals her concern over the trivialities of personal appearance: "'Well, you will find it, if you want me to respect you and be engaged to you. . .'" (p. 70). She accepts no excuse for his carelessness and says he must attempt to find the missing jewel. "And he strode away up the valley, under a broiling sun and amid the death-like silence. . . . He ascended, with giddy-paced haste, the windy range of rocks to where they had sat. . . ," but the earring was not to be found (p. 70).

After Elfride acquires a worldly stepmother, she learns techniques for displaying her vanity. The second Mrs. Swancourt, although homely, is skilled in the arts of feminine deception: "'I have learnt the language of . . . [Nature's] illegitimate sister--artificiality; and the fibbing of eyes, the contempt of nose-tips, the indignation of black hair, the laughter of clothes, the cynicism of footsteps, and the various emotions lying in walking-stick twirls . . . , the elevation of parasols, the carriage of umbrellas, become as ABC to me!'" (p. 154). Elfride gains considerable skill in self-display under the tutelage of her knowledgeable stepmother and soon learns to value herself so highly that she holds her former lover in contempt. Through the assistance of this experienced woman Elfride meets Henry Knight, a reviewer who has been uncomplimentary of her writings but to whom she is extremely attracted. In his column he includes some thoughts on vanity which seem to be applicable to Elfride's behavior. Knight says, "'Look at me,' say these youthful beginners in womanly artifice, without reflecting whether or not it be to their advantage to show so very much of themselves" (p. 196). Elfride herself seems most interested in seeking his

admiration for her when she asks him question after question about his preference in womanly beauty and in every case receives answers unfavorable to herself. Finally she asks about eyes and is unhappy when he announces a preference for hazel. Although she attempts to find something complimentary even in his rejections by trying to accept his comments as a tribute to her honesty, she is momentarily piqued.

Finally, Knight corners her on the subject of her vanity by giving her a hypothetical choice: if she had to choose earrings or some new music, which would she prefer? Knight has just complimented her on her interest in music and has said that few women love music as well as many men do. He has told her a story about a man who made his girlfriend choose between two editions of British poetry, and the girl announced that she would rather have a pair of new earrings than either. He tests her reaction: "'Now I call her a girl with not much in her but vanity; and so do you, I dare say.' 'O yes,' replied Elfride with an effort" (p. 204). Elfride fails the same test but defends herself: "'If I really seem vain, it is that I am only vain in my ways--not in my heart. The worst women are those vain in their hearts, and not in their ways" (p. 207).

Knight does not wish to make such a fine distinction. He thinks upon the conversation after he and Elfride are separated and decides he may have been too severe with her. He "had since excused her a hundred times by thinking how natural to womankind was a love of adornment, and how necessary became a mild infusion of personal vanity to complete the delicate and fascinating dye of the feminine mind" (p. 214). That which he previously condemned has become attractive to him because he has decided it is an integral part of womanly mentality. Thus Elfride, despite

her talents and abilities, allows her vanity to render her incapable of logical thought. This failing makes her appear more feminine in Knight's eyes.

Viviette Constantine

Viviette Constantine in Two on a Tower is vain in a different way. She seems to be about as free from frivolous interest in the details of personal appearance as any character Hardy created. She has many interests and is capable of intellectual curiosity; her rapid absorption in astronomy is typical of these interests. She is capable, too, of self-sacrifice, which she shows when she forsakes her lover to allow him to remain eligible for an inheritance closed to him if he should marry before he reaches age twenty-five. She is willing to give up her desires to help her lover achieve his ambition. Yet the tragedy of her situation is the mere fact that she is older than he and that he may no longer love her after she loses her youthful beauty. Thus, although Viviette does not herself have excessive concern for physical appearance, she loses in love and thus reinforces the idea that personal appearance and physical attractiveness are critical in a woman's life. Viviette, in her very lack of excessive attention to this detail, reinforces (in her failure) the Victorian emphasis on womanly frivolity. Viviette loses her lover despite her willingness to sacrifice.

Hardy devotes little space to Viviette's appearance. He merely says that she has black hair and eyes and a complexion capable of showing her warm temperament. Altogether hers is a quite pleasing appearance, but she seems to have no excessive vanity about it. When her lover brings up the question of age and Viviette discovers she is ten

years older than he, she is worried, but her worry at that time is unnecessary. "He innocently turned to scrutinize her face. She winced a little. But the instinct was premature. Time had taken no liberties with her features as yet, nor had trouble very roughly handled her."[8] Their subsequent discussion indicates interesting attitudes toward appearance and attractiveness. When she tells him her age and practically forces him to agree that she is significantly older, she then becomes angry that he has agreed with her. Her ambivalence on the subject of her appearance becomes obvious. "'A polite man would have flatly contradicted me. . . . O I am ashamed of this. I am speaking by the card of the outer world, which I have left behind utterly. . .'" (p. 107). The irony of her statement is clear: this woman is just as convinced of the importance of female beauty as anyone else. She insists forcefully that she cares nothing for such matters, but her justification for her outburst is a good commentary on Hardy's woman characters: "'that which is called the Eve in us will out sometimes'" (p. 108).

The problem of her appearance gets more attention as her brother urges her to marry a suitable older man, warning her about her looks: "'If you don't follow up this chance . . . you'll never have another. . . . You are getting on to be a middle-aged woman, and your black hair is precisely of the sort which time quickly turns grey. . . . Young marriageable men won't look at you; or if they do . . . , in a year or two more they'll despise you as an antiquated party'" (p. 206).

Finally, Viviette persuades her lover to go away for the five years he must remain single in order to receive his inheritance. Yet when the years pass and he returns and sees her again, he does not conceal his feelings of revulsion toward her changed appearance. Seeing his aversion

toward her, she refuses to hold him to his promise of marriage, knowing that he no longer loves her and is merely fulfilling an obligation. In spite of her stated willingness to give him up, he reassures her that he is indeed willing to marry her. When she finally realizes he is not going to forsake her, she is so overjoyed that the extreme emotion brings a fatal heart attack. Viviette, who has tried to preserve a love relationship despite her lack of youthful beauty, is unable to survive.

Mrs. Charmond

The vanity found in Mrs. Charmond, the lady land-holder in The Woodlanders, brings drastic results. Willing to go to unfair extent to pursue her goals, she takes advantage of the local people to satisfy her own vanity. Mrs. Charmond is an advanced woman--with her dresses low enough to scandalize the community,[9] her cigarette smoking, her imperious manners, and her managerial capacity. Yet her desire for physical beauty is a serious problem.

The train of consequences set in motion by her vanity begins one day when Mrs. Charmond is in church. Sitting just ahead of her is Marty South, one of her tenants under a life grant to Marty's father, John South. As Mrs. Charmond analyzes the girl during the service--it is obvious that her mind must have been more on her adornment than on spiritual matters--she notices that Marty's hair, long and luxuriant, is exactly the color of her own not overly abundant locks. Sensing at once the enhancement she could receive from a wig, she resolves to have Marty's hair by means not necessarily just (p. 11). When approached on the subject, Marty at first refuses to sell her hair, but finally in a mood of despondency lets it go. Although Mrs. Charmond gets what she

wants, she is always conscious of the price at which her beauty has been augmented. When she sees Marty, she has mixed feelings of victory and remorse. One typical event occurs when Mrs. Charmond gives Marty a ride in one of her carriages. "Inside the carriage a pair of deep eyes looked from a ripely handsome face, and though behind those deep eyes was a mind of unfathomed mysteries, beneath them there beat a heart capable of quick, extempore warmth. . . . After recognizing the girl, she had acted on impulse, possibly feeling gratified at the denuded appearance . . . which signified the success. . ." (p. 44). Although Mrs. Charmond performs such deeds of kindness at times, her preoccupation with herself and her willingness to enhance herself at the expense of others indicate her vanity, a quality for which she will later pay heavily.

Mrs. Charmond's feelings of remorse and tenderness seem to flash through at only occasional times, and the normal course of her life is vain and frivolous. Her statement, "'Women are carried about like corks on the waves of masculine desire'" (p. 228), seems but partially true in her own life--she is carried about on the current of her own vanity. She dislikes the outdoors (p. 282), is tired of anything pertaining to the history of the local community (p. 69), and seems reluctant to face any kind of unpleasantness (p. 278). Her desires for something exotic, she thinks, can be fulfilled by travel, but she has not the practical energy for setting down a record of her journeys.

Despite her lack of energy and her loss of interest in the ordinary details of life around her, she is capable of maneuvering situations to enhance her attractiveness. When she is slightly injured in a carriage accident, she takes full advantage of the opportunity to display herself

fetchingly to the doctor--Fitzpiers, a former lover of hers, now married to Grace Melbury. Marty South's hair doubtless adds greatly to this picture of charming malaise: "He was shown into a room at the top of the staircase, cosily and femininely draped, where by the light of the shaded lamp he saw a woman of elegant figure reclining . . . in such a position as not to disturb a pile of magnificent hair. A deep purple dressing-gown formed an admirable foil. . ." (p. 224).

As Fitzpiers returns again to her power, he continues to neglect his wife, Grace, who then turns to Giles Winterborne, the idol of Marty South. Fitzpiers prolongs Mrs. Charmond's period of treatment until his interest is obvious to everyone except his wife. Self reproach (too little and too late) comes to Mrs. Charmond when she realizes she is to blame for Fitzpiers' marrying Grace: if she had let Giles keep certain properties that would have been his except for legal technicalities, Grace would have married him; she then could have married Fitzpiers. She desires to make some reparation to Winterborne, but apparently only because his misfortune has caused her to suffer; she has previously shown no interest in his welfare.

The forces set in motion by Mrs. Charmond's vanity now close in on her. Marty, knowing that the woman has ruined her matrimonial chances and the finances of her would-be lover, decides to use her ultimate weapon, to reveal to Fitzpiers that Mrs. Charmond's hair is false. (The assumption that his interest will be seriously dampened by this discovery shows that Marty believes their alliance is based on very frivolous reasons.) What was deadly serious to Marty turns out to be only the occasion for a bantering but gradually deepening lovers' quarrel between Mrs. Charmond and Fitzpiers, and in itself would not have been serious.

But Fitzpiers becomes angry and leaves; she pursues him and is shot by an angry American lover whose existence has been noted at intervals throughout the book.

Thus Mrs. Charmond, whose main interest has been her adornment, is dead. Unable to take interest in any aspect of life except for her personal attractiveness to men, she has created circumstances that trap her. Unable to turn any of her interest outside of herself, she has through her vanity eventually alienated those who could have been her friends. Hardy presents a woman modern in her tastes for travel, sophisticated and free to manage her life. But this woman, described by community residents as having been "a bit of a charmer in her time" (p. 274) conforms to stereotyped views that hold women to be excessively interested in their appearance; and this trait has indirectly resulted in her downfall.

Summary

Elfride, who spends most of her time thinking about adornments, and Fancy, who worries over her appearance and thinks up coquettish tricks, are examples of a type of femininity which Hardy presented often in his young women. They are the typical young beauties, most interested in their looks and the effects of their looks on others. In Two on a Tower the trait of vanity is largely absent from Viviette, and yet her death comes as a result of a man's opinion about her appearance. And Mrs. Charmond's desire for beauty leads her to harm others and eventually causes the circumstances that kill her.

Most of the other important heroines give at least some serious concern to their looks, and the glib ease with which Hardy describes the

clothing and features of his young women indicates his emphasis on this aspect of personality. And yet the quality is in many cases equated with shallowness of thought, and in some instances it causes outright destruction. Hardy has numerous comments about the subject even in novels in which characters not primarily vain predominate. In Desperate Remedies, he makes a statement that could apply in many instances in the other novels: "His clothes are something exterior to every man; but to a woman her dress is part of her body. Its motions are all present to her intelligence if not to her eyes; no man knows how his coattails swing. By the slightest hyperbole it may be said that her dress has sensation. Crease but the very Ultima Thule of fringe or flounce, and it hurts her as much as pinching her. Delicate antennae, or feelers, bristle on every outlying frill. Go to the uppermost; she is there; tread on the lowest; the fair creature is there almost before you."[10] Previously, in A Pair of Blue Eyes, he has emphasized the value of a woman's appearance: "Perhaps to a woman it is almost as dreadful to think of losing her beauty as of losing her reputation."[11] In Far From the Madding Crowd the same idea is stated: "A woman's dress . . . [is] of the same nature with a malformation or wound in the other. . . ."[12] In the same novel he comments on the role of flattery in the life of a woman: "The wondrous power of flattery in passados at woman is a perception so universal as to be remarked upon by many people almost as automatically as they repeat a proverb. . . ."[13]

A reading of Hardy's works shows a continued interest in the subject of vanity and a continued tendency to let concern about appearance work disadvantageously for his women characters. In his book Pierre D'Exideuil expressed the idea that in presenting women who seek

admiration, Hardy was merely reflecting nature: "The desire for admiration, which we behold in all of them indeed . . . , shews [sic] us that Nature herself acquaints them with the destined role of their charm and with the power which it wields, at the same time instructing them in its necessity."[14] Vanity causes a large part of the difficulties Hardy's women face in their lives.

ENDNOTES

[1] "The Rights of Women," in Female Liberation, Roberta Sapler, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 28.

[2] Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Bryn Mawr College, 1921), p. 184.

[3] Desmond Hawkins, Thomas Hardy (London: Arthur Baker, Ltd., 1950), p. 29.

[4] Hawkins, p. 29.

[5] Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1912; first published 1872), p. 18. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Fancy Day are from this edition.

[6] Hawkins, p. 29.

[7] Thomas Hardy, A Pair of Blue Eyes (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1873), p. 1. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Elfride Swancourt are from this edition.

[8] Thomas Hardy, Two on a Tower (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1882), p. 107. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Viviette Constantine are from this edition.

[9] Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders (London: Macmillan, 1958; first published 1887), p. 28. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Mrs. Charmond are from this edition.

[10] Thomas Hardy, Desperate Remedies (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1871), p. 151.

[11] Thomas Hardy, A Pair of Blue Eyes, p. 312.

[12] Thomas Hardy, Far From the Madding Crowd (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1874), p. 83.

[13] Thomas Hardy, Madding Crowd, p. 192.

[14] Pierre D'Exideuil, The Human Pair in the Work of Thomas Hardy (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 106.

CHAPTER V

CAPRICIOUSNESS: FOUR WOMEN RULED BY WHIMS

Capriciousness, the quality of changeability or whimsicality which makes firmness of purpose impossible, is one of the main criticisms which antifeminists have leveled against women who aspire to any serious business or professional endeavor or who hope to direct their own lives. Folk tradition has given women the privilege of changing their minds, presumably to a much greater degree than men. But women's assumed inability to adhere consistently to a course of action has frequently been the explanation for unfaithfulness in love, irresponsibility at work, and irascibility in the home. Antifeminists mention rapid shifts of mood and short attention spans as the causes of women's lack of serious accomplishment.[1] Even in the twentieth century, Dr. Edgar Berman, physician to prominent political figures, declared that women would be unsuited for high office because of "raging hormonal imbalances" that, he believed, would make them too capricious, too unstable to hold responsible positions.[2] In the nineteenth century Mill granted that this belief was general enough to merit consideration: "It will be said, perhaps, that the greater nervous susceptibility of women is a disqualification for practice, in anything but domestic life, by rendering them mobile, changeable, too vehemently under the influence of the moment, incapable of dogged perseverance, unequal and uncertain in the power of using their faculties. I think that these phrases sum up the greater

part of the objections commonly made to the fitness of women for the higher class of serious business."[3] Although he went on to say that "much of all this is the mere overflow of nervous energy run to waste, and would cease when the energy is directed to a definite end,"[4] the fact that he mentioned the quality of changeability indicates the degree to which nineteenth century thinkers took it seriously as an inherent quality of women. A statement by Freud, although published in 1925, corroborates the idea that women have always been considered whimsical. Freud in discussing "character traits which critics of every epoch have brought up against women" mentioned among other liabilities the uncomplimentary assumption "that they are often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility."[5]

This view of women as extremely changeable appears frequently in the works of Thomas Hardy. In fact, Hardy presented numbers of women whose changeability is a serious handicap. Although Bathsheba Everdene, Eustacia Vye, and Sue Bridehead have other problems, capriciousness complicates their lives. Of the purely capricious the most obvious examples are Miss Aldclyffe in Desperate Remedies, Paul Power in A Laodicean, and Lucette Le Sueur in The Mayor of Casterbridge. Mrs. Garland in The Trumpet Major is a comical parallel in whose life capriciousness seems to have only mild consequences. But many of Hardy's other women characters possess the trait to an interesting degree. Pierre D'Exideuil considered the trait significant to an understanding of many of the characters, for he said that

> These creatures owe their captivating seductivness to the degrees of the caprice which govern their actions. But,

> in reality, these degrees are predetermined. . . . They are issued subject to a law of necessity.
>
> If Hardy chooses this trait as the most conclusive in women's character, he thereby demonstrates more amply that the action takes its rise in the very source of the emotion itself, to terminate in a tragic result wherein everything is destroyed. In the final analysis it is from this little seed of madness that the first impulse starts, sovereign and instinctive, hurling these women upon the slope down which they slide at the bidding of natural laws, without the slightest regard for the conscious desires which still survive in them.[6]

Commenting on capriciousness in Sue Bridehead, Robert Heilman makes a statement applicable to many of the other characters: he notes "her unceasing reversals, apparent changes of mind and heart, acceptances and rejections, alternations of warmth and offishness, of evasiveness and candor, of impulsive acts and later regrets, of commitment and withdrawal, of freedom and constraint, unconventionality and propriety."[7] James Granville Southworth says of Hardy's women that their "emotionalism is a dark abysm across which man cannot pass." He states that the author "shows woman as motivated by emotion rather than intellect."[8] Arthur McDowall, although he complimented the women, recognized their great changeability when he said of them that "they exist only for their feelings, though more naturally, as feminine natures, and on the whole more honestly than the men. They pay cruelly with their very lives."[9] In the Hardy world, then, the women characters so frequently display

capriciousness that it seems to be a complicating factor in the lives of most of them.

Some of the more frivolous characters exhibit a marked degree of capriciousness. For example, Fancy and Elfride are changeable, but their changeability seems to be a part of their flirtatiousness--something they do almost deliberately. Other characters seem to possess the quality as an inherent part of their beings and are not using it as a device of conscious manipulation. In each of the cases which I shall discuss (except Mrs. Garland, who is hardly a serious character), the woman either falls short of her goals or else ends her life tragically.

Bathsheba, in spite of her ability to work hard, to behave managerially toward servants, and in general to act with independence, displays a rather appalling changeability. Her capricious nature causes her to change her mind about a course of action sometimes in the very face of knowledge that her original plan is better. The instability that Hardy's women commonly display can be seen in Bathsheba's dealings with her maid, in her decision to marry Troy, in her reaction toward Troy's death, and in her belated interest in Gabriel Oak only after he has given up all serious hope of winning her.

Much less conventional is Eustacia Vye, who shows her capriciousness by deliberately defying local customs and laws when the motion strikes her. She thinks independently, but her independent thoughts reveal themselves as mere caprice. She seduces a lover, decides he is not great enough for her, then wants him again all within a short period of time. She wants to leave home, but quickly rejects her first chance for travel. When whim or caprice can carry her no further in life, she dies.

Like Eustacia, Sue Bridehead reveals in numerous ways her inability to choose a life plan and follow it consistently. She is intellectual, but she cannot pursue the only career open to her in the realm of intellect--teaching. She loves Jude, but she cannot commit herself to him in marriage. She respects her marriage vows to Phillotson, but she cannot love him. She wants to provide well for the children, but she is so unstable that she cannot even equip them for survival. She has a pagan spontaneity about her, but she cannot still her Christian conscience long enough to enjoy sensuality and the aesthetic life. These three women all demonstrate caprice in addition to the other qualities that limit their achievements.

Miss Aldclyffe

In Desperate Remedies the reader meets a woman who is capriciousness personified and who gives hints of capricious qualities that will later occur mixed with other characteristics in successive heroines. Miss Aldclyffe, a solitary spinster in her late forties, has lived a life of luxurious isolation which, coupled with her basic quality of high temper, has caused her to develop capriciousness to so extreme a degree that her doings mystify even herself. She is haunted by a past in which her lover rejected her because he found out about her illegitimate son, whom she gave up for adoption when he was quite young. Prevented thus from marrying the man she loved, she has secluded herself in her home, using her fiery energies mainly to support religious causes, in which she has only the vaguest interest, and to tyrannize her servants, whom she really bears no ill will. The reader meets Miss Aldclyffe when Cytherea Graye, the main character, has just come in to

be interviewed for a position as lady's maid. During the interview Miss Aldclyffe makes her displeasure obvious by expressing numerous criticisms: Cytherea is too young; she does not know enough; she has advertised dishonestly by not emphasizing her lack of experience--Miss Aldclyffe is vocal about these shortcomings; and although Cytherea makes logical replies and defends herself convincingly yet courteously, Miss Aldclyffe sends her away, imperiously declaring that she will not do by any means. Cytherea, who preserves her self-respect and self-control amid such a scurrilous verbal attack, feels no reason to stay. But as she leaves, she turns her head for one backward look at the older lady, whom she could easily admire given a little less unpleasantness on her elder's part. At the sight of her at this angle, Miss Aldclyffe is strangely touched. (At this stage the reader cannot know another reason for this unpredictable behavior: Cytherea resembles her father, who is the lover that rejected Miss Aldclyffe. Thus the reader sees Miss Aldclyffe's great capriciousness as being even greater than it is, because the motivation is hidden.) Miss Aldclyffe shows her changeable nature by being surprised that the young woman has left, forgetting that a strange girl could not know that an older woman was merely being moody. The older woman's thoughts reveal this moodiness: "'What a silly modest young thing she is, to go away so suddenly as that!'"[10] Miss Aldclyffe asks her to return and practically hires her on the spot, asking her to come on the next Monday. True to her nature, Miss Aldclyffe hires her without allowing time for more than minimal checking of references.

After Cytherea arrives (in a state of mixed emotions) to begin work, a servant gives her some insight into Miss Aldclyffe's behavior, insight that might have helped her a few days ago. "'She's got a very

quick temper; she flees [flies] in a passion with them [the servants] for nothing at all; next morning they come up and say they are going; she's sorry for it and wishes they'd stay, but she's proud as a lucifer. . . . If you say to her about anybody, "Ah, poor thing!" she says, "Pooh! Indeed!" If you say "Pooh, indeed!" "Ah, poor thing!" she says directly'" (p. 68). Cytherea will learn how true indeed is this servant's evaluation of Miss Aldclyffe's capricious temperament, even though she will choose not to yield to her employer's whims.

A trial is not long in coming: Cytherea feels the effects of this temperament when she gets her first assignment, that of "making up" Miss Aldclyffe for a party. While arranging her hair, Cytherea discovers her employer's erratic nature. No way that Cytherea tries to arrange the coiffure is satisfactory, and the older lady becomes peevishly obnoxious. The author comments that "tyranny was in the ascendant with Miss Aldclyffe at this moment, and she was assured of palatable food for her vice by having felt the trembling of Cytherea's hand" (p. 76). Nothing that the girl can do is right, and Cytherea nervously waits throughout the party for an even worse scene at disrobing time. After the party, as Miss Aldclyffe is undressing, Cytherea notices a change in her. The lady seems to be at war with herself, at one moment wanting to confide in her young servant and at the next resenting the girl for compelling her to desire such confidences. Seeing that Cytherea has noticed her locket, Miss Aldclyffe shows her the picture of her former lover, whom Cytherea recognizes as her father; fortunately the girl is able to conceal her shock at this discovery. Miss Aldclyffe is then furious at herself for such a personal revelation. Swearing Cytherea to secrecy is not enough; she will not have done until she has utterly chagrined

the girl and has made a fool of herself in the process. Fortunately, Cytherea's tendency to self-immolation has not yet devoured her spirit, and she defends herself against the lady's unreasonable accusations.

True to her changeable nature, Miss Aldclyffe comes to Cytherea's room after both have had time to think about the day's events. Her mood borders on contrition, and she speaks apologetically. "'Do you think badly of me for my behavior this evening, child? I don't know why I am so foolish. . .'" (p. 90). Miss Aldclyffe seems extremely disappointed because Cytherea can hardly be civil to her. The feelings of kinship are not present in the girl as they are in Miss Aldclyffe; but out of courtesy, Cytherea allows the lady to lead her into conversation. When Cytherea mentions Edward, her lover, Miss Aldclyffe possessively implies that she resents the existence of such a person, announcing her disillusionment with her young servant. At once she reprimands the girl for not being as innocent as appearances have led her to believe, and she says extremely uncomplimentary things to the girl, who has not violated any standards of decorum. At once, seeing that she has alarmed Cytherea, she proceeds to enhance the feeling by trying to convince the girl of the fickleness of all men. Then, when Cytherea is scarcely able to hold back tears, Miss Aldclyffe begs her not to leave but to stay on, not as a maid but as a personal companion. Throughout their discussion in Cytherea's room, Miss Aldclyffe has demonstrated her inability to adhere to a steady course of action; she cannot even last the night without regretting her harshness; she cannot love the girl enough to win a confidence; she cannot maintain her anger long enough to keep from seeking an immediate reconciliation. Some of the qualities she displays here are vaguely reminiscent of the way

Bathsheba treats her servants, harshly reprimanding them and then through maudlin sympathy reversing much of the effect of the reprimand.

The next morning Cytherea expects to have good rapport with her employer, even a certain feeling of warmth based on the confidence of the previous evening. Yet on her arrival at Miss Aldclyffe's room she detects no evidence of a warmer relationship. In fact, Miss Aldclyffe seems almost to enjoy the opportunity of telling Cytherea that Edward has become engaged to someone else. Then, her mood changing again, she vows with equal relish that she will break up the match and help Cytherea win him back.

After she has arranged circumstances so that Cytherea and Edward are together again, Miss Aldclyffe schemes for Cytherea to marry Manston (actually Miss Aldclyffe's long-unacknowledged illegitimate son) and is about to succeed in forcing the marriage by offering money to Cytherea. Responsible for planning the wedding, Miss Aldclyffe is strangely enthusiastic; Hardy says of her, "The capricious old maid had latterly taken to the contemplation of the wedding with even greater warmth than had at first inspired her, and appeared determined to do everything in her power, consistent with her dignity. . ." (p. 269). The vigorous interest in the amenities of the wedding is further evidence of her inconsistent behavior. After the marriage and the subsequent discovery of Mr. Manston's murder of his first wife, Mr. Manston kills himself, and Miss Aldclyffe is incapacitated by the news of this turn of events. On her deathbed she explains to Cytherea that she had hoped for partial fulfillment of her own youthful dreams by uniting her son to the daughter of her lover. Capricious to the last, she is quite sorry for Cytherea, then jerks herself back to practicalities. "Miss Aldclyffe in the jaws

of death was Miss Aldclyffe still, though the old fire had degenerated to mere phosphorescence now" (p. 443). Miss Aldclyffe has met her death, partly as a result of her capricious meddling in a young person's life. Although in any environment she would probably have been extremely impulsive, the constricted circumstances--her loss of her lover because of her past, her seclusion in the house, her lack of outlet for creative powers--have intensified the inherent capriciousness, which in turn works against her and causes her to wreak destruction upon herself and to harm at least two young persons. Grimsditch has a good summation of her changeable nature in his study of Hardy's characters: "Miss Aldclyffe . . . displays startling inconsistencies of temperament. Her moods succeed one another like phases of April weather. In spite of her proud and imperious temper, which at first drives Cytherea almost to despair, she is capable of softer feelings, and her sentimentalizing over the orphan girl is at times even morbid. There is nevertheless some excuse for it, which is more than can be said for her excessive compliance in respect of Manston, though here the tie is of course stronger."[11]

Paula Power

The inability to decide on a course of action and to follow it logically to its conclusion is a significant part of the character of Paula Power in A Laodicean. This changeable young woman seems to waver between tradition and modernity. In her most rational moments Paula is modern enough, holding such advanced ideas as physical education for women, independence from her ancestors, and interest in such modern devices as her own personal telegraph. Young Mr. Somerset, her neighbor,

sees her as an interesting young woman. Hardy allows the young man to observe of her that "she was . . . a modern type of maidenhood . . ., a presumably sophisticated being among the simple ones--not wickedly so, but one who knew life fairly well for her age."[12] Not only is she modern in her ideas of physical culture and progress, but also she is well educated and is interested in cultural and historical learning. She reveals these qualities by her interest in the restoration of the castle and her broad and detailed knowledge of the periods of decor. She has also traveled extensively. She has no older relatives who might function as authority figures. Thus she should be able to make mature decisions and exercise rational control over her environment. Yet Paula's capriciousness is a major part of her character; and, as critics have noted, it reveals itself on numerous occasions. Samuel Chew in a study of the novels alludes to it in his rather uncomplimentary evaluation of the book: "The feminine flux of fancy . . . becomes the chief motive of A Laodicean. . . . The involved love-story is not worth untangling. The only noteworthy motive in the book, apart from that of feminine indeterminateness, is the influx of modern ideas and methods into Wessex; Paula, the heroine, comes of new commercial stock, but she lives in an old castle that embodies or symbolizes the dignity and romance and memories--and discomforts--of past times."[13] Irving Howe, too, notes her lack of firmness of purpose and bestows a grudging compliment on her in his book on Hardy's works.

> Paula Power is a young woman who, in the argot of the 1960's, does not easily "lose her cool." Crisp and alert, rich and pretty, she has many interests but no visible

> passions. She cannot make up her mind between the Baptist faith of her father and the humanist skepticism floating in the background. She is torn in her tastes between fondness for the medieval castle her father has bought her and the modernity symbolized by her private telegraph arrangement. She is inclined to provoking delay in her romantic life, just enough to test her powers though not so much as to cause excessive torment. For several chapters, she is interesting.

Howe seems to see her whimsicality as a characteristic typical of Hardy's women characters, for he says the author "liked the changefulness, sometimes even the caprice, of feminine personality."[14]

The title of the book is itself a clue to Paula's character. Knowing that Paula is the Laodicean referred to in the title, the reader can at once compare her to the members of the early Christian church at Laodicea whom the New Testament writer is addressing in the book of Revelation. The writer reprimands this church severely because it is "luke-warm," that is, not firmly committed to any definite course of action.[15]

The first instance of Paula's capriciousness appears early in the book. Paula has promised to be baptized, according to the dying request of her Baptist father. All preparations for the ceremony have been made, and the congregation has gathered for the service. Paula, after she has followed the minister to the brink of the water, suddenly knows she cannot go through with her promise. To the minister's interrogations she can give no more convincing reply than "'I was mistaken'" (p. 16). After her exit the preacher takes his text from the previously

mentioned biblical passage and aims his sermon directly at her. Hardy includes a statement to show that the preacher "did not know the illimitable caprice of a woman's mind" (p. 18). The young Mr. Somerset, who has been observing the proceedings, has some less critical observations about her. The scandalous act of refusing baptism does not lessen her stature in his eyes, for Hardy says that "the inference was that though this girl must be of a serious turn of mind, willfulness was not foreign to her composition; and it was probable that her daily doings evinced without much abatement by religion [sic] the unbroken spirit and pride of life natural to her age" (p. 19). Here is a suggestion that capriciousness is natural to her sex. Somerset himself sees Paula's lack of certainty about her decision as a part of her charm for him and thus as a part of her femininity: ". . . perhaps if Miss Power had known her own mind, she would have not interested him half so much" (p. 36); and there is more compliment than criticism in his description of her as "'a mixed young lady, rather'" (p. 35).

Thus Somerset sees the negative quality of caprice as a part of femininity despite the fact that this very quality has caused Paula to incur disfavor in the community. When Somerset discusses Paula's ideas with a local preacher, the preacher fears that Paula may have been intellectually converted to a new sect. Somerset reassures him that Paula's hesitancy has been caused by caprice and not by rationality. "'She's not that . . . she's a woman; nothing more'" (p. 70). Since she is a woman, Somerset assumes, there is no need to fear that her faith has been endangered by competition with conflicting ideologies; she is merely acting out her feminine nature by being infirm of purpose. As further proof of her capriciousness the men also refer to the

rapidity with which she espouses modern causes: "'Every philosopher and man of science who ventilates his theories in the monthly reviews has a devout listener in her; and this subject of the physical development of her sex has had its turn with other things in her mind. So she had the place [a gymnasium] built on her very first arrival, according to the latest lights on athletics, and in imitation of those at the new colleges for women'" (p. 192). But the tone of this speech seems to indicate more her capriciousness than her breadth of interest. The speaker seems to be considering her a typical woman in the rapidity with which she accepts new ideas; he does not seem to consider that much of this tendency is caused by mental or emotional superiority.

In love also, Paula's inability to steer a straight course reveals itself. She does a fair amount of coquetting with Somerset in the usual manner of a Hardy heroine, tantalizing him but not allowing him to say he loves her, writing him only the tersest of letters, and so on; some of these coquettish actions seem deliberate. But her later actions seem even more representative of true capriciousness. After Somerset's devotion to her is obvious, Paula announces to him that she will follow her uncle's peevish commandment to write less often. Somerset is disappointed, not only about the lack of letters but also about her inability to make decisions without being influenced by her uncle: "He silently reproached her, who was apparently so independent, for lacking independence in such a vital matter. Perhaps it was mere sex, perhaps it was peculiar to a few, that her independence and courage, like Cleopatra's, failed her occasionally at the last moment" (p. 303). As she further hesitates in her correspondence, her lover becomes anxious that such a "mixed young lady" might easily change her feelings about him. "His

original assumption, that she was a personification of the modern spirit who had been dropped . . . into a chink of mediaevalism, required some qualification. . . . Romanticism . . . had asserted itself in her, . . . her modern spirit was taking to itself wings and flying away" (p. 305).

After many events in which Paula rejects logical courses of action and manages to make decisions that appear more attractive to her because of their seeming lack of logic, she and Somerset are at last married. Shortly thereafter, when the castle where she has lived burns to the ground, she seems happy that they are going to rebuild in the modern spirit. Since Somerset is a man of no great rank, they can be truly free, she thinks, and independent. But her capriciousness is revealed at the very last. As they stand viewing the ruins of the castle, she sighs almost unconsciously and her new husband asks her what is wrong. The only answer he gets is, "'I wish my castle wasn't burnt; and I wish you were a de Stancy [an aristocratic family]'" (p. 500). Thus Paula, despite her advanced ideas and her efforts toward independence and modernity, laments the passing of the old order and proves that she is not nearly as free of its influence as she has indicated. As her story ends, she has given up any idea of achieving status on her own merits, and she reverts to the attitude of the unliberated woman by depending on her husband for her status. Ostensibly the lukewarm Laodicean has finally cast her lot with modernity, but her thoughts are still traditional.

Lucetta Le Sueur

Lucetta Le Sueur in The Mayor of Casterbridge exhibits the quality of changeability to a significant extent. Chew says of her that she

behaves "as Hardy's fickle women are wont to behave."[16] With her foreign name and her expensive tastes, she has affinities with the exotics to be discussed later. In love with Henchard, she has to give him up when his former wife returns. Finding him free after the woman's death, she loses interest and considers the young Farfrae more appealing than Henchard. Married to Farfrae, she can never be happy because her earlier indiscretions with Henchard haunt her. Her capriciousness is shown partially in her attitudes toward her past but mainly in her attitudes toward love and in Henchard's comments about her.

Lucetta seems to allow herself to be carried about by circumstances, and she follows the impulse of the moment, sometimes overthrowing long-range plans in order to do so. She rejects any ties to her past, saying tersely that she does not "'value past matters.'"[17] She explains her own character in terms of the past, however, feeling that her background has in fact made her the capricious person she is: "'As a girl I lived about in garrison towns and elsewhere with my father, 'til I was quite flighty and unsettled'" (p. 173). Because she has been able to escape her background of poverty, she repudiates her heritage completely, even changing her name to Templeman, that of her wealthy relatives.

Having revoked her heritage, she comes to live in Henchard's town, hoping she can capture his love. Yet once settled there, she is quite reluctant to renew her acquaintance with him, even hiding in her timidity (p. 188). And she begins to fear a contingency that has not occurred to her previously; she may not even like Casterbridge (p. 182). After she has seen Henchard and has made some progress toward restoring herself to a place in his affections, she no longer wants him very much. "Lucetta had come . . . to quicken Henchard's feelings with regard to

her. She had quickened them, and now she was indifferent to the achievement" (p. 188). Her instability is surprising even to her: "Her emotions rose, fell, undulated, filled her with wild surmise at their suddenness. . ." (p. 189). As Henchard is almost ready to marry her, she has become so interested in Farfrae that she cannot accept Henchard. Henchard is aware of the inconsistency of her actions, since he knows he was the cause of her change of residence. "For the first time in their acquaintance Lucetta had the move; and yet she was backward" (p. 203). Finally, by the time Henchard is desperate to have a promise from her, indeed needs one as a business endorsement, she is already secretly married to Farfrae. She has agreed to the marriage because she desperately fears that she may lose Farfrae if anyone reveals the details of her affair with Henchard.

Throughout the story Henchard has had several telling remarks to make about Lucetta's capriciousness and indeed that of womankind in general. He seems to expect women to prove unstable and unreliable as a part of their nature, and yet he soundly condemns them (and specifically Lucetta) for this capriciousness. Early in the story of her attempts to regain his interest, she hints that she would like him to come to visit her sometime, then refuses to see him on the one evening when he does appear unexpectedly. His comment seems to indicate that he sees her whimsicality as typical of all women when he says, "'These cursed women--there's not an inch of straight grain in them!'" (p. 171). Later, when Farfrae and Henchard are discussing Henchard's ill-fated romance with Lucetta, and Farfrae presumably does not know it is his wife who had jilted Henchard, Farfrae says of the nameless lady that she

"'must have had a heart that bore transplanting very readily'" (p. 284). Henchard can do nothing but agree fully.

Lucetta's death comes about suddenly as a result of shock over a public display of herself in effigy, an event which would not have occurred had she remained true to her original intention of marrying Henchard. But she has been carried about on the whims of the moment, and her instability has led indirectly to her death.

Mrs. Garland

In The Trumpet Major, one capricious woman is a parody of the condition as it is found in other characters. A very light-hearted individual, Mrs. Garland shows her capriciousness in her behavior toward her daughter and in her alliance with her neighbor. Not a serious character, she provides excellent contrast for her rather stolid daughter Ann and comically echoes other women for whom the quality has serious consequences. In her case, however, the downfall is nothing more than a descent of one or two rungs down the social ladder.

Hardy says of her that "Mrs. Garland was of a festive and sanguine turn of mind, a woman soon set up and soon set down. . . .'"[18] And as Ann, in her serious efforts to be socially proper, conflicts with her mother, the reader sees Ann's opinion of this very changeable woman: "Ann knew that her mother's sentiments were naturally so versatile that they could not be depended on for two days together. . ." (p. 91). Mrs. Garland announces to Ann her plans for marrying Mr. Loveday, their neighbor; and Ann, knowing her mother to be unstable, becomes distressed about her own situation and meditates on her mother's "infirmity of purpose" (p. 93).

The marriage takes place under extremely unusual circumstances. Mr. Loveday's son Bob, the Garlands' neighbor, is to be married; and Mr. Loveday with the help of the Garlands has planned prodigally for food and entertainment and has worked his house into an unaccustomed state of cleanliness. However, at the critical moment, Bob, the intended bridegroom, is jilted; and Mr. Loveday is left with all his preparations useless. So Mrs. Garland accepts his unpremeditated proposal, for what must seem to be among the shallowest of reasons for which a woman ever accepted a man: "'She pitied me so much for having had the house cleaned in vain, and lain [sic] in provisions to waste. . .'" (p. 174).

This changeable woman is a figure of comedy, and her actions harm no one seriously and are only mildly degrading to her. Besides, her degradation is purely social. Her changeable nature is still a part of her when she decides that she no longer wants her daughter to marry her new husband's son, despite the fact that before her own marriage she secretly hoped for some time that the two would marry (p. 196). Unlike more serious characters, she wrecks no one's life, not even her own, by her inability to adhere purposefully to a course of action. Hardy's other changeable women do not fare nearly as well.

Summary

The effects of capriciousness contribute to disaster in the lives of Eustacia and Sue and partially contribute to the circumstances bringing on their deaths. Bathsheba's capriciousness is partly responsible for suffering and grief brought on the three men that she loves, and despite Hardy's statement that she is the stuff of which great men's

mothers are made, she herself suffers considerably because of her whimsical nature. The trait displays itself to a marked extent in Miss Aldclyffe, where a naturally changeable temper has intensified through the years because of Miss Aldclyffe's authority and the isolation which have combined to create an atmosphere in which she has yielded progressively to her whims. As she has given in to this natural tendency until she has further isolated herself, she has caused the servants to despise her; she has behaved ungraciously to a young, impoverished woman; and she has partially brought on her own disaster by attempting to manipulate the young girl's love life.

The trait dominates Paula Power also. Despite the fact that she outlines for herself a life of realistic progressive accomplishments, she is not able to pursue her goals consistently. Her lack of firmness is punished much less severely than that of Miss Aldclyffe; in fact, she achieves success--but at the end she symbolically rejects her success and retreats to a position of anti-modernity. She herself lives, but her modern independence dies.

Lucetta Le Sueur, like Miss Aldclyffe, has a capriciousness which deeply affects her life. She is unable to press forward in her pursuit of her lover, Henchard, eagerly chasing him when he is not available and whimsically avoiding him when he does finally express an interest in her. Her inability to stay with one purpose is instrumental in bringing about her death. And the comic Mrs. Garland, whose death is no more than the death of trivial social ambitions, provides comic contrast to the serious characters in whom capriciousness causes real disaster. A statement made of Sue Bridehead is typical of Hardy's capricious women, for ". . .

when faced with an emotional problem, [they] cannot gauge [their] own feelings from one minute to the next."[19] This instability brings hardships to them in most areas of their lives.

In spite of the many almost complimentary lights in which Hardy presents changeable qualities, and in spite of the fact that even the characters for whom he himself avowed the greatest liking are motivated by capriciousness to a significant degree, the examples above indicate that this quality is a handicap to the women. It is an integral, sometimes even charming part of Hardy's women which, nonetheless, disqualifies them from complete emancipation. This characteristic thus makes them likely subjects for masculine domination, since they cannot control their emotions well enough to control their destinies.

ENDNOTES

[1] Germaine Greer, The Female Eunuch (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), pp. 40, 42, 97, 101 et passim.

[2] Christopher Lydon, "Role of Women Sparks Debate by Congresswoman and Doctor," New York Times, July 26, 1970, p. 35, col. 1.

[3] From "The Subjection of Women" in Up Against the Wall, Mother, Elsie Adams and Mary Louise Briscoe, eds. (Beverly Hill, Calif.: Glencoe Press, 1971), p. 182.

[4] Mill, p. 182.

[5] "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," in Up Against the Wall, Mother, Elsie Adams and Mary Louise Briscoe, eds. (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Glencoe Press, 1971), p. 47.

[6] The Human Pair in the Work of Thomas Hardy (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 114.

[7] "Hardy's Sue Bridehead," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 20 (March 1966), 310.

[8] The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1947), pp. 59, 72.

[9] Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1931), p. 124.

[10] Thomas Hardy, Desperate Remedies (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1871), p. 61. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Miss Aldclyffe are from this edition.

[11] Character and Environment in the Novels of Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 174.

[12] Thomas Hardy, A Laodicean (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1881), p. 15. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Paula Power are from this edition.

[13] Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Bryn Mawr College Press, 1921), pp. 59-60.

[14] Thomas Hardy (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 68-69, 108-109.

[15] Revelation 3:14-22.

[16] Chew, p. 65.

[17] Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1886), p. 173. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Lucetta Le Sueur are from this edition.

[18] Thomas Hardy, The Trumpet Major (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920; first published 1880), p. 9. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Mrs. Garland are from this edition.

[19] Grimsditch, p. 134.

CHAPTER VI

ANIMALS, WITCHES, EXOTICS, AND ONE FLAGRANT EXCEPTION

A whole continuum of behavior seems to be acceptable in the world of Hardy's women as long as the women accept the role of perpetuator of the species for themselves or support this role for other women. In this chapter, I shall present a number of women rather far apart on this continuum and will discuss the fact that they survive or fail to survive on the basis of their acceptance or rejection of this role. Three main types emerge: those represented as gross animals, witches, and exotics. These women are frequently minor characters, and although often in trouble, cause almost as much difficulty for others as for themselves. One woman seems to violate all the rules, cross all the categories, and succeed where failure seems certain.

Animals

One of the traditional views toward women in the nineteenth century was that of base animal, gross seductress and allurer of men on a physical level. In this role a woman is threatening because she can control a man by working upon his passions, by way of which she can make him almost completely helpless and bring him to ruin for her benefit or her entertainment. This type seems to be the purest representation of the will-to-live, for she is above no means which will help her to manipulate

her man. She serves as a convenient scapegoat figure, for a man can easily minimize his responsibilities in an encounter with such a woman. Yet, despite these negative qualities, this woman endures, for she accepts sexual value as the important aspect of her life. Her emphasis on sexuality as the reason for her existence disqualifies her for liberation, but allows her to survive physically. The type does not seem to have fascinated Hardy to the extent that some others did (he confessed his fondness for the wispy, aesthetic Sue Bridehead type[1]), but Suke Damson in The Woodlanders, Car Darch in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and most impressively, Arabella Donn in Jude the Obscure are proof that he noticed the preponderantly physical type. Even Tess herself has the physical qualities of such a woman, but Hardy quickly disclaims any such qualities of character in her. These three women accept their basic animality. Their lack of interest in careers or intellectual activities makes them contrast sharply with the women who seek success in these areas.

Suke Damson in The Woodlanders, despite the fact that she is not a major character, foreshadows the physical type of woman which Hardy develops more fully in later novels. Her allurements seem to be primarily physical, and she is able to charm men almost with impunity, having to suffer very little in the way of punishment for her misdeeds. Of capacity for self examination she seems to have not one bit, and Hardy never mentions that she has any cultural or intellectual endowments.

Suke enters the story on several occasions before she becomes significant, but in each of her early appearances she reveals herself in ways that emphasize her physicality and lack of refinement. She first shows her character one day as she is walking through a gate which Dr.

Fitzpiers has just painted. Hardy says that the doctor sees her as "a bounding young woman with her skirts tucked up and her hair wild."[2] Her lack of refinement shows when she curses as the paint musses her hands. In other encounters the doctor describes her as "hoydenish." As is generally true for her type in the Hardy gallery, she is said to have "a well-developed form and gait" (p. 200). She and later similar characters demonstrate that Hardy did not present women who had both physical and mental superiority.

Engaged to Tim Tangs, whom she does not seem to regard very seriously and whom she manipulates on several occasions, she is not above seizing an opportunity to be with the more attractive Dr. Fitzpiers. On one evening her behavior reveals her susceptibility to masculine charms: she is out for a walk, expecting to meet Tim, but when the doctor arrives first, she makes no effort to discourage his advances. In this encounter her physical attractiveness shows to best advantage: "In the moonlight Suke looked very beautiful, the scratches and blemishes incidental to her outdoor occupation being invisible. . ." (p. 177).

Suke takes advantage of a minor ailment in order to see the doctor under the guise of professional visits. He is most cooperative, inventing a story of an extracted tooth to make her visits appear plausible; but Grace, the doctor's wife, proves the story to be false (p. 250). Then, when Fitzpiers is ill, Suke has the audacity to come to their home and ask Grace if she may see him. This triangular situation is reminiscent of some of the encounters in the later novels, for example, between Sue and Arabella when Jude is ill. It shows Suke as a forward young woman, willing to pursue her beloved even in circumstances rendered almost grotesque by her presence.

Finally, after Suke and Tim perpetrate their somewhat hypocritical marriage, Suke continues to wield a fascination over Fitzpiers, failing to reckon with the jealous nature of her insipid little husband. A man-trap Tim sets for Fitzpiers catches Mrs. Fitzpiers instead--she has been out looking for her errant husband. And Suke suffers no remorse for this happening, even though she is in large measure responsible for it (p. 427).

In Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Car Darch is the representative of animality. Hardy says that Tess herself has a physical luxuriance but without the animal-like qualities that are associated with it. In this novel, the gross woman helps to cause the downfall of pure Tess, who cannot accept the other girls' lack of refinement. Late one evening on the way home from a dance, Car shows tendencies that Hardy will later make significant in Arabella Donn: ". . . she had bared her plump neck, shoulders, and arms to the moonshine under which they looked as luminous and beautiful as some Praxitelean creation, in their possession of the faultless rotundities of a lusty country girl."[3] Car is the type of woman who endures, but does not advance. Her basic will to live is her dominating force.

Much more likable but equally animalistic and static is Arabella Donn from Jude the Obscure. Unlike most of the fragile, aspiring ladies, she frankly accepts the life force within her, is absolutely realistic, and accepts male dominance as the system that works. As a result she perseveres instead of allowing circumstances to defeat or diminish her, but a survival like hers could never be acceptable to any of the more ambitious and refined women.

Unlike Tess, she is not embarrassed about her physical luxuriance but rather accentuates and exploits it. She wears fake hair and artificially produces dimples to make herself more attractive. She launches a concentrated campaign to capture Jude, who remains naively helpless against her advanced techniques. Teasing him at her home one afternoon, she draws back when he is about to caress her, telling him he will crush the hen egg she is hatching in her bosom. Here, she announces her desire to nurture living creatures.[4] Then a few months later she forces him into marriage by shamming pregnancy and causing him to abandon his academic ambitions in order to support her.

This propensity for absolutely practical realism that Arabella has used to establish herself respectably with a husband also extends into other areas. The nearest Arabella has ever come to a vocational interest is pig-raising, a practical, down-to-earth business. She shows her ruthless practicality in the famous pig-killing scene in which she chides Jude for killing the pig too quickly and not allowing the meat to be properly drained.[5] She shows an equally strong practical bent when after the breakup of their marriage she sells Jude's picture for the price of the frame, not even bothering to remove the picture first. And the most heartless practicality motivates her when she decides to leave Jude and go to a street dance, explaining to others that he will not awaken while she is gone. No one has to know the truth--that this practical, life-oriented woman sees no use in giving up a street dance when her husband lies dead. She can take up her proper stance of mourning widow in plenty of time to fulfill the social requirements.

And she has obviously given certain attention to the fulfillment of social requirements. Unlike Sue, she has accepted her local community's

concepts about what marriage is supposed to be--she believes, or at least says, that a married man must dominate his wife. When she visits Phillotson, Sue's husband, and finds that he has allowed Sue to leave him because of her feeling of extreme revulsion toward him, Arabella comments in words that clearly but brutally reinforce her belief in women's subordinate position. She tells Phillotson that he should have used persuasion, even physical force if needed, to preserve the form of marriage even in the absence of its spirit:

> ". . . you shouldn't have let her [leave]. That's the only way with these fanciful women that chaw high--innocent or guilty. She'd have come round in time. We all do! . . . , I should have kept her chained on--her spirit for kicking would have been broke soon enough! There's nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf taskmaster for taming us women. Besides, you've got the law on your side. Moses knew. . . . 'Then shall the man be guiltless, but the woman shall bear her iniquity!' Damn rough on us women, but we must grin and put up wi' it'" (pp. 383-384).

She obviously accepts herself and other women as flawed beings, weak and suitable for dominance, able to make gains only by devious scheming, at which she has repeatedly demonstrated her competence. Even though at times this view may be unpleasant for her personality, she still operates within its framework.

In addition to her acceptance of the idea of masculine dominance, Arabella completely if somewhat hypocritically accepts the idea of marriage as an indicator of social respectability. Ignoring the

dishonesties and disloyalties of her past marriage, she has no hesitation about vaunting her greater social propriety over Sue, who is Arabella's superior in honesty, conscientiousness, and many other qualities. One of the most blatant examples of this tendency to attribute moral superiority to herself occurs when Jude, in the delirium of his last illness, calls Arabella by Sue's name. Arabella lashes out at him with unintentional irony. "'I wish you'd mind who you are taking to calling a respectable married woman by the name of that _____'" (p. 483). Arabella has done the legally and socially correct thing, no matter what other factors enter. As Frederick McDowell says, "The amoral Arabella thus gives her judgment on a woman of far greater discrimination; at the same time some of the common sense of the situation lies with Arabella."[6]

Arabella stands in direct contrast to the typical Hardy heroine. Not for her is the self-sacrifice of Tess and others; no apology does she ever present for her animal nature; she has no ambition beyond the demands of mere survival; her capriciousness is only that of the opportunist; her vanity is base--and yet, unlike the women of more refined character who attempt to examine their status and improve it, Arabella endures. Yet, although Hardy did have a certain interest in Arabella and even, as McDowell suggests, liked her, she seems to lack most of the qualities he admired in women.[7] She is not interested in the arts; she is not intellectual; she is not ambitious for a vocation; she is not elegant in personal appearance. I believe that Hardy presented her as a realist and that she is an effective foil against which to view the others. As McDowell says, "She displays an impudence, not totally devoid of Hardy's own sardonically humorous apprehension of reality."[8] According to some critics, Hardy expressed the idea that reality is very hard

on women. The ones who endure physically are those who accept the biological destiny of women. If this statement is true, it implies the question of whether such endurance at the cost of other achievements is worthwhile. The more idealistic of Hardy's heroines would seem to answer in the negative.

Witches

The characters with witch-like qualities bring up a question about ambivalence toward women in Hardy's works. If animalistic women survive, it is because they fulfill or attempt to fulfill a simple biological function. If women seeking to achieve cultural or vocational ambitions must be destroyed or tamed, it is because they seek to remove themselves from this framework. The witches, then, may be viewed in two ways. They normally would exist outside the framework, but if they support it, they receive no more serious punishment than ostracism. The witches who use their power constructively to support the continuation of life are merely ostracized, but those who use it selfishly in ways that deny life are destroyed. In either case their superior ability to predict accurately causes them to be objects of fear. The assumption is that if they can foresee events, they must be abnormal in some way; and if they appear superior to men, men scorn them just as readily as the same men criticize other women for being naive.

Simone De Beauvoir in The Second Sex discusses in some detail the feeling of distrust toward women who are unattractive or uncannily clever, or even in some cases merely perplexing. "The old woman, the homely woman, are not merely objects without allure--they arouse hatred mingled with fear. . . . Women's mentality perpetuates that of

agricultural civilizations which worshipped the magic powers of the land: she believes in magic. Her passive eroticism makes . . . an attraction akin to that which causes the divining rod to dip. . . ." If the woman breaks the pattern of submissiveness, De Beauvoir says, she becomes equally suspect but for a different reason. ". . . the lot of the woman being bondage to another, if she escapes the yoke of man she is ready to accept that of the devil."[9] Because witchcraft was being taken seriously by the peasants in Hardy's day, he heard many stories of witches and observed their supposed works in his community. Thus it is not surprising that representatives of this view of women should find expression in his works. The people actually delineated as local witches do little harm. However, in the characters who have merely taken on some aspects of witches' natures, Hardy presented more sinister portents.

Hardy's first practicing witch comes early in the course of his novels. She is Elizabeth Endorfield in Under the Greenwood Tree. Ruth Firor, in a detailed study of Hardy's folkways, points out that he seemed to take delight in this creature.[10] He showed the ambivalence of her community's attitudes toward her as he described her and said that her reputation wavered "between distinction and notoriety."[11] Her name is a quaint touch, Endorfield being a rather transparent allusion to the Old Testament witch of Endor who was surreptitiously employed by King Saul to conjure up Samuel from the dead to advise him in a desperate military situation[12]--a heavy allusional weight to attach to such a small local witch. But this witch fits the pattern:

> She was shrewd and penetrating; her house stood in a lonely place; she never went to church; she wore a red cloak;

> she always retained her bonnet indoors; and she had a pointed chin. Thus far her attributes were distinctly Satanic; and those who looked no farther called her, in plain terms, a witch. But she was not gaunt, nor ugly in the upper part of the face, not particularly strange in manner; so that, when her more intimate acquaintances spoke of her the term was softened, and she became simply a Deep Body, who was a long-headed as she was high (pp. 166-167).

Here he has little criticism of the witch, admitting after a detailed portrayal of the external evidence of her witchery, that any skill she has is simply a result of common sense. But he allows the reader to see the great amount of opprobrium that can be attached to any woman who has the double handicaps of ugliness and shrewdness.

When Fancy Day comes to the home of the witch one rainy evening and seeks shelter from the storm, she does not quite know whether to confide in Elizabeth or not. But the question is at once taken out of her hands, for like a good witch (or an observing and sympathetic mature woman), Elizabeth ferrets out the cause of Fancy's distress. Apparently enjoying her power over Fancy, she answers Fancy's inarticulate question as to how she knows about the girl's problem: "'Little birds tell me things that people don't dream of my knowing'" (p. 167). Then she pours out to Fancy a list of directions which she first refers to as witchery, but she later is moved to add: "'The charm is worked by common sense, and the spell can only be broke by your acting stupidly'" (p. 167). The plan is a very simple enchantment: Fancy is merely to starve herself and

waste away in lovesickness. The success of this bit of enchantment impresses Fancy more than it does the reader.

The character of Elizabeth, occupying only a small chapter, is certainly a minor one, hardly more than a piece of the much-touted Hardy landscape. Yet it shows a picture of one way the literary world (and of course the community) has chosen to look upon women. In the light of the frequency with which critics of emancipation have condemned women equally severely for possessing or not possessing certain qualities, the use of the witch-personality is predictable. The community may criticize women for being flighty and stupid, but if they commit the greater sin of being deep and clever the community is likely to ostracize them. The world of masculine supremacy can tolerate the first two qualities because they tend to cause women to become submissive, but it can never forgive those women who are more clever than the common run. They have nothing about which to be abject, and they demand a most unpalatable humility in those who meet them. Thus, unacceptable, they must be punished for having the very qualities the absence of which has been severely criticized in the typical woman. As Hardy's works become more complete, he presents other characters with witch-like qualities.

Another women who has a suggestion of the witch about her is Eustacia Vye in The Return of the Native. She shows qualities of a witch fairly early when she discusses her reasons for wanting to have a bonfire as a part of the traditional November celebration. Wildeve, her lover, has come in response to her signals, and she is rejoicing over her triumph and glorying in her power: "'I would get a little excitement by calling you up and triumphing over you as the Witch of Endor called Samuel. . . . I have shown my power.'"[13] She herself does not take her

powers seriously, but subsequent events reveal that her neighbors do. Ruth Firor in her discussion of Hardy's witchlike characters mentions the hatred between Eustacia and the denizens of the community. She says, "Eustacia was hated because she openly despised the social and moral standards of Egdon, and disdained what seemed to her a dull and stupid outlook on life. . . . her extraordinary beauty and her powerful will exercised over the rustic mind a fascination that seemed utterly malevolent."[14]

Hardy describes Eustacia as a lonely, idle, mysterious creature and shows that she is dark in both coloring and powers. Combining superior education with superior sensitivity (in one place the author says she is able almost to see with her ears), she has caused suspicion among her neighbors because of her lack of sociability. The local characters do not trust her, and she hardly tries to veil her contempt for them, a contempt based merely on lack of interest, not evil intent. Mrs. Yeobright has a realistic summation of the situation: "'Good girls don't get treated as witches even on Egdon'" (p. 211).

Eustacia provokes the superstitious fear of Susan Nonesuch, an eccentric woman who seems to have affinities with witchcraft herself, being quite well informed about its lore and conscious of its applications. Eustacia has frequently employed Susan's son Johnny on errands, and Susan has decided that the boy is in Eustacia's power. Susan uses a rather horrifying method to avenge her: she pricks her with a knitting needle during one of Eustacia's infrequent visits to church (p. 209). Eustacia's superior qualities of mind, emotion and spirit have caused Susan to misunderstand her, and she has punished her for the illness of little Johnny, a condition for which Eustacia cannot have been

responsible. In this case qualities indicating superiority have caused misunderstanding and punishment.

The most conclusive evidence that people in the community believe Eustacia is a witch occurs when Susan makes a counter-charm against her. Susan accepts Eustacia's witchcraft as proven when Johnny reports feeling worse shortly before Eustacia goes by. "To counteract the malignant spell which she imagined the unsuspecting Eustacia to be working, the boy's mother busied herself with a ghastly invention of superstition. . . . It was a practice well known on Egdon at that time. . ." (pp. 423-425). Susan makes the wax image in the form of Eustacia, sticks pins in it, and then burns it. In fighting the supposed power of the unknown, she herself has taken on some of the functions of a witch, but her main purpose here is to serve as an objectification of the community's feelings toward this extraordinary creature, Eustacia, whose needs and emotions her neighbors cannot perceive.

Exotics

In addition to animals and witches, one further type of objectionable woman finds her way into Hardy's novels. She is the exotic: beautiful, vain, but not practical. To be associated with her is folly for a man, for her tastes are so expensive and her desire for fulfilling them is so insistent that she is incapable of behaving unselfishly. She must gratify herself at all costs; she dabbles in disapproved social activities, she is artificial in manners and personal adornment, and she insists on travel and familiarity with the outside world. Often she has foreign lovers or friends or both. She has supported herself in suspect occupations, often as a low-rated actress. She wins the interest of the

men and the scorn of the women, and her exotic tastes usually lead to her downfall.

Lucetta Le Sueur, Felice Charmond, and Eustacia Vye are major characters who have this trait to a significant degree. In each case the women have lived in foreign countries and are glamorous and sophisticated. They yearn for greater scope and greater finance, and they seek these goals in ways most detrimental to themselves. Lucetta is attempting to flee from her background in search of love and money. Felice, with her glamour, seeks love in the person of a man loved by an innocent woman. Eustacia seeks excitement in stage productions and vague dreams about foreign countries. But the exotic woman appears in her pure form only in minor characters, who despite the small number of pages they occupy, cause havoc for the main characters by their expensive tastes and their unusual power to charm through artifice and scheming. The first Mrs. Manston in Desperate Remedies and Matilda Johnson in The Trumpet Major are examples. These women create difficulty in many ways.

Mrs. Manston is the wife of Miss Aldclyffe's steward (afterwards the reader learns that Manston has forced her to stay in the background for quite some time because of Miss Aldclyffe's demand that her steward be a single man). By the time she arrives, she has become so angry over his neglect of her that her highly temperamental nature is showing plainly. Her husband, in explaining his plight to Miss Aldclyffe, has said that his wife is a third-rate actress, an American, and a very shallow woman of whom he was tired after a week of marriage.[15] Although she knows he no longer loves her, she pursues him to the extent the law allows. Hardy comments directly upon her: "Altogether her conduct had shown her to be what in fact she was, a weak, though a calculating woman,

one clever to conceive, [but] weak to execute. . ." (p. 189). In this case the result for the woman is death, for in a fit of fury Manston strikes her and she dies. Manston, although not intending to kill her, is not sorry. Hardy has not presented her in complimentary terms anywhere in the novel, and her husband describes her harshly in his last confession as "one whose beauty had departed, whose utterance was complaint, whose mind was shallow, and who drank brandy every day" (p. 433).

In The Trumpet Major, Matilda Johnson appears as another example of the shallow women of artificial tastes who lead local innocents into difficulty. She is the fiance of Bob, having become engaged to him on extremely short notice. A scene early in the book provides a chance for Matilda to reveal her character. Bob's household is in an uproar, preparing for his wedding, and the premises and the people have been whipped into a painfully unnatural state of cleanliness and propriety. When she arrives by means of a poor wagon instead of the coach Bob has given her money to hire, she tells him she has saved the money. But Hardy lets the reader know what really happened. "That angel had, in short, so wildly spent Bob's and her own money in the adornment of her person before setting out, that she found herself without a sufficient margin. . . ."[16] She reacts with highly artificial concern to the rural aspects of Bob's home, practically fainting at the bellow of the family milk cow, the "horrid bull" as she calls it. The local women are impressed by her city ways: "Miss Johnson's pleasing habit of partly dying whenever she heard any unusual bark or bellow added to her piquancy. . ." (p. 148). Later, when she disappears, Bob's brother John explains that he has dismissed her, since he knows that she is a woman of bad reputation who will bring scandal upon their family. Bob meekly accepts this

decision and allows her to go. John has accomplished all this without more than a brief look at the lady himself.

Not too much later, John falls in love with an actress and arranges for Bob and his friend to come and see her. Predictably enough, the actress is Matilda. Upon finding Bob there, she is furious and resolves to avenge him for jilting her. She shows her character by directing military officers to his home so that they almost impress him into the service. Her belated assistance to Ann in arranging his escape seems less a repentance than a caprice. Despite her antics and schemes, her fate is nothing worse than marriage to the arch-villain of the story. A shallow person, alienated from the farm people who comprise the majority of the characters in this novel, she is an example of an undesirable woman--part of the image of womankind as evil that occurs in several guises in Hardy's novels.

Hardy gives a generous sampling of women who exhibit failings to a significant degree and who because of these failings suffer anything from community ostracism to physical death, sometimes accompanied by ominous hints about possible spiritual death. They suffer because they are too self-sacrificing. Furthermore, their tendencies to cast themselves down force them into sufferings they might have missed completely if they had been less yielding. Or they center their lives on ambition and then are unable to find the satisfaction available to those who take life as it comes. They may be vain and frivolous coquettes who use all their potential for beauty and charm to trap an elusive man who frequently proves markedly inferior to the more easily available matrimonial prospects. They make fine and noble and involved plans and then, too capricious to follow through on these plans, fall into courses of action worse than

those of women who have taken no thought for the future. They are animals, witches or exotics; and, to the extent that they reject for themselves or others the reproductive function of women, they suffer in one way or another. Animalistic ones seem to be most in harmony with this concept. The power that they have may be frightening to men, but it is a power in line with women's alleged purpose. Witches suffer according to the extent of their rejection of the role. Exotics, involved in a search for unusual experiences, reject the maternal or submissive wife role and thus do not survive.

One Exception

But in one novel, The Hand of Ethelberta, Hardy presents a woman with at least some of all four of the major qualities with which he frequently endows women, and this woman advances to success not only for herself but also for her entire family. The statement by William Larrett about Hardy's social climbers is particularly applicable to her; Larrett believes that "the chance . . . of improved social standing, with all that it implies, tempts most of Hardy's women."[17] Yet Ethelberta is definitely in the minority, for although many aspire, few achieve. H. C. Webster mentions the fact that she is more practical and reasoned than the usual Hardy women.[18] Although she is in peril at points in the story, she perseveres and begins to earn a good income. There is little evidence that anything is left in the conscience of Ethelberta to haunt her, except maybe a lingering remembrance of how she has had to snub her family in order to reach the position she holds at the end of the book. Wifedom does not squash her up in its maw, and no Hardyean ironies of

circumstance come along to lessen for her the material success for which she has worked and conceived.

The Hand of Ethelberta was Hardy's first financially successful attempt at portraying life among the upper classes. Hardy was not at his best in this milieu, and in spite of the novel's financial success, some critics believe it to have been aesthetically unsatisfying.[19] His upper-class characters are not drawn with the brilliance of his rustics, and some critics have commented that his drawing-room scenes border on disaster. Although Grimsditch says of Ethelberta that she "never makes a mistake" and considers her intelligent and efficient, he adds that she "is the least attractive of the gallery of women portrayed in the Wessex novels."[20] James Granville Southworth says that ". . . [Hardy] fails only when he sees with an unconsciously jaundiced eye--when, for example, he looks at the women . . . in the fashionable social world. . . . Only then are his portraits unconvincing."[21] And his social climber character is as exceptional in her success as her book is in its subject matter. Hardy is in his element among the lower classes, and Ethelberta as a person transplanted into the upper class is untypical of his characters. So she seems to glide past all the circumstances that less-favored women trip themselves up on, and she arrives at success where they catapult themselves into disaster.

The story begins as Ethelberta Petherwin, a young widow, has been disinherited by her wealthy mother-in-law. The elder Mrs. Petherwin has been offended because Ethelberta has refused to suppress a book of original love poems disrespectful to the memory of her son. The elder lady argues that Ethelberta has no right to accept financial help from her and to live as her daughter now that she is capable of developing

an interest in young men again. Thus Ethelberta faces the prospect of returning to her parental home, and she feels obligated to improve the lot of her nine brothers and sisters as well as that of her parents. She contrives to take a great house in London, hire her parents and some of her siblings as servants, secretly rent the upstairs portions to foreign lodgers, and pass herself off as a society lady. In order to support this melange, she has hit upon the plan of "novel-telling," that is, charging audiences an admission to hear her tell adventure stories, to which she gives a sense of dramatic immediacy by presenting herself as the central character. This plan, she hopes, will enable her to earn a good income and possibly to meet socially acceptable matrimonial prospects. All depends on the degree to which she can insure that her entertainment prospers and that her lodgers and her guests and her servants do not make any inauspicious revelations to each other. The very audacity of such a scheme testifies to the ambitious nature of this completely aggressive young woman.

Ethelberta's invincible drive reveals itself in her ambitious climb to a measure of fame and to matrimonial success and in her treatment of her husband after the wedding. George Wing says of her that her decisions are "calculated and unemotional: she deliberately cast aside any prospect of happiness, about which Hardy is skeptical anyway, and she fastened, unashamedly, avariciously, to Mountclare [the wealthy prospective husband]."[22] All the time that she is behaving in such a ruthless fashion, she has recurring regrets about the way in which she must treat her own family, and she often wishes she were dead. Thus, knowing that society has left her no other way to provide for her family, the reader is likely to feel at least some pity for her, at the same time condemning

her for her affectations. An early view of Ethelberta as she races across a secluded area to try to help an injured bird foreshadows her later forceful efforts to help her family: "she raced along over the uneven ground with such force of tread that, being a woman slightly heavier than gossamer, her patent heels punched little D's in the soil with unerring accuracy wherever it bare, and crippled the heather-twigs where it was not. . . ."[23] She is not a light woman, and her treads into society will make deep impressions. She will crush more than twigs before she achieves her ambition.

The ambitious drives and the abilities that have made it possible for Ethelberta to undertake her grand scheme have revealed themselves early in her life. Her family, including her parents as well as her brothers and sisters, seems to have deferred to her superiority and to have accepted early the idea that she had special abilities. Her brothers, Sol and Dan, who follow her around like two adoring watchdogs and are often ingratiating, discuss their sister in terms that reveal this attitude: "'her life has been quare [sic] enough . . . I suppose 'twas her nater to want to look into the world a bit. . . . Father and Mother kept Berta to school. . . . They always had a notion of making a governess of her. She was always one of the independent sort. . .'" (p. 112). And all her family members tolerate her arrangements as if her intelligence entitles her to control them all in this way.

Ethelberta's stories fascinate the public, and she begins to enjoy a measure of success, although she must keep her background a secret. The loved ones in the background remain there, almost without exception not even offering a word of complaint. Hardy comments on the uniqueness of her situation:

> She stood there, as all women stand who have made themselves remarkable by their originality, or devotion to any singular cause, as a person freed of her hampering and inconvenient sex, and, by virtue of her popularity, unfettered from the conventionalities of manner prescribed by custom for household womankind. The charter to move abroad unchaperoned, which society for good reasons grants only to women of three sorts--the famous, the ministering, and the improper--Ethelberta was in a fair way to make splendid use of: instead of walking in protected lanes she experienced that luxury of isolation which normally is enjoyed by men alone, in conjunction with the attention naturally bestowed on a woman young and fair (p. 262).

But Ethelberta frequently speaks of the venture as a game and says she is tired of playing. She emphasizes the fact that her own desire to provide well for the family is her key motivation, even though her own enjoyment and sense of challenge cause her always at the back of her mind to feel vaguely guilty and to torture herself with doubts about the rightness of her action.

One incident involving a donkey shows the mixed feelings she has about the ruthlessness her ambition demands. On this occasion she wishes to attend a meeting of a historical society to which a number of influential people belong. Although the distance is long and the road is steep, she rules out the possibility of hiring a carriage, for she needs all the money possible for the children's holiday. Determined to go, she decides to make the five-mile journey on foot and just show up

at the meeting, making no reference to how she got there and thus preserving both status and budget. But the walk begins to tire her long before the destination is in sight, and she gives in to her fatigue by renting a little donkey and riding him the rest of the way. She then ties him in what she assumes to be a secluded place so that no one will see him and ask embarrassing questions. Having walked in the direction of the appointed castle meeting place for some minutes, she is appalled to find that the shabby animal has loosed himself and has become an object of scrutiny for the historical society, whose members have gathered about him and are discussing him as a local artifact. There is nothing Ethelberta can do now except to join them and add her own comments on the possible historical significance of the beast. To claim him now would be social suicide. She refuses to clear up the mystery of his presence but begins to feel guilty because she cannot acknowledge the creature which has brought her up the hill. Hardy reveals her thoughts:

> The ass looked at Ethelberta as though he would say, "Why don't you own me, after safely bringing you [sic] over those weary hills?" But the pride and emulation which had made her what she was would not permit her, as the most lovely woman there, to take upon her own shoulders the ridicule that had already been cast upon the ass. Had he been young and gaily caparisoned, she might have done it; but his age, the clumsy trappings of rustic make, and his needy woeful look of hard servitude, were too much to endure.
>
> . . .

> The humble ass hung his head in his usual manner, and it demanded little fancy from Ethelberta to imagine that he despised her. And then her mind flew back to her history and extraction, to her father--perhaps at that moment inventing a private plate-powder in an underground pantry--and with a groan at her inconsistency in being ashamed of the ass, she said in her heart, "My God, what a thing am I!" (pp. 263-264).

Whatever thing she is, however, she is beginning to get results. One of the gentlemen at the meeting, an elderly Lord Mountclere, has taken an interest in her for quite some time. Her reaction fits the pattern she has established. She recognizes that his offer of matrimony has attractive possibilities, for when married to him she could supposedly give up all her pretenses and have all her financial problems solved. Should she marry him, or should she accept one of the lesser men who have sought her? She looks for the answer, not in her heart but in treaties on utilitarianism and causistry, and at last decides that marriage to Mountclere would indeed meet the criterion of the greatest good for all the people for whom she is responsible. Then she regrets that a lack of romanticism has had to be a factor; she sees that her course has been "emotional poetry, light verse, romance as an object, romance as a means, thoughts of marriage as an aid to her pursuits, a vow to marry for the good of her family: in other words, from soft and playful Romanticism to distorted Benthamism." She wonders, "Was the moral incline upward or down?" (p. 321). But the man offers all the advantages she wants, and practicality prevails. Ethelberta becomes Mrs. Mountclere at 8:00 one morning. A brief skirmish occurs when

Ethelberta learns that her husband has been dishonest about his financial status. She tries to escape him, but he foils her plans with diabolical cleverness and she continues to be married to him.

But the invincible domineering quality of Ethelberta is alive to the last. It is almost as if she feels that the deceitful conduct of her husband has entitled her to manipulate him completely with no qualms about the rightness of her behavior. Hardy gives only secondhand accounts of her life with Mountclere, but a neighbor's description of her treatment of her husband reveals the fact that if Ethelberta has ever had any tendencies toward self-immolation, she has overcome them completely. She controls Mountclere absolutely, for the good of everyone, and by the end of the story she has made him give up his vices. She personally manages their estate with a great amount of skill. The neighbor reveals the situation to a former lover of hers when he says, "'She threatened to run away . . . and kicked up Bob's-a-dying. . . . Pore old nobleman, she marches him off to church every Sunday . . . and keeps him down to three glasses of wine a day'" (p. 452). He never makes any decisions without her consent. As the story ends, she has fired most of the farm workers and is doing the managing herself. "'Twas a lucky day for him that she was born in humble life, because owing to it she knows the ins and outs of contriving, which he never did'" (p. 453).

So Ethelberta, purposefully ambitious, has enough self-immolation to grieve over her behavior toward her family, enough vanity to make her extremely concerned with her beauty, enough caprice to cause her to vacillate. But she achieves financial success despite obstacles that prostrate other Hardy women and despite the "sense of disquiet" that, as

D'Exideuil says, she can never get rid of.[24] The only price she has to pay is that of tolerating an unattractive old husband who is so doting toward her that his other qualities really seem to matter very little. She is one woman that Hardy allows to succeed. Evelyn Hardy's comments about her are illuminating:

> Through his heroine Hardy re-lives some of his own problems on joining London society, but he is master enough of a woman's mind to interpret her difficulties with feminine understanding. . . . Although she has earned a kind of sexlessness which enables her to be free from the fettering of social restrictions . . . she finds consequent drawbacks. . . . She longs to be a man, since men appear to have all the advantages in life; finally she decides that . . . the only solution is to marry. . . . Hardy never envisaged a woman strong enough to stand alone without the support of marriage.[25]

Miss Hardy finds the character unsatisfying because she has to stultify too much of her real self. Ethelberta is the manipulator, for she uses people as objects to help her in her ascent. Since her family includes several working people (a butler, two carpenters, and a teacher), it is unlikely that her financial help is really necessary. Her undignified use of people to serve an ambition that is more important to her than to anyone else shows that she can achieve financial independence, but that in achieving it she gives up the human qualities necessary to complete spiritual liberation. Even though Ethelberta succeeds materially, she does not succeed as an emancipated woman, and even while learning of her

success, one notes that with it she has degenerated into a stereotype--that of the nagging wife.

ENDNOTES

[1] Desmond Hawkins, Thomas Hardy (London: Arthur Baker Ltd., 1950), p. 83.

[2] Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958; first published 1887), p. 133. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Suke Damson refer to this edition.

[3] Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles (London: Macmillan, 1960; first published 1891), p. 82.

[4] Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1923; first published 1895), p. 62. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Arabella Donn refer to this edition.

[5] Henry Charles Duffin, Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and the Dynasts (Manchester: Univ. Press, 1937), p. 233.

[6] "In Defense of Arabella: A Note on Jude the Obscure," English Language Notes, 1 (June 1964), 274-280.

[7] McDowell, p. 6.

[8] McDowell, p. 6.

[9] Simone De Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), pp. 160, 598, 155.

[10] Folkways in Thomas Hardy (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1931), p. 84.

[11] Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960; first published 1872), p. 166. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Elizabeth Endorfield refer to this edition.

[12] I Samuel 28:7-20.

[13] Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (New York: Harper Brothers, 1960; first published 1878), p. 73. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Eustacia Vye refer to this edition.

[14] Firor, p. 84.

[15] Thomas Hardy, Desperate Remedies (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960; first published 1871), p. 180. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Mrs. Manston refer to this edition.

[16] Thomas Hardy, The Trumpet Major (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960; first published 1880), p. 141. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Matilda Johnson refer to this edition.

[17] The English Novel from Thomas Hardy to Graham Greene (Frankfurt: Veilag Moritz Diesterwig, 1967), p. 38.

[18] On A Darkling Plain (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 115.

[19] Herbert B. Grimsditch, Character and Environment in the Novels of Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 129.

[20] Grimsditch, p. 129.

[21] The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1947), p. 71.

[22] Thomas Hardy (New York: Grove Press, 1963), pp. 32-33.

[23] Thomas Hardy, The Hand of Ethelberta (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960; first published 1876), p. 7. All page numbers in parentheses in the section on Ethelberta Petherwin refer to this edition.

[24] The Human Pair in the Work of Thomas Hardy (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 89.

[25] Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography (London: Hogarth Press, 1954), p. 149.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Thomas Hardy wrote his novels over a period of years during which the question of women's abilities received much consideration. Many people were debating the question of whether the traits commonly associated with women were inborn or socially conditioned. Despite the efforts of Mill and others, the prevailing tendency seems to have run toward the belief that women were inherently inferior to men in mind just as they tended to be smaller than men in body. Many thinkers also said that in addition to smallness, women were weakened by their stressful role in reproduction and thus rendered incapable of achievements outside the home.

In addition, the views of Schopenhauer seem to be reflected in Hardy. Samuel Chew discusses the influence of these views on at least part of Hardy's works, saying that although "the earlier novels . . . were written before Schopenhauer was known in England . . . the resemblances between the later books . . . and the teachings of the German philosopher are so close as almost to rule out of consideration the possibility of their being due simply to coincidence." As Hardy matured as a novelist, his works reflected more strongly Schopenhauer's concept of will as it operated in the lives of women. According to Chew, ". . . the function of child-bearing is the central idea in Hardy's view of women." Chew elaborates on this idea in Hardy's works: "The business

of life is to reproduce life. . . . Nature, seeking only to prolong the species, has given this function preeminently to women." Chew credits this fact for "women's instinctive assertion of charm."[1] According to this view, then, the oddities of women's behavior are simply a result of the working out of the reproductive plan for their lives. His statement of Hardy's attitude seems harsh, for he says that "On the whole . . . Hardy's attitude toward women is unfavorable; his opinion of them is bitter." Although this statement seems extreme compared to several comments by Hardy and his critics to the effect that Hardy loved women, the next statement fits well: "They have many good qualities of heart, but they are fickle and vain, insincere, conscienceless, and seductive."[2] His statements seem to agree with that by A. R. Cunningham in "The 'New Woman' Fiction of the 1890's." Cunningham says of Hardy's novels that they "do not on the whole offer an encouraging picture of what emancipated theories could achieve in practical terms."[3]

A different view of Hardy's women is presented in Five For Freedom, in which Geoffrey Wagner discusses Tess. Wagner mentions the strong criticism the book received from its contemporaries and argues that the book supports the struggle for women's rights. He says that Hardy "was writing for and on behalf of women."[4] Wagner seems to base his argument on the repression of Tess's sexual nature and indicates that the book is a plea for more sexual openness. But although Hardy did express concern for women's welfare, the import of the main novels seems to show that he places some sort of deficiency in each of the women instead of just showing them as victimized by society. F. R. Southerington in a book entitled Hardy's Vision of Man (no space will be wasted on defining Man in this title) states that several of the characters, most notably

Elfride Swancourt, Ethelberta Petherwin, and Sue Bridehead, get into difficulties because of flaws in their own nature.[5] In the light of these comments and Chew's evaluations of the women characters, I believe that Hardy has created women who are incapable of liberated lives because of sex-linked flaws imposed on them by the hardships of their biological role as child bearers. Hardy's interest in, admiration for, and sympathy toward women did not preclude his treatment of them in terms of the stereotypes mentioned by Conway and others. Hardy certainly does show the cruelties imposed by society on women, but he gives each woman characteristics which in one way or another disqualify her from defending herself against these cruelties. Hardy apparently considered that his novels gave an artistically focused picture of women as they really were.

Hardy's women, then, try to emancipate themselves in many ways. The earlier ones, such as Fancy Day and Elfride Swancourt, dare little and are not punished severely. Later ones like Sue Bridehead dare more and suffer more. Even Ethelberta, despite her ostensible success, fails to achieve an emancipated life because her struggle for financial success has dehumanized her to the extent that she regards people merely as objects to be used as aids to her success.

The quality of self-sacrifice occurs frequently among Hardy's women. Three self immolators, Cytherea Graye, Tess Durbeyfield, and Sue Bridehead, suffer because they possess this characteristic. Cytherea has enough of it to make her willing to sacrifice her happiness. Tess, a much more serious woman than Cytherea, carries the tendency further and becomes a death seeker. And Sue, who meditates darkly on the vanity of human existence, destroys herself spiritually. The last two women

carry the idea of self-sacrifice so far that it comes into conflict with the life force and brings about their destruction. This tendency also occurs in a number of the other women, for example, Bathsheba Everdene, who blames herself for arousing passion and then refusing to gratify it; Susan Henchard, who passively assents while her husband sells her at auction; and Marty South, who allows her lover to be taken from her without any protest. Even Ethelberta Petherwin has a few moments of self-criticism, but hers is deserved because of the way she treats her family. The tendency to self-abasement recurs with significant frequency in Hardy's women, reminding the reader that Hardyan heroines with this flaw cannot function independently.

In addition to the self-immolators (and crossing categories with them in at least one instance) are the intellectual, ambitious types. They appear more emancipated than the self-sacrificers, but this emancipation is illusory. Bathsheba Everdeen is ambitious for vocational success; Eustacia Vye yearns for culture and travel; Sue Bridehead values intellectual achievements. Bathsheba, the most conventional of the three, comes to a better end than the others because she eventually recognizes the function of her life to be marriage, with the implied potential of childbearing. Eustacia, unable to come to terms with her situation as a wife, dies; and Sue, unable to persuade herself to marry the man she loves, is destroyed spiritually. Pursuit of vocational, cultural, or intellectual life is not successful for Hardy's women; it leads them away from their basic function. Thus they cannot survive, or can survive only in a reduced condition.

The tendency to self abasement and the possession of misused ambition are qualities Hardy attributes to serious characters, but both

serious and frivolous Hardy women are vain and coquettish. If women's main function is motherhood, it is logical that they should try to develop the attractiveness and flirtatiousness that would insure their selection as prospective mothers. Although most Hardy women have this interest, it is most important for Fancy Day, Elfride Swancourt, Viviette Constantine, and Felice Charmond. The first two women have no serious trouble because of vanity. They merely reveal the shallowness of their minds. For Viviette the question of appearance is sobering; her marriage is destroyed because she is not attractive and refuses to contest the assumption that beauty is necessary. Mrs. Charmond shows flaws in character by her desire to win beauty, a desire which is stronger than her interest in other people. These women possess or are affected by a quality of concern over appearance that precludes their consideration as emancipated women. Mainly they have within themselves a flaw which causes them to accept the idea of excessive emphasis on physical attractiveness.

Another quality with which Hardy endows his women is capriciousness. This changeability is apparently a reflection of women's instinctive responses, uncontrolled by intellect, leading them to the fulfillment of their biological purpose but handicapping their fulfillment as emancipated persons. Miss Aldclyffe, Paula Power, and Lucetta Le Sueur possess this quality in its purest form. Miss Aldclyffe is perhaps the most changeable. Paula experiences little harm because of this quality, but Lucetta is not as fortunate. The capricious women, despite occasional brilliant behavior, do not fare well. Yet since most of the women have a touch of this quality, and since several men characters consider it a part of femininity and even a factor in womanly charm, there is a

dilemma. With it the woman is ineffectual, but without it she would be unfeminine. Thus in the Hardy world, emotional stability and femininity seem to be mutually exclusive traits.

The animals, the witches, and the exotics represent a wide range of behavior that causes them to prosper or to fail depending on the extent to which they support the concept of the biological basis of the purpose of women's existence. The animalistic women have a greater significance in Hardy's works than their frequency of occurrence would seem to suggest. Suke Damson and Car Darch are good examples. Not emancipated in any sense of the word, they bypass the worlds of intellect and ethics in favor of a life based on instinct. These women frankly reinforce the concept of women as primarily biological entities. Hardy did not create a major character in this class until Arabella appeared in his last novel, but animalistic women recur frequently enough to serve well as points of contrast for the women who try to see life as something more than biological destiny. Like the animals, the witches provide a good contrast. Harmless witches give love advice and thus support the concept of woman as fated mainly for marriage; even though they themselves may be childless, they fare rather well. But the others, who violate the concept, fare badly. The exotics do not support the concept and usually do poorly also.

Although Hardy's women move from trivial flippancy to grotesque seriousness, they tend to have one thing in common. They possess traits that prevent their achieving liberation. Despite Hardy's statements of concern about women's rights, he does not present women who are capable of achieving independence. Two statements from two of his novels seem typical of his presentation of women as flawed persons. In The Well

Beloved he says of a coarsened matron that "she was another illustration of the rule that succeeding generations of women are seldom marked by cumulative progress, their advance as girls being lost in their recession as matrons; so that they move up and down the stream of intellectual development like flotsam in a tidal estuary. And this perhaps [is] . . . by reason of . . . their misfortune as child rearers."[6] A description of the girls' dormitory at the teachers' training school in Jude the Obscure suggests the same idea: ". . . all lay in their cubicles, their tender feminine faces upturned . . . every face bearing the legend 'The Weaker' upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were moulded, which by no possible exertion of their willing hearts and abilities could be made strong while the inexorable laws of nature remain what they are."[7]

The women of Hardy's novels, then, are victims. They strive heroically to free themselves from their weaknesses, but they never entirely succeed. Hardy presented women who could not direct their lives in an emancipated fashion. The women with the qualities he professed to admire meet failure, while the women with the qualities he professed to dislike manage to endure. Although he spoke in favor of women's rights and expressed a great admiration for women, he was subconsciously controlled by views which caused him to create nonliberated characters. He showed women as eternal victims, victims of sex-linked traits within themselves.

ENDNOTES

1 *Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist* (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Bryn Mawr College Press, 1921), pp. 184-185.

2 Chew, p. 182.

3 *Victorian Studies*, 18, No. 2 (December 1973), 182.

4 (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972), p. 194.

5 (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1971), pp. 51, 77, 146.

6 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923; first published 1892), p. 170.

7 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923; first published 1895), p. 168.

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VITA

Ruth Lazelle Couch

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: WOMEN AND THOMAS HARDY: A STUDY OF SEX-LINKED QUALITIES IN THE CHARACTERS

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Magnolia, Arkansas, September 23, 1936, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Couch.

Education: Graduated from Magnolia High School, Magnolia, Arkansas, in May, 1955; received the Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Southern State College, Magnolia, Arkansas, in 1958; received the Master of Science in Education degree from Henderson State College, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, in 1961; enrolled in the Doctoral program at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in 1968; completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1975.

Professional Experience: Public school teacher, 1958-1967; graduate teaching associate, Oklahoma State University, English Department, 1968-1971; Assistant Professor of English, Arkansas State University, Beebe, Arkansas, 1971-present.