

THOMAS HARDY'S CHANGING CONCEPTION  
OF THE FEMALE SUBJECT

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

Department of English

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

by

Henriette Marguerite Morelli

September, 1992

The author claims copyright. Use shall not be made of the material contained herein without proper acknowledgment, as indicated on the following page.

4D0200776326

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor who supervised my thesis work or, in his absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis in whole or in part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of English  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0W0

## ABSTRACT

The feminist framework used in this thesis addresses subjectivity, power, and discourse in an attempt to demonstrate how Thomas Hardy's texts construct meaning and subject positions for the reader. A close textual analysis of an early, a middle and a late Hardy novel demonstrates how power is exercised through fictive discourse. In Hardy's early novel, *The Return of the Native*, the necessarily hierarchal opposition of man/woman reflects a unitary intentional subjectivity. One side of the opposition, man, becomes the key concept in negatively defining the other, woman. By deconstructing the text it becomes possible to discover how the discourse achieves its effects and to reverse this opposition. This can only be done with reference to issues of social context, particular interests and power. The wider historically specific discursive context and the power relations which structure the literary field must be taken into account. In Hardy's middle novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a gradual shift in the empowerment of the female begins to emerge. The patriarchal silencing of women begins to give way to female articulation in writing. In his late novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy's female protagonist speaks out for herself and occupies resistant subject positions. Tess emerges not as a unity, but as a multiple, decentered and internally contradictory subject. Tess's multiple

subjectivity represents deliberate change on Hardy's part,  
and emphasizes the dialectical relationship between women  
and the language in which their subjectivity is constructed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the University of Saskatchewan, especially the Department of Graduate Studies and the English Department. My deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Len Findlay, without whose guidance and support this thesis would not have been possible. In the words of Thomas Hardy, "[You] have only too largely repaired my defects of narration by [your] own imaginative intuition."

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Edwin Peter Morelli, whose love, support and respect enabled me to construct my own subjectivity, and to the memory of my father, Urbain Joseph Letendre, who long before it was fashionable, advocated equal representation for women, both in the private and public spheres.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| ABSTRACT  | ii   |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS                                 | iv   |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS                           | vi   |
| CHRONOLOGY                                      | vii  |
| INTRODUCTION                                    | 1    |
| CHAPTER ONE: <b>The Return of the Native</b>    | 4    |
| CHAPTER TWO: <b>The Mayor of Casterbridge</b>   | 27   |
| CHAPTER THREE: <b>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</b> | 54   |
| CONCLUSION                                      | 98   |
| NOTES   | 102  |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY                                    | 105  |

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout this thesis I have used the following editions of Hardy's novels:

**The Return of the Native**(Penguin, London, 1978)

**The Mayor of Casterbridge**(Penguin, London, 1978)

**Tess of the D'Urbervilles**(Penguin, London, 1978)

References to these editions are given in parentheses in the text and are abbreviated as follows:

**The Return of the Native**     RN

**The Mayor of Casterbridge**     MC

**Tess of the D'Urbervilles**     TD

All biblical references are listed parenthetically in the text, and are from the King James Version.

## CHRONOLOGY

**The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, and Tess of the D'Urbervilles** in relation to Historical Feminist Events in England.

- 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act establishes divorce courts.
- 1869 Contagious Diseases Act passed, subjecting prostitutes to police and medical registration.  
First women's college established at Cambridge (Girton).
- 1870 The first Married Women's Property Act gives women the right to retain possession of money they earn.
- 1878 **The Return of the Native** published.
- 1882 The second Married Women's Property Act secures for women the right to separate ownership of property.
- 1886 **The Mayor of Casterbridge** published.
- 1889 More than one hundred well-known women publish "Appeal Against Female Suffrage".
- 1891 **Tess of the D'Urbervilles** published.
- 1908 Women's Freedom League established.
- 1918 Women over thirty who are householders or married to householders achieve the vote.



## Introduction

While Thomas Hardy's representations of women have engendered much controversy and criticism, the relation of these representations to each other has never been adequately examined, or at least deserves to be re-examined in light of recent feminist theory. Hardy's early women, represented as unitary objects bound to patriarchal power relations in which their interests are subordinated to the interests of men, bear faint resemblance to his later women who emerge as complicated desiring subjects in their own right. Hardy's changing conception of the female subject, and of the relations of subjectivity to society, are the focus of this thesis.

The sexual objectification of the female body, a concern of feminists for a number of years, makes it difficult to articulate the difference of women from 'Woman', and emphasizes the difference of women from men. Putting gender in these terms constrains feminist thought within the framework of a virtually universal sex opposition. Contemporary feminists, including Teresa De Lauretis, Kaja Silverman, and Chris Weedon, advocate the necessity of conceiving of the female subject, and the relations of subjectivity to society, on grounds other than "sexual difference." Many feminists view female representation and self-representation as the product of social technologies such as narrative, cinema, and theory.

The feminist appropriation of the male-centered frames of reference of Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida allows feminist thought to examine and expose the presuppositions and the implicit hierarchies of value at work in the representation of women. In rewriting the meanings of "technology of sex(Foucault)," "desire(Lacan)," and "différance(Derrida)," feminists make language once again the site of struggle for meaning and power.

Central to the deconstruction of representation is what Althusser calls "interpellation," whereby individuals absorb social representations as their own. Because subjectivity is always socially produced in language, a close examination of Hardy's signifying practices is necessary for an understanding of fictive representations of gender which propose norms of femininity and masculinity and relations between the sexes. A revaluation of signifying practices allows for an examination at the level of textual analysis, while simultaneously allowing for an exploration of the discursive context and the power relations of the discursive field within which the textual reading is located.

Literature, as a primary site for the ideological construction of gender, must be examined as textual construction rather than reflection of pre-existing meaning.

A close textual analysis of *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, will enable us to discover how Hardy's representations of gender were constructed, and allow us to understand how

these representations changed over time. In examining an early, a middle, and a late Hardy novel, a gradual shift in the conception of the female subject can be effectively demonstrated. The objectification of women begins to give way to women as subjects constructed in the experience of class, age, and sexual relations, a subject no longer unified, but multiple, decentered and internally contradictory.

## Chapter One: The Return of the Native

Even casually attentive readers of *The Return of the Native* cannot fail to recognize the sexual stereotyping at work within the text. In this novel, Hardy's women appear as unitary objects bound to patriarchal power relations in which their interests are subordinated to the interests of men. Hardy's fictive representations of normal behavior between women and men establish a hierarchy of values within the narrative, a hierarchy wherein patriarchal cultural values dominate. Hardy's norms of femininity, masculinity, and relations between the sexes perpetuate sexual stereotypes. A close examination of *The Return of the Native* at the level of textual analysis will enrich our understanding of his fictive representations of gender.

Throughout this novel Hardy's women appear as a single vast body, making them unitary objects both fully disclosed and permeable. As narrator, he continually presents over-generalized statements about women which are inadequate to the complexity of their behavior. Consider the following narrative description of Eustacia Vye:

Believing that she must love him in spite of herself, she had been influenced after the fashion of the second Lord Lyttleton and other persons, who have dreamed that they were to die on a certain day, and by stress of a morbid imagination have actually brought about the event. Once let a maiden admit the possibility of her being stricken with love for some one at a certain hour and place, and the thing is as good as done. (RN 198-99)

Eustacia's disempowerment is obvious; she loves Clym in spite of herself. Her instability and over-active

imagination become a paradigm for all maidens. The males, on the other hand, retain their specificity and personhood. Lord Lyttleton and the other persons, empowered by Hardy, brought about their own fates. Interestingly, the male persons exercise control over life and death, whereas the weak maiden lacks control even over her own emotions. In this way the power of the mind over matter operates generally to the disadvantage of women.

By over-generalizing femaleness, Hardy, via the narrator's authority, sets up women as objects to be acted upon by the male-dominated society. His construction of femininity produces a unified entity recognizable to his middle-class Victorian audience as the female subject. Individual women become exemplars of a single truth, and their objectification allows males to possess them totally. Mary Childers extends this problem of appropriation to suggest that "It is as though to possess a woman as a totality and a truth in the imagination would have permitted him [Hardy] to possess himself."<sup>1</sup> While such an assertion may be extreme, the fact remains that Hardy's generalizations about women throughout the novel prove that he fully intends to present his female characters as representatives of their sex, representatives replete with time-honored stereotypes which cause justifiable offence to many women.

Hardy's generalizing statements about women subject them to scrutiny while protecting men from it. Frequently

in the novel, especially when Eustacia is being discussed, the habits of women become the subject of authorial intervention.

All emotional things were possible to the speaker of that 'good night'. Eustacia's imagination supplied the rest - except the solution to one riddle. What **could** the tastes of that man be who saw friendliness and geniality in these shaggy hills?

On such occasions as this a thousand ideas pass through a highly charged woman's head; and they indicate themselves on her face; but the changes, though actual, are minute. Eustacia's features went through a rhythmical succession of them. She glowed; remembering the mendacity of the imagination, she flagged; then she freshened; then she fired; then she cooled again. It was a cycle of aspects, produced by a cycle of visions.(RN 172)

Through the selectivity of what he highlights, Hardy conceals the male subject while exposing the female object. Clym is allowed the specificity of **that man**, while Eustacia becomes the epitome of a **highly charged woman**. Ideas pass through her **head**, not her mind, because her objectification presupposes the lack of a mind. The **cycle of aspects** apparent on Eustacia's face - "glowed...flagged...freshened...fired...cooled" - suggest a blast furnace or some other instrument of combustion, rather than personhood. That these aspects were **produced** by a cycle of visions emphasizes Eustacia's position as an object to be worked upon by outside forces. The femininity of the word **cycle**, a euphemism for a link to menstruation, indicates that women alone are subject to these kinds of changes. Hardy, as narrator, distinguishes between masculine and feminine vision. Clym **saw** friendliness and geniality in the hills, suggesting his view of things actually present. Eustacia,

on the other hand, undergoes a cycle of visions, suggesting vivid imagination of things not existing in actuality.

Eustacia's visions suggest that she imagines things under the influence of an outside agency, in this instance her sexual appetite, which stands in sharp contrast to Clym's tastes. Once again the narrator represents women as passive objects at the mercy of external forces.

Eustacia's objectification does not shield her from responsibility and authorial blame, however. Clym's infatuation with Eustacia is forgiven while Eustacia is made responsible.

Did anything at this moment suggest to Yeobright the sex of the creature whom that fantastic guise inclosed, how extended was her scope both in feeling and in making others feel, and how far her compass transcended that of her companions in the band? When the disguised Queen of Love appeared before Aeneas a preternatural perfume accompanied her presence and betrayed her quality. If such a mysterious emanation ever was projected by the emotions of an earthly woman upon her object, it must have signified Eustacia's presence to Yeobright now.(RN 199)

The interrogative mode of the narration here extends an invitation to the male reader. The narrator elicits the complicity of his patriarchal audience in his contemplation of womenkind. Eustacia, endowed with an extended scope and compass, uses her power in making others feel. Seldom are the women in this novel allowed power except to exercise that power over the allegedly innocent and unsuspecting males. However, Clym's infatuation with Eustacia does not become a paradigm for all male responses to her; he becomes the unsuspecting victim or object of Eustacia's preternatural power. Hardy's allusion to the Aeneid here

works against as well as for Eustacia. On the one hand, she is elevated to the status of Venus, the goddess of love, but her promotion to pagan divinity reduces her to little more than a set of emotions and a perfume. Her mysteriousness reflects the duality of Hardy's feelings about women, uncontrollable delight coupled with a sense of female 'otherness'.

At times Hardy's male characters are made to express blatant and overt misogyny, as when Clym, the hero of the novel, derides Eustacia:

You are just like all women. They are ever content to build their lives on any incidental position that offers itself; whilst men would fain make a globe to suit them.(RN 265)

Clym maintains the misogynistic tradition of viewing women as flighty creatures lacking firm beliefs and ideals. Men, on the other hand, appear to be almost god-like in their ability to make a globe. Clym's negating gesture assigns certain kinds of conduct to women which assure him that, in this regard, no similarity exists between himself and them. His explicit misogyny asserts and maintains his masculine identity. Because Clym emerges as the undisputed hero of the novel, these words out of his mouth acquire added authority. Consider how these sentiments would have been accepted were Wildeve, "one in whom no man would have seen anything to admire"(RN 93), the speaker. Clym's status as a gentleman and a scholar lends validity to his comments.

At other times in his novel Hardy presents a more subtle and covert misogyny. Consider his initial



description of Eustacia:

That she was tall and straight in build, that she was ladylike in her movements, was all that could be learnt of her just now. (RN 104)

This apparently sympathetic and chivalrous description of Eustacia complicates notions of misogyny. Hardy's use of the phrase "ladylike in her movements" suggests that certain **movements** are appropriate only to women. His reliance on sexual difference in his representations of the female subject becomes a limitation, one might almost call it a liability, according to feminist thought. Teresa de Lauretis, in *Technologies of Gender*, identifies two limits of "sexual difference(s)":

The first limit...is that it constrains feminist critical thought within the conceptual frame of a universal sex opposition...which makes it very difficult, if not impossible to articulate the differences of women from Woman, that is to say, the differences among women or, perhaps more exactly, the differences **within women**.

A second limitation...is that it tends to recontain or recuperate the radical epistemological potential of feminist thought inside the walls of the master's house.<sup>2</sup>

Hardy's representations of gender, defined in terms of "sexual difference(s)", betray similar limitations. His over-generalized statements about women, the selectivity of what he dramatizes, and his complicity with the misogynist tradition are inextricably tied to a universal sex-opposition so that the line separating men and women becomes completely inviolable. His representations of women become largely reliant upon the difference of women from men, of the feminine from the masculine.

In the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*,

Michel Foucault suggests "a hysterization of women's bodies" as one of the four strategic unities of sexual discourse initiated in the eighteenth century. He identifies one of the processes of hysterization as that tradition "whereby the feminine body was analyzed--qualified and disqualified --as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality."<sup>3</sup> This process can be seen in **The Return of the Native** when Hardy's representation of Eustacia's feminine confusion becomes also an erotic image.

Eustacia sighed: it was no fragile maiden sigh, but a sigh which shook her like a shiver. Whenever a flash of reason darted like an electric light upon her lover - as it sometimes would - and showed his imperfections, she shivered thus. But it was over in a second, and she loved on. She knew that he trifled with her; but she loved on. . . .Amid the rustles which denoted her to be undressing in the darkness other heavy breaths frequently came; and the same kind of shudder occasionally moved through her when, ten minutes later, she lay on her bed asleep.(RN 116-17)

Hardy's penetration of Eustacia, his examination of her **heavy breaths**, appearing as **sighs**, **shudders**, and **shivers**, replicates sexual tension itself. Even in her sleep she is unable to escape his penetrating gaze. Eustacia's constant emotionality, which **frequently came** even as she **lay on her bed asleep**, is sporadically interrupted by a **flash of reason**. As a being "thoroughly saturated with sexuality," Eustacia's emotionality overcomes her reason. Hardy emphasizes that these were "no fragile maiden sigh[s]". The word **maiden** implies a young, virginal, innocent girl, (a stereotype of another sort reserved for Thomasin within this novel), and Hardy deliberately distances Eustacia from the

purity and innocence implicit in maidenhood. Within Hardy's hierarchy of sexual stereotypes, Eustacia occupies a different and less elevated position.

Werner Sollors' Introduction to *The Invention of Ethnicity* sheds light on the invention of sexual stereotypes. He suggests: "The forces of modern life embodied by such terms as 'ethnicity,' 'nationalism,' or 'race' can be meaningfully discussed as 'inventions'. Of course, this usage is meant to...suggest widely shared, though intensely debated, collective fictions that are continually reinvented."<sup>4</sup> If terms such as ethnicity, nationalism, and race can be discussed as inventions, then certainly gender can be seen as an invention as well. Viewing gender as an invention enables us to recognize the general constructedness of gender-specific roles, of sexual stereotypes. Stressing the importance of invention as a category emphasizes the major role played by language in the social construction of the feminine. Speaking of literature as inventions enables us to lay bare the textual strategies employed in the construction of femininity and masculinity. So much of what subjectively makes up the categories of women, (wife, mother, temptress,) consists of constructs associated with what is appropriate. Stereotypes claim to be a priori sexual differences which are not constructs, but rather natural human traits; they pretend to be what is natural, real and eternal. Continual repetition of sexual stereotypes effectively conceals both the inventedness of the construct and the power relations behind the invention.

Literature becomes a powerful productive force that constitutes or constructs ideological terms which appear as sexual stereotypes. The disseminators of sexual stereotypes in nineteenth-century literature were predominantly male. As Mary Childers suggests, "...the repetition of sexist conventions and received ideas is virtually guaranteed when literature containing female characters is written by and for those who are not directly and vitally concerned with altering the way women are represented."<sup>5</sup> I would argue that the **received ideas** can be altered by a strengthened emphasis on, and examination of, language itself.

While no essential qualities of femininity and masculinity can exist for all times and be captured definitively in language and social relations which language structures, the fact remains that sexual stereotypes do exist and are often disseminated in literature. Ferdinand de Saussure, in his **A Course in General Linguistics**, suggests that meaning, instead of being reflected by language, is produced within language, and that individual signs do not have intrinsic meaning but acquire meaning through the language chain. This principle becomes important when we look at the word, or signifier, 'woman'. Saussurean theory implies that the meaning of 'woman' and the qualities identified as womanly are not fixed by nature but are socially produced within language. Jacques Derrida changes the Saussurean focus on speech to a concern with writing and textuality. He introduces the concept of

**différance** in which meaning is produced through difference and deferral. For Derrida, representations, with their apparently fixed meaning, are but temporary fixings. Representations are always located within a discursive context, and it is this discursive context which determines the temporary fixing of meaning in a specific reading. The meaning of 'woman', for example, may vary from whore to virgin to mother according to its context. In **The Return of the Native** the meaning of 'woman' varies from the Good Woman to Mother to Evil Temptress. Each of these stereotypical representations is at work within the text.

In Book First, "The Three Women", Hardy introduces Thomasin, Mistress Yeobright, and Eustacia Vye, and clarifies the subject position each occupies. Thomasin, the first woman the reader encounters, represents 'The Good Woman'. As Nina Auerbach points out in her Introduction to **Woman and the Demon**, "As all clean-minded Victorians knew, a normal, and thus a good woman, was an angel, submerging herself in family, existing only as daughter, wife and mother."<sup>6</sup> This describes Thomasin Yeobright to perfection. Although Thomasin is an orphan, her subject position in relationship to her aunt, Mistress Yeobright, is that of a daughter. Thomasin, "such a confoundedly good little woman"(RN 137), stands for marriage and respectability in the novel.

Thomasin is immediately introduced as an essentially simple character in need of male annexation and protection. Consider the following exchange between Diggory Venn and

Captain Vye:

'You have something inside there besides your load?'

'Yes'

'Somebody who wants looking after?'

'Yes.'

Not long after this a faint cry sounded from the interior. The reddleman hastened to the back, looked in, and came away again.

'You have a child there, my man?'

'No sir. I have a woman.'

'The deuce you have! Why did she cry out?'

'Oh, she has fallen asleep, and not being used to travelling, she's uneasy, and keeps dreaming.'

'A young woman?'

'Yes, a young woman.' (RN 60)

Thomasin's faint cry emphasizes her frailty, suggesting a weak female who wants looking after by a strong and virile male. Not surprisingly, Captain Vye mistakes her for a child, the subject position that The Good Woman is expected to occupy in relation to men. Throughout the novel the noun **woman** is always preceded by the adjectives **young** or **little** when Thomasin is discussed, thus reinforcing her subordinate position. That the noun **woman** often becomes **girl** in Thomasin's case serves the same purpose. William Ames Coates, in "Thomasin and the Reddleman", defines Thomasin as a "worthy, attractive human being." Her worthiness and attractiveness result from her girlishness:

Thomasin is consistently depicted as a sweet and charming girl; her calm acceptance of her lot, as a woman and a resident of the heath, is in marked contrast to Eustacia's wild rebellion. Her nature was made for marriage, and happy marriage at that. To be sure, her road is not a smooth one: as the novel opens she is in a pitiable predicament, and many and varied sufferings lie ahead of her. Her involvement with Wildeve was a serious error, but one which resulted primarily from girlish innocence. It was such an error as has been the ruin of many girls, in real life as in literature.<sup>7</sup>

Coates' representation of Thomasin reinforces patriarchal values. His conservative discourse fails to take issue with the power relations within the novel, and in society at large. Instead he reproduces and legitimizes these relations by placing responsibility for a happy marriage upon Thomasin, even suggesting that her calm acceptance of her lot as a woman is admirable, especially when compared to Eustacia's wild rebellion. Coates' argument offers Thomasin only one legitimate subject position, that of the long-suffering patient Griselda. His attempt to mitigate Thomasin's error in becoming involved with Wildeve as a result of girlish innocence is in actuality a case of blaming the victim; the error is Thomasin's, not Wildeve's. Clearly literary criticism, like literature itself, readily lends itself to the repetition of sexist conventions and received ideas when written by those not vitally concerned with altering the way women are represented.

Thomasin, as the representative of marriage and respectability in the novel, values her reputation above all else.

'Thomasin thinks, and I think with her, that she ought to be Wildeve's wife, if she means to appear before the world without a slur upon her name. If they marry soon, everybody will believe that an accident did really prevent the wedding. If not, it may cast a shade upon her character - at any rate make her ridiculous. In short, if it is anyhow possible they must marry now.' (RN 151)

Both Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright think that Thomasin ought to and **must** marry a man she no longer loves or respects in order to prevent "a slur upon her name" and a "shade upon

her character". Thomasin's respectability and character are inextricably tied to her status as a married woman. Her self-definition depends completely upon how she is perceived by others. Her value and worth are solely the value and worth others place upon her. Mrs. Yeobright recognizes this even more strongly than does Thomasin. When Diggory Venn tells Mrs. Yeobright of his love for Thomasin, "She thanked God for the weapon which the reddleman had put into her hands"(RN 152). Mrs. Yeobright realizes that a woman's desirability to a man increases when someone else desires her. The narrator's use of **weapon** demonstrates that the relations between the sexes in this novel are figured within the stereotypical framework of the battle between the sexes.

Thomasin, emerging from the novel unscathed and rewarded, serves as a contrast to Eustacia Vye, who poses a danger to the social order. Unlike Eustacia's character however, hers engenders little critical coverage. Often *The Good Woman*, despite her many admirable qualities, ultimately bores her audience.

Mrs. Yeobright, represented by the narrator as Earth Mother, takes her birth directly from the soil.

She was a woman of middle-age, with well-formed features of the type usually found where perspicacity is the chief quality enthroned within. At moments she seemed to be regarding issues from a Nebo denied to others around. She had something of an estranged mien: the solitude exhaled from the heath was concentrated in this face that had risen **from** it.(RN 83)

As my emphasis makes clear, Mrs. Yeobright's birth directly **from** the heath ensures her subject position as Earth-Mother.



Although somewhat removed from the other heath-dwellers, and having an **estranged mien**, she behaves as a woman at one with the heath. Her marginality results from **perspicacity**, from her keen discernment and penetration of the heath itself and of the people who live on or near it. In Hardy, oneness with the heath becomes a metaphor for the character's acceptance of his or her earthly fate. Mrs. Yeobright's marginality, defined by Hardy as estrangement, does not interfere with her acceptance of her lot. She represents the antithesis of Eustacia Vye, whose "smouldering rebelliousness" results from her being "inwardly and eternally unreconciled"(RN 119) to the heath itself, and to her placement on it. Mrs. Yeobright, however, takes her birth directly from the heath, and her prescribed role as Mother forces her to accept her earthly fate, indeed, to take this acceptance to its ultimate conclusion.

Much of the pathos in *The Return of the Native* centers around Mrs. Yeobright. Hardy invests her with 'motherly' virtues, littering the text with stereotypes such as, "To any other person than a mother..."(RN 340), and "But, being a mother, it was inevitable..."(RN 351). Certainly, as Jacques Lacan suggests, prescribed subject positions result in inevitable behaviors.<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Yeobright's enforced entry into the symbolic order of Motherhood results in the repression of everything but that subject position, until Mother itself becomes a metaphor for sacrifice and

salvation. Mrs. Yeobright's willingness to sacrifice herself for her son elevates her to the level of the Savior. Little Johnny Nunsuch, upon meeting Mrs. Yeobright in the chapter entitled "The Closed Door", compares her to a lamb. "How funny you draw your breath - like a lamb when you drive him till he's nearly done for"(RN 349). Mrs. Yeobright's breathing condition, like Eustacia's earlier in the novel, becomes the subject of male scrutiny, which culminates in her identification as a Lamb of God. Her representation as a lamb however, soon changes to that of the Good Shepherd: "...a little patch of shepherd's-thyme intruded upon the path; and she sat down upon the perfumed mat it formed there"(RN 351). Consider what happens as she lies down upon the shepherd's-thyme:

But, being a mother, it was inevitable that she should soon cease to ruminate upon her own condition. Had the track of her next thought been marked by a streak in the air, like the path of a meteor, it would have shown a direction contrary to the heron's, and have descended to the eastward upon the roof of Clym's house.(RN 351-52)

The track of Mrs. Yeobright's meteor-like thought, reminiscent of the Epiphany, is eastward towards Clym's house. If at that moment Clym had stepped outside his home he, like the Magi, could have seen a sign in the west. Mrs. Yeobright's imminent death, the supreme sacrifice, signals her rebirth as the Savior. Upon discovering his mother upon the shepherd's-thyme, Clym carries her to a hut resembling a stable.

Moreover, fifty yards off stood a hut, built of clods and covered with thin turves, but now entirely disused. The simple outline of the lonely shed was visible, and

thither he determined to direct his steps. As soon as he arrived he laid her down carefully by the entrance, and then ran and cut with his pocket-knife an armful of the dryest fern. Spreading this within the shed, which was entirely open on one side, he placed his mother thereon.(RN 357)

Like the first Savior, who was born in a stable on a bed of straw, Mrs. Yeobright is (re)born in a lonely hut on the heath, on a bed of fern. That this hut is "entirely open on one side" reinforces its similarity to a stable. Hardy concludes his identification of the Mother with Christ when, like Christ, Mrs. Yeobright achieves her victory beyond the grave. Consider Clym's sermon on the mount following his mother's death:

"And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand. Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay."(RN 474)

The identification is complete. Like Christ, who sits on the right hand of the Father, the mother likewise sits on the right hand of the king. Her victory, achieved through death, comes too late. The mother's elevation to the status of Savior not only perpetuates, but actively encourages, the association of motherhood with sacrifice. Ironically, her sacrifice brings her no closer to power than "a seat...on his right hand." The only mode of subjectivity open to her, the one arbitrarily fixed by the stereotype, is that of the woman behind the man. The privileged forms of power inherent in a patriarchy guarantee her subordinate position.

Susan Nunsuch, the other stereotypical mother in this

novel, is likewise constituted by her subject position. Although aligned with the dark forces of Satan and witchcraft rather than with Christ, Susan too becomes a paradigm of the Mother. Like Mrs. Yeobright, Susan goes to extreme lengths to save her son from the evil Eustacia. Clym's identification of Eustacia as his "mother's supplanter" serves a dual purpose; first, it assigns blame to Eustacia for usurping Mrs. Yeobright's place in his life; and second, it indicts Eustacia as one who threatens the existing social order. Susan and Mrs. Yeobright, attempting to save their sons from the unscrupulous Eustacia, merely fulfill the roles prescribed for them by Hardy. Their subject positions as mothers validate and even celebrate a particular mode of femininity, an approach to family life governed by 'selflessness.' This subject position and the forms of subjectivity which it structures imply a particular type of female satisfaction and deny the validity of others. In the case of motherhood, femininity is implicitly masochistic.

Eustacia Vye occupies the stereotypical subject position of Evil Temptress as a result of her representation as a sex-object. The identification of sexuality with the female body constructs women as an image or an object of visual pleasure to the male's voyeuristic gaze. From Hardy's initial introduction of her, Eustacia's representation as a sex-object is virtually guaranteed.

Above the plain rose the hill, above the hill rose the barrow, and above the barrow rose the figure. Above the figure was nothing that could be mapped elsewhere

than on a celestial globe.

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

The form was so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure that to see it move would have impressed the mind of a strange phenomenon. . . .

Yet that is what happened. The figure perceptibly gave up its fixity, shifted a step or two, and turned around. . . .The movement had been sufficient to show more clearly the characteristics of the figure, and that it was a woman's.(RN 63)

Throughout this introduction Eustacia appears as nothing more than a **figure** or a **form**, an object. The use of the impersonal possessive pronouns **the** and **its** reinforces her objectification. From the generalized designation of women as object the narrative gaze moves to a much more specific sexualization of the female **figure**.

The mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss. Some might have added, less to kiss than to curl. Viewed sideways, the closing-line of her lips formed, with almost geometric precision, the curve so well known in the arts of design as the cima-recta, or ogee. So fine were the lines of her lips that, though full, each corner of her mouth was as clearly cut as the point of a spear. This keenness of corner was only blunted when she was given to sudden fits of gloom, one of the phases of the night-side of sentiment which she knew too well for her years.(RN 119)

The narrator's voyeuristic gaze lingers seductively over the part of the female anatomy often considered the most sensual, the lips. The narrator not only submits the female body to examination, but he figuratively places it under a microscope so that it might be **viewed sideways**. Eustacia's lips become merely a geometric shape to be studied and explored by the presumably male architect. The ogee, resembling the letter S, symbolizes her lips, like

the snake, as evil temptation. The threatening potential of the lips is reinforced by the narrator's reference to the point of a spear. Interestingly, the narrator represents silence as the female destiny; her "mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss." He deprives the female subject of speech and relegates the mouth to the position of object of male desire. Once again the changeability of women is represented through Eustacia. Like the cycles seen earlier in the novel, Eustacia's body undergoes a series of phases. Despite the partial disagreement among some of the gazers, the representation of the female body as the primary site of sexuality and visual pleasure is now complete.

After the construction of the female subject as sexual object and evil temptress, Hardy proceeds to elevate her to the status of goddess: "...her general figure might have stood for either of the higher female deities"(RN 119). While here Hardy speaks about Artemis, Athena, and Hera, throughout the novel Eustacia represents the Queen of Solitude. Her "conspicuous loneliness"(RN 104), her "instincts towards social nonconformity"(RN 122), and her "strange state of isolation"(RN 123) emphasize her marginality. Eustacia's highly provisional status, while contesting the notion of center, merely reinscribes patriarchy in another milieu. Where Mrs. Yeobright's marginality results from perspicacity, Eustacia's results from selfishness and petulance. She only enjoyed holidays for herself when they "...came in the midst of other

people's labour"(RN 122). Mrs. Yeobright, as The Mother, is aligned with Christ, while Eustacia, as The Sex-Goddess, is aligned with the powers of Satan. Her representation as Queen of Night connects her with images of darkness, fire, and witchcraft. She rules supreme because, as the following passage demonstrates, "Egdon was her Hades"(RN 119).

The subtle beauties of the heath were lost to Eustacia; she only caught its vapours. An environment which would have made a contented woman a poet, a suffering woman a devotee, a pious woman a psalmist, even a giddy woman thoughtful, made a rebellious woman saturnine.  
(RN 123)

Notice that Eustacia is dependent upon the male god Saturn for her identity as a **saturnine** woman. Because of her **rebelliousness**, Eustacia bears the full burden of responsibility for her marginality. By refusing the only acceptable modes of being for a woman in a patriarchy, (contented, suffering, pious, and even giddy), Eustacia must assume the only subject position available to a **rebellious woman**, that of Sex-Object.

Much of the contemporary literary criticism concerning **The Return of the Native** centers on the ambiguity of Eustacia's death. The determination of the mode of death, suicide or accident, seems to me less illuminating than the fact that Hardy focuses on the aftermath of her death, rather than on her death itself.

They stood silently looking upon Eustacia, who, as she lay there still in death, eclipsed all her living phases. Pallor did not include all the quality of her complexion, which seemed more than whiteness; it was almost light. The expression of her finely carved mouth was pleasant, as if a sense of dignity had just compelled her to leave off speaking. Eternal rigidity had seized upon it in a momentary transition

between fervour and resignation. Her black hair was looser now than either of them had ever seen it before, and surrounded her brow like a forest. The stateliness of look which had been almost too marked for a dweller in a country domicile had at last found an artistically happy background.(RN 442-43)

For Eustacia, death becomes just another phase, but she appears more alive in death than she was in life; her death "eclipsed all her living phases," suggesting both her elimination and her outdoing. Only death provides "an artistically happy background" for her beauty. Eustacia, often symbolized by fire imagery, undergoes a baptism in the weir which results in the purification and beautification of her corpse. Presumably only in death can The Sex-Goddess be cleansed of her sins. Hardy's apparent lack of interest in her mode of death is all the more interesting because it reveals where his interests lie. The management of the narrative demands repression or marginalizing of secondary characters, but there are limits to that repression. The abundance of criticism surrounding Eustacia's death reflects the difficulty of keeping the repressed out of sight. Hardy's ambiguous handling of Eustacia's death reflects more strongly than anything else in the novel his perception of women as fully permeable and disclosable objects. Eustacia emerges in the course of the novel as merely an adjunct to Clym as central character. Her final suppression confirms her subject position as Sex-Object, her sexuality as the totality of her being.

The women characters in Hardy's *The Return of the Native* dramatize the volatile relationship between language



and identity. Through their stereotypical subject positions, produced in language, women become the appropriate site of powerlessness. Because representations of gender become absorbed subjectively by everyone whom the discourse addresses, the implications of sexual stereotyping are serious and far-reaching. Through language, individuals (in this case women) are governed by the ideological state apparatuses in the interests of the ruling class (in this case men). Louis Althusser argues in his influential text, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses" (1971), that language functions for the individual by **interpellating** her as a subject, that is, constituting her subjectivity for her in language. Language, in the form of what Althusser calls "ideology in general," makes subjectivity appear obvious to the individual.

Like all obviousnesses, including those that make a word 'name a thing' or 'have a meaning' (therefore including the obviousness of the 'transparency' of language), the obviousness that you and I are subjects - and that does not cause any problems - is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect.<sup>9</sup>

Althusser argues that interpellation of individuals as subjects is a structural feature of all ideology.

I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individual into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called **interpellation** or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey you there!'<sup>10</sup>

Interpellation is also a process of misrecognition in that

the individual assumes that she is the author of the ideology which constructs her subjectivity. She imagines that she is in control of meaning, that she is indeed the type of subject which the ideology or discourse proposes. It is this identification with a subject position which causes so much concern for feminists. Because it is language in the form of conflicting discourses which constitutes subjectivity, a close examination of the discourse enables us to decenter the subject and abandon the belief in essential subjectivity, and in that way open up subjectivity to change.

The signifying practices at work in this novel propose norms of being which women reacted against, even in the nineteenth century.[See Chronology] Were **The Return of the Native** the whole of the Hardy canon, Hardy could justifiably be dismissed as a misogynist. This is not the case, however. In one of his middle novels, **The Mayor of Casterbridge**, a gradual shift in Hardy's perception and representations of the female subject begins to emerge.

## Chapter Two: The Mayor of Casterbridge

Femininity, almost always confined within masculine parameters, often finds itself defined as a lack, deficiency, imitation, or negative image of the male subject. The women in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* find their significance primarily as a means to the representation of maleness. They provide an image of what is missing, improved, transmuted, or repressed in the acquisition of maleness. They represent that which is different, the Other. Because power is a relation made possible in difference, resistance to this constituted power necessitates an examination not only of the distribution and exercise of power, but of the structure of power itself. Understanding power and all its forms assumes major importance when one is addressing and attempting to contest the specific forms of power at work in literary discourse.

Hardy's representations and definitions of women serve as negating gestures which assure men that no similarity exists between themselves and female nature as perceived by the narrators of his fiction. For Hardy, the process of becoming male includes a decision not to recognize in oneself the qualities observed in women, the allegedly feminine qualities taken as evidence of female Otherness. In *The Return of the Native* Hardy employed over-generalized statements and continual authorial intervention as a means of reinforcing female Otherness. In *The Mayor of*

**Casterbridge**, Hardy employs a much more subtle method of marginalization. The continual use of the surnames Henchard and Farfrae identifies these men as owners of the family, including their wife and children. Susan, Elizabeth-Jane, and Lucetta become the property of their owners, and are generally consigned to a subordinate role in the patriarchal power structure.

In all patriarchal discourses the nature and social roles of women are defined in relation to the male. Interestingly, in **The Mayor of Casterbridge**, a multiplication of female social roles begins to emerge. The sexual stereotyping at work in **The Return of the Native**, where each woman becomes the epitome of one particular social role, gives way to a blurring of the stereotypes in the later novel where each woman occupies more than one social role. While the social roles themselves are prescribed by the patriarchal discourse, an awareness of the power of society in the formation of these roles begins to develop in both Hardy and the reader. Hardy's multiplication of the social roles of women represents an attempt to demythologize femininity, to liberate women from prescribed social roles. Unfortunately, Hardy's attempt to grant the female subjects autonomy results in little more than a multiplication of the stereotypes themselves. This is not to suggest that the attempt results in complete failure, however. The attempt itself represents a significant shift in Hardy's perception and in his

representations of the female subject, a shift which will reach fruition in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Susan Henchard occupies the dual subject position of wife/mother. Her own identity becomes completely subsumed in her representation as "Henchard's wife"(MC 91) and "Elizabeth's mother"(MC 95). That her representation as "Henchard's wife" positions her as male property is made abundantly clear in the wife auction scene in which Henchard exercises his rights of ownership over her. Susan stands mute as her breeding, cultivation, and bone(MC 75), like those of the stallions sold earlier in the day, are assessed by the potential male buyers. Susan's only resemblance to stallions, who symbolize masculine virility and strength, is in her subject position as property of the male. The animal imagery with which she is associated suggests both weakness and passivity. Her pleading with Henchard is described by the narrator as "those bird-like chirpings"(MC 74), and her sale to Newsom is viewed by the populace as "very good shelter for shorn lambs"(MC 80). Her subject position as "Henchard's wife" results in her representation as a shorn lamb on the sacrificial altar of male power and dominance.

The sexual allure Susan presumably once possessed has been eroded by "the atmosphere of stale familiarity"(MC 70) in which she and Henchard now co-exist. In this novel maternity fills the gaps in repressed female sexuality. As "Elizabeth's mother" Susan becomes a prototype for her

daughter. As Elizabeth's primary role-model, Susan becomes the sign for femaleness, and both women incorporate resignation and dumb submission in their definition of woman. Consider the narrator's initial description of Susan:

When she plodded on in the shade of the hedge, silently thinking, she had the hard, half-apathectic expression of one who deems anything possible at the hands of Time and Chance except, perhaps, fair play.(MC 70)

Her partial resignation to her unjust fate, apparent in her half- apathetic expression, suggests that her subject position as "Henchard's wife" has erased expectations of fair play. Compare this description of Susan to the later description of Elizabeth when Farfrae shows his preference for Lucetta:

Susan Henchard's daughter bore up against the frosty ache of the treatment, as she had borne up under worse things, and contrived as soon as possible to get out of the inharmonious room without being missed.  
(MC 246)

Like her mother, "Susan Henchard's daughter" expects little fair play from a life which has been nothing more than a series of disappointments under which she has borne up. She attempts to avoid the frosty ache of pain by leaving the inharmonious room, but she does so in a way that will not cause disharmony; she leaves without being missed. Despite her pain, her first concern remains unobtrusiveness, a lesson she has learned in her subject position as Susan Henchard's daughter.

Daughter is not the only subject position Elizabeth occupies in this novel. The narrator's continual

representation of her as **girl** and **maiden** not only reinforces her innocence and purity but, as with Thomasin in **The Return of the Native**, positions her subjectively as **The Good Woman**. This positioning is strengthened through her continual association with biblical characters.

They sat stiffly side by side at the darkening table, like some Tuscan painting of the two disciples supping at Emmaus. Lucetta, forming the third and haloed figure, was opposite them; Elizabeth-Jane, being out of the group, could observe all from afar, like the evangelist who had to write it down.  
(MC 254).

That Lucetta appears as the **haloed figure** Christ becomes ferociously ironic when compared to the subject positions she occupies. That Elizabeth appears as the **evangelist** raises many interesting possibilities. As an evangelist Elizabeth's primary function, like Hardy's, is to **write it down**. Her position as author empowers her, and this, in a novel replete with issues of power and powerlessness, represents a significant shift in Hardy's representation of women. There is a price attached to the acquisition of that power, however, a price which lies in being **out of the group**. Elizabeth's marginal position enables her to **observe all** and write it down. Only from afar can the writer be all-seeing and objective. Early in the novel, when Elizabeth and her mother spend their first evening in Casterbridge, Hardy immediately represents Elizabeth's marginality. Hiding behind a settle "...permitted Elizabeth to be a spectator of all that went on without herself being particularly seen"(MC 119). Interestingly, Farfrae is the

object of her gaze, just as he will be the object of her entire life when she assumes the subject position of wife.

In her subject position as Mrs. Donald Farfrae Elizabeth represents the stereotypical Victorian wife. Consider the following description of the first days of her marriage:

In exploring her new domain during the first week of residence, gazing with critical satisfaction on this cheerful room and that, penetrating cautiously into dark cellars, sallying forth with gingerly tread to the garden, now leaf-strewn by autumn winds, and thus, like a wise field-marshal, estimating the capabilities of the site whereon she was about to open her housekeeping campaign - Mrs. Donald Farfrae had discovered...the dead body of a goldfinch.(MC 404-5)

The mock-heroic imagery here perpetuates the stereotype of a housewife waging war against dirt and disorder. Notice that Elizabeth's domain consists entirely of her house and grounds. As the field-marshal Elizabeth cautiously examines screened corners and dark cellars. Her housekeeping campaign in reality consists of nothing more than the mundane chores assigned to the housewife in patriarchal power structures. In her subject position as wife, Elizabeth's identity is reduced to that of Mrs. Donald Farfrae.

Like Elizabeth, Lucetta also occupies three subject positions: in her case, those of vamp, wife, and mother. The narrator's ironic allusion to her as the lady or the young lady in fact contests the notion of her being a lady at all. Consider the following:

...the possibility that Lucetta had been sublimed into a lady of means by some munificent testament on the part of this relative lent a charm to her image which



it might not otherwise have acquired.(MC 219-220)

On the surface, the pretentious, showy, Latinity of the diction reinforces Lucetta's elevation, her **sublimation**, to the status of lady. A closer examination soon demonstrates that the Latinity of the diction is indicative of something else entirely. The economic terms of borrowing and owning, of **testament**, **lent**, and **acquired**, clearly identify Lucetta as little more than a commodity. The narrator's suggestion that Lucetta may be **sublimed**, that is to say made higher, nobler, or purer, simply through the acquisition of wealth parodies the convention that fine clothes make the lady. Notice that the **charm** only invests her image, which suggests merely the outward appearance of that quality. As a vamp, Lucetta uses her power of pleasing or attracting males as a weapon in the **battle of the sexes**. She also knows when and how to conceal her charms.

To heighten her natural attractions had hitherto been the unvarying endeavour of her adult life, and one in which she was no novice. But now she neglected this, and even proceeded to impair the natural presentation.  
(MC 323)

Fearing that her **natural** beauty or charm exerts some kind of magical hold over Henchard, Lucetta determines to **impair** or hinder that power in order to appear as "very small deer to hunt"(MC 325). Her subject position as vamp guarantees that she is no novice in the **hunt**, a loaded cliché for male/female relations. Unlike Elizabeth, who as **field-marshal** wages war against dirt and grime, Lucetta uses her **charm**; her power to attract, to wage war against men. In the final analysis however, Lucetta's **charm** positions

her as little more than a trinket or toy provided for the amusement of men. The magical power of her charm ultimately culminates in virtual powerlessness.

Lucetta's subject position of wife also involves her in the stereotypical role of totally submerging her own identity in that of her husband: "she was living his part rather than her own"(MC 339). As the wife of a rich and powerful man her sole responsibility is to be the beautiful object of contemplation. Once her marriage to Farfrae is accomplished, the only recognition she receives is as the Mayor's wife. The front seat at the Royal visitation "was occupied by Lucetta, the Mayor's wife"(MC 339), and the Royal Personage "shook hands with Lucetta as the Mayor's wife"(MC 341)[emphasis mine]. Not surprisingly, when her marriage is threatened, so is Lucetta's sense of personhood.

The one subject position Lucetta fails successfully to occupy, that of mother, is perhaps the most illuminating. After the skimmington ride Lucetta falls into a fit, and as the doctor says, "...a fit in the present state of her health means mischief"(MC 354). As we soon discover, the present state of her health euphemistically refers to Lucetta's pregnancy. The doctor, like Hardy, sees an inherent physical weakness in women which makes them vulnerable to mental conflict. Lucetta's miscarriage is represented as the inevitable result of her "absurd passion"(MC 351). Lucetta's subsequent death, like Eustacia's in *The Return of the Native*, represents the only appropriate outcome for the fallen, or in Lucetta's case,

the indiscreet woman. As the following demonstrates, by her death she saves not only herself but, more importantly for the narrator, Farfrae as well:

[Farfrae] could not but perceive that by the death of Lucetta he had exchanged a looming misery for a simple sorrow. After the revelation of her history, which must have come sooner or later in any circumstance, it was hard to believe that life with her would have been productive of further happiness.(MC 377)

The obvious question of whose happiness would no longer be produced, can be resoundingly answered with the name "Farfrae." Notice the alleged inevitability here; Farfrae "could not but perceive" that by Lucetta's death he had escaped misery. That Lucetta's history would no longer be productive of his happiness reinforces her identification as an object in the transaction of marriage. Her failure to fulfill her obligations as a product of exchange, not the least of which is motherhood, justifies and validates her death. The simple sorrow resulting from her death is preferable to the looming misery which disclosure of her history would have produced. The narrator continues:

But as a memory, notwithstanding such conditions, Lucetta's image still lived on with him, her weakness provoking only the gentlest criticism, and her sufferings attenuating wrath at her concealments to a momentary spark now and then.(MC 377)

Despite the pathos evoked by the repetition of her image, Lucetta's weakness becomes the bearer of responsibility for her death. She provokes only the gentlest criticism from Farfrae. The question arises as to why, if weakness is inherent in women, it should provoke any criticism at all. Presumably, male wrath can be attenuated when the woman has

been adequately punished; her sufferings reduce the male wrath to a momentary spark now and then. The ideology at work here, the male propensity to blame the victim, has long been a major concern of feminists. Unquestionably Lucetta is the victim of both Henchard and Farfrae, and perhaps to an even greater degree, the victim of Hardy's stereotyping.

While on the whole Hardy engages in a blurring of the stereotypes within this novel, there are still times when obvious stereotypical constructs enter the discourse. His representation of the "nineteen superior young ladies of Casterbridge" (MC 383) assigns certain behaviors to women which assert the masculine identity as the object of female desire. Similarly, his continual representation of the Furmity Woman as old woman and hag perpetuates the male myth about aging; women become old and ugly hags while men become distinguished. Nor is this novel completely free of the over-generalized statements about women which were so prevalent in *The Return of the Native*. Consider the following description of Elizabeth:

This was enough to set Elizabeth thinking, and in thinking she seized hold of the idea, at one feminine bound, that the caged bird had been brought by Henchard as a wedding gift and token of repentance. (MC 405)

That Elizabeth suspects at one feminine bound that the bird was a gift from Henchard suggests a mysterious and mythical woman's intuition. Elizabeth's suspicion, which could have entered anyone's mind, male or female, is designated by Hardy something uniquely feminine, suggesting that for him women possessed a mysteriousness which he could

only explain in terms of sexual difference.

Hardy's reliance upon sexual difference in this novel assumes major significance in light of the following:

Biological theories of sexual difference attempt to ascribe social definitions of the nature and function of femininity and masculinity to a fixed and unchanging natural order, guaranteed by the female or male body, independently of social and cultural factors. They appeal to biological difference between women and men, both observable and imagined, to explain the naturalness and inevitability of our social status and function. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Chris Weedon's explication of biological theories of difference identifies one of the major problems with such theories; they **ascribe** social definitions. This becomes particularly obvious in this novel wherein gender becomes the **cause** of traits like lack of will, confusion, indecisiveness, and inconstancy in women. Hardy ascribes to women two ways of being, either impulsive or indecisive, or a combination of the two. In his female characters indecisiveness often results in impulsiveness. While recognizing that female indecisiveness is often a response to continually applied male pressure, Hardy none the less emphasizes biology as the primary cause of seemingly irrational female behavior. Note Henchard's self-justification the morning after his sale of Susan:

He knew that she must have been somewhat excited to do this; moreover, she must have believed that there was some sort of binding force in the transaction. . . .There may, too, have been enough recklessness and resentment beneath her ordinary placidity to make her stifle any momentary doubts. . . . 'Tis like Susan to show such idiotic simplicity. Meek - that meekness has done me more harm than the bitterest temper!' (MC 83-4)

Susan's acceptance of her unjust fate is viewed by Henchard

as an instance of feminine hysteria; she was **somewhat excited**. Paradoxically, Henchard suggests that her **recklessness** or impulsiveness is a result of **resentment**, when in fact his sale of her is largely the consequence of these same qualities. Henchard's suggestion that Susan's recklessness and resentment are hidden **beneath her ordinary placidity** indicts her as a duplicitous female. While with one breath he condemns her **recklessness**, with the next he condemns her **idiotic simplicity**, her **meekness**. Susan's submission to her husband, the only acceptable way of being for the Victorian wife, becomes her principal fault. Her meekness has done Henchard **more harm than the bitterest temper**. The harm it has done Susan disappears completely. If this misogynistic representation of Susan were confined to Henchard, it could be dismissed as merely an aberration. This is not the case, however. The narrator states that in her indecisiveness about revealing her past to Elizabeth "Henchard's wife acted for the best, but she had involved herself in difficulties"(MC 91). The phrase **involved herself** suggests that she bears responsibility for the difficulties she now faces. Like Henchard, the narrator condemns not only Susan, but a host of women, for their **idiotic simplicity**. He assures the reader that "...she was by no means the first or last peasant woman who had religiously adhered to her purchaser"(MC 91). The use of the phrase **religiously adhered** is interesting here as it demonstrates the adherence to the creed of masochism and obedience to authority so prevalent in Hardy's women.

Susan's reflex submission to masculine authority resembles that cultivated in some forms of Christianity, with males occupying the position of God the Father.

Lucetta's femaleness, like Susan's, becomes the cause of her confusion, indecisiveness, and inconstancy. In the initial stages of her relationship with Farfrae, the narrator describes her emotions as follows:

Her emotions rose, fell, undulated, filled her with wild surmise at their suddenness; and so passed Lucetta's experiences of that day.(MC 236)

Lucetta's hysterization is reminiscent of the cycle of visions Eustacia undergoes in *The Return of the Native*.

Eustacia "flagged...freshened...fired...and cooled"(RN 172);

Lucetta "rose...fell...undulated...and filled." The result in both cases is identical; each woman is represented as the hysterical female who lacks control over her own emotions.

Lucetta's feminine indecisiveness and confusion culminate in extreme physical weakness. When the pressure exerted on her by Henchard results in her promise to marry him, Lucetta "...fell back in a fainting state"(MC 270). Similarly, after the skimmington ride Lucetta "...convulsed on the carpet in the paroxysms of an epileptic seizure"(MC 353). The inconstancy of her feelings, and the resulting confusion finally become the cause of her death.

Unlike Susan and Lucetta, Elizabeth behaves impulsively rather than indecisively. Her decision to move in with Lucetta, her attempt to warn Farfrae of his potential danger at the hands of Henchard, and her offer to work at the inn

to offset some of the expense, represent impulsive decisions on her part. That her impulsiveness is caused by her gender is unquestionable. Consider the narrator's explanation of her decision to defray the costs of the room through her labor:

If there was one good thing more than another which characterized this single-hearted girl it was a willingness to sacrifice her personal comfort and dignity to the common weal.(MC 112)

The narrator's assertion that a **willingness to sacrifice** represents a **good thing** in the female character perpetuates, and attempts to justify, the stereotype of women as victims. Elizabeth's representation as a **single-hearted girl** reinforces her subjectivity as a unitary object to be worked upon by outside forces. While no male would be expected to sacrifice his **dignity** to the common weal, Elizabeth is not only expected to, but she is commended for it. In a novel so replete with a sense of personal **dignity**, such a glaringly blatant double-standard becomes both obtrusive and offensive.

The male behavior in this novel, as indecisive and impulsive as the female, is not represented as being **caused** by gender. The inconstancy of Henchard's affections for Lucetta, with its implicit indecisiveness, is mitigated by Hardy. Henchard's resumption of the affair with Lucetta results from "his bitter disappointment at finding Elizabeth-Jane to be none of his, and himself a childless man, [leaving] an emotional void in Henchard that he unconsciously craved to fill"(MC 219). Henchard's



inconstancy represents the mature view of a man "...getting on towards the dead level of middle age, when material things increasingly possess the mind"(MC 220). Notice how pathos is evoked here through lost ownership. Henchard's realization that Elizabeth Jane is **none of his** indicates that he regards her as his lost property.[See Chronology] Interestingly, material things now **possess** his mind. Hardy represents the insurgence of 'feminine' passivity in this bull of a man as both tragic and pathetic.

Farfrae's indecision about providing Henchard with a seed shop results from prudence. After Elizabeth's warning, Farfrae "...revised impressions from a subsequent point of view, and the impulsive judgement of the moment was not always his permanent one...he went and countermanded his orders"(MC 313). His initial intention, admittedly **impulsive**, is over-ruled by masculine powers of reasoning and results in a **subsequent point of view**. Masculine impulsiveness and indecisiveness represent prudence, rationality, and the mature view. The presence of the uncontrolled, irrational female contrasts with and helps secure the male identification with power.

Issues of power and powerlessness permeate **The Mayor of Casterbridge**. In his **History of Sexuality** Foucault defines power as

...the multiplicity of the force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions

and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.<sup>2</sup>

Foucault is concerned with the ways in which power relations are produced and sustained in the discursive production of historically specific sexuality, the subjects which it constitutes and governs, and resistance to that power. In his analysis, sexuality represents the primary locus of power. To speak, or to use language of any sort, is to assume a subject position within discourse and to become **subjected** to the power of the discourse. Hardy, however, predominantly makes women alone perform the confusion all speaking subjects experience with language. Where men often become powerful in speech, women remain powerless.

Early in the novel Hardy introduces Susan Henchard as "the silent mother"(MC 94). This silence reflects her inability to articulate the myriad emotions she experiences. The deeper the emotion, the less able is she to articulate her feelings. When Henchard asks her if she forgives him, "[Susan] murmured something; but seemed to find it difficult to frame her answer"(MC 145). A situation which should empower her, putting her in the position to grant or withhold forgiveness, in fact leaves her speechless. A closer examination of the context in which this occurs will enhance our understanding. Notice how Henchard asks her forgiveness: "But just one word. Do you forgive me, Susan?"(MC 145). By attempting to limit her response to a

question which cannot be answered with one word, given the complexity of her emotions, Henchard empowers himself and simultaneously disempowers Susan. The male articulation effectively silences the female.

Henchard uses what Foucault calls "confession" to preempt Lucetta's articulation of her preference of Farfrae. Foucault defines the confessional mode as "...a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, or reconcile."<sup>3</sup> In the following power relationship between Henchard and Lucetta, Lucetta represents the subject, and Henchard represents the authority:

'Why did you come here to find me, then?'

'I thought I ought to marry you for conscience' sake since you were free, even though I - did not like you so well.'

'And why then don't you think so now?'

She was silent. It was only too obvious that conscience had ruled well enough till new love had intervened and usurped that rule. In feeling this she herself forgot for the moment her partially justifying argument - that having discovered Henchard's infirmities of temper, she had some excuse for not risking her happiness in his hands after once escaping them.

(MC 269-70)

By putting her on the defensive, Henchard effectively silences Lucetta. Lucetta's recognition that for 'conscience' sake, to protect her good name, she ought to

marry him, allows Henchard to manipulate her guilt to the point that she forgets her justifying argument. Hardy, as narrator, connives at the manipulation of Lucetta's guilt; he represents her argument for not marrying Henchard as being only partially justifying. In spite of Lucetta's discovery of Henchard's infirmities of temper, "she was silent."

Henchard is not the only male to silence effectively Lucetta; Farfrae does so as well. Consider the following death-bed scene:

...she had tried to lisp out to him the secret which so oppressed her, he checked her feeble words, lest talking should be dangerous, assuring her there was plenty of time to tell him everything.(MC 362)

Notice that Farfrae checked Lucetta's words lest talking should be dangerous. That a woman should be allowed speech could indeed be extremely dangerous. Only by keeping women silent can males guarantee female subordination. Farfrae's lie to Lucetta as she lies dying is partially justified by Hardy as an attempt to protect her from danger. The question arises as to what could be more dangerous than for her to die with her sin unconfessed. Hardy's representation of Lucetta's attempt to lisp out her feeble words reinforces her physical powerlessness in speech, despite the power of her knowledge.

Elizabeth-Jane is likewise disempowered in speech within this novel. Her "imploring face"(MC 239), her "mute appeal"(MC 354), and her "weak note of warning"(MC 313) all reflect "...the difficulty in conveying to his [the male]

mind the exact aspect of possibilities of her own"(MC 312). Like the other two women in this novel, Elizabeth finds articulation impossible in the presence of powerful male speech. Interestingly, in her case Hardy appears aware of and represents societal influences on female inarticulation. Consider his ironic description of Elizabeth's language:

One grievous failing of Elizabeth's was her occasional pretty and picturesque use of dialect words - those terrible marks of the beast to the truly genteel.  
(MC 200)

Hardy suggests that the **grievous failing** lies with the **truly genteel** who fail to appreciate the **pretty and picturesque** dialect words. His recognition of the natural beauty of Elizabeth's speech signals a significant shift in his perception and representation of women. In a novel permeated with female powerlessness in speech, Elizabeth is granted a modicum of power by Hardy.

In this novel, Farfrae epitomizes masculine power in speech, as is seen in his introduction to Casterbridge:

...he was to them like the poet of a new school who takes his contemporaries by storm; who is not really new, but is the first to articulate what all his listeners have felt, though dumbly till then.(MC 122-3)

Farfrae's power lies in his ability to **articulate**, to speak what everyone else has **dumbly** felt. The power inherent in his **articulation** elevates him to the level of **poet**. Hardy, as writer, recognizes the responsibility that comes with that power; "[Farfrae] intuitively caught the sense of the meeting, and as spokesman was obliged to utter it, glad as he would have been that the duty should have fallen to

another tongue"(MC 337). Power in speech carries with it a duty; Farfrae was obliged to speak. Farfrae the Mayor has been granted authority, and he must use that authority to utter the words others only feel. In Foucault's 'confessional mode,' authority always implies power in speech.

As we have already seen, Henchard's authority over the women in this novel confers power on his speech. As the Mayor of Casterbridge, the supreme figure of authority, Henchard is "...the powerfulest member of the Town Council...[his] voice arose above the rest,"(MC 103). He articulates his awareness of his power when he tells Farfrae, "I am not the man to let a cause be lost for want of a word"(MC 132). He fully recognizes that as the authority figure he has power with a word. Only when he loses his authority does he lose his power in speech.

In her "The Unmanning of the Mayor of Casterbridge," Elaine Showalter examines the fight in the loft between Henchard and Farfrae after which Henchard "...remained in a crouching attitude, unusual for a man, and for such a man. Its womanliness sat tragically on the figure of so stern a piece of virility"(MC 348). Showalter suggests that Henchard's surrender to the 'feminine' side of himself "...opens him for the first time to an understanding of human need measured in terms of feeling rather than property. It is the completion of his unmanning - a casting-off of the attitudes, the empty garments, the façades of dominance and authority."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it is not so much that

Henchard measures human need more in terms of feeling than property, but rather that he himself has become, in a sense, property. I would like to take Showalter's analysis one step further and suggest that in Foucault's 'confessional mode,' Henchard's loss of authority repositions him as both the speaking subject and the subject of the statement. This dynamic becomes obvious in Henchard's final meeting with Elizabeth. She demands of Henchard, "O how can I love as I once did a man who has served us like this!" (MC 402). By asking an impossible question, Elizabeth positions herself as authority, and Henchard as subject. Like the women when the situation was reversed, Henchard is effectively silenced:

Henchard's lips half parted to begin an explanation. But he shut them up like a vice, and uttered not a sound. (MC 402)

Henchard, who has so long used his authority to effect silence in women's speech, is now silenced by a woman. Once again, through Elizabeth, Hardy's gradual shift in perception and representation of women begins to emerge.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Hardy demonstrates a growing self-awareness about his medium. He fully recognizes the power of the written word. In many ways this novel characterizes the progress from an oral to a written culture. What is of special interest to the feminist reader is that Hardy's assignment of power in writing is not so directly articulated along gender lines, but on the basis of character and aptitude.

Susan Henchard is as powerless in writing as she was in speech. Henchard says of her, "What advantages had she? None. She could write her own name, and no more"(MC 367). Her lack of advantages raises serious questions about the politics of education. As an uneducated woman, Susan is unable to understand and aid Elizabeth in her quest for knowledge. Consider the following:

The desire - sober and repressed - of Elizabeth-Jane's heart was indeed to see, to hear, and to understand. How could she become a woman of wider knowledge, higher repute - 'better,' as she termed it - this was her constant inquiry of her mother. She sought further into things than other girls in her position ever did, and her mother groaned as she felt she could not aid in the search.(MC 93)

Elizabeth's desire for wider knowledge, unusual for girls in her position, cannot be satisfied by Susan who occupies the same position. That Elizabeth's desire has been repressed suggests a systematic repression of knowledge in the women of her class. It is not surprising that Susan groaned over Elizabeth's aspirations; she is completely aware of how highly the odds are stacked against the acquisition of knowledge, and thus power, for girls of Elizabeth's position. Susan's awareness comes from personal experience. While Henchard's declaration that Susan could "write her own name, and no more" is an exaggeration, the fact remains that her writing is as ineffectual as her speech, indeed as her whole life. She writes the notes to Farfrae and Elizabeth because she hopes to see them married. She tells Elizabeth, "'Twas not to make fools of you - it was done to bring you together....Well, I had a reason. 'Twill out one



day. I wish it could have been in my time! But there - nothing is as you wish it!"(MC 189-90). Susan's whole life has been doomed to failure; indeed nothing is as [she] wish[ed] it. Even after death her wishes are ignored. Her letter to Henchard "Not to be opened till Elizabeth-Jane's wedding-day"(MC 195), is opened immediately after her death, and is characterized by the narrator as "...another illustration of that honesty in dishonesty which had characterized her in other things"(MC 196). The paradoxical phrase **honesty in dishonesty**, reminiscent of "The Dishonesty of an Honest Woman"(RN 150), positions women, especially mothers, as creatures of little power who must resort to **dishonesty** to accomplish their aims. Susan's ineffectual attempt to do the right thing cannot succeed. Her **honest** character forces her to make the attempt, but her victimization by life guarantees that the attempt must fail. As a character with virtually no power, Susan's writing is likewise disempowered by Hardy.

Unlike Susan, Lucetta is much more articulate and eloquent in writing than she is in speaking. Written by an educated woman, her letters enable her to say on paper what she cannot say in person. Consider the following description of her writing:

The self-repression, the resignation of her previous communication had vanished from her mood; she wrote with some of the natural lightness which had marked her in their early acquaintance.(MC 218)

Lucetta's previous communication was the one in which she realized "...how impossible it would be for any further

communication to proceed between them now that [Henchard's] re-marriage had taken place"(MC 187). Not surprisingly, **self-repression** and **resignation** characterize her letter.

These are the only two acceptable ways of being to one in Lucetta's subject position as an abandoned woman. When her inheritance re-empowers her, Lucetta's mood returns to its former **natural lightness**, and her letters reflect the easy confidence of a woman in charge of her own fate.

Unfortunately, Lucetta's subject position as vamp makes the retention of that power impossible for her. The letters themselves, the implements of her empowerment, ultimately bring about her downfall and death. Just as Susan's subject position as victim disempowers her, so too Lucetta's subject position as vamp demands her disempowerment.

Elizabeth-Jane is the only female character to achieve and retain power in writing in this novel. Consider the narrator's description of her writing:

She started the pen in an elephantine march across the sheet. It was a splendid round, bold hand of her own conception, a style that would have stamped a woman as Minerva's own in more recent days.(MC 201)

Notice that Elizabeth's writing is **elephantine**, **splendid**, and **bold**, traits usually associated with the masculine in Hardy's novels. In fact, Hardy goes on to say that "Henchard's creed was that proper young girls wrote ladies'-hand - nay, he believed that bristling characters were as innate and inseparable a part of refined womanhood as sex itself"(MC 201). In order for a girl to be **proper**, she must write **ladies'-hand**. By placing Henchard, a

man of questionable judgement, as the authority concerning bristling **characters**, Hardy suggests that perhaps writing ladies'-hand is neither an **innate** nor a fashionable accomplishment. Still, it is interesting that the only way Elizabeth can achieve power in writing is by writing "...round hand instead of ladies'-hand"(MC 209). That **instead** assumes major importance here as it makes a distinction between ladies-hand and the supposedly masculine hand. Interestingly, her bold handwriting **stamped** Elizabeth as Minerva's own, reinforcing her association with wisdom and arts. Elizabeth's desire "...to see, to hear, and to understand,"(MC 93) are reflected in the bold writing of her **own conception**. That Elizabeth **conceived** or gave birth to her own style of writing elevates her to the position of feminist votary. The modicum of power Hardy presented in Elizabeth's speech has been broadened and expanded in her writing.

Elizabeth's power in writing stands in sharp contrast to Henchard's: he is "...so bad at letters"(MC 150). This **man of character** has little power over the written character. The only time he possesses and exerts power in writing is when he is dealing with a character of even less power than himself. Consider his note to Susan after her return to Casterbridge:

'Meet me at eight o'clock this evening, if you can, at the Ring on the Budmouth road. The place is easy to find. I can say no more now. The news upsets me almost. The girl seems to be in ignorance. Keep her so till I have seen you. M.H.'(MC 138)

Henchard, in complete control of the situation, demands that Susan meet him and keep Elizabeth in ignorance. His dislike of the written word does not apply in his relationship with Susan as it does in his relationship with Farfrae.

Henchard, "bad at science,...bad at figures," recognizes that Farfrae is "just the reverse"(MC 117), and in spite of his distrust of the written word agrees to "settle terms in black-and-white if you like, though my word's my bond"(MC 133). Henchard realizes that he is at a disadvantage in terms of power in writing, but is willing to accommodate Farfrae's preference for a written agreement. In his desire to utilize Farfrae's power for his own benefit, Henchard willingly agrees to "settle things in black-and-white." His declaration that "my word's my bond" proves untrue, and Farfrae's astuteness once again emerges.

Henchard's condemnation of Elizabeth's writing becomes ferociously ironic when juxtaposed to his last will and testament. 'Michael Henchard's Will' demonstrates more fully than anything else in the text his powerlessness in writing. The will itself, replete with grammatical and spelling errors, demonstrates his lack of education. Even more telling is that "what Henchard had written in the anguish of his dying was respected as far as practicable by Elizabeth-Jane"(MC 410). The last wishes of the weakened Henchard must give way to the **practicality** of the now-powerful Elizabeth. Because his will is "a piece of the same stuff that his life was made of"(MC 410), suggesting no growth of character, Henchard's wishes are respected only

as far as practicable by Elizabeth. Elizabeth's growth of character becomes obvious in the description of her after Henchard's death: "Elizabeth-Jane found herself in a latitude of calm weather, kindly and grateful in itself, and doubly so after the Capharnaum in which her preceding years had been spent"(MC 410). The experiences of her life have elevated Elizabeth to the status of the people of Capharnaum "which sat in darkness [and] saw a great light" (Matt 4:16). Like Christ, who performed many miracles at Capharnaum, Elizabeth exercises total control over the fulfillment of Henchard's final wishes. By novel's end Elizabeth exhibits the rugged strength previously existing only in the "friendship between man and man"(MC 167).

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* a slight shift in Hardy's perception and representation of women appears to have occurred. In a novel so concerned with issues of control and lack of control, one woman character becomes empowered by Hardy. While still heavily reliant on the stereotyping inherent in sexual difference, Hardy's objectification of women has begun to give way to women as subjects constructed in the experience of class, education, and sexual relations who will emerge more fully in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

### Chapter Three: Tess of the D'Urbervilles

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, women emerge as subjects no longer unified, but multiple, decentered and internally contradictory. Hardy addresses subjectivity, socialization and power in an attempt to show that established meanings, values and power relations are neither natural nor immutable. A close textual analysis of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* effectively demonstrates where meanings, values and power relations come from, whose interests they support and where they are susceptible to specific pressures for change.

This novel, like its predecessors, contains many over-generalized statements about women whenever a woman does something. Hardy continues to demonstrate an inability to discuss the complexity of women's behavior without having recourse to sexual difference. While allowing his male characters specificity and personhood, Hardy represents Tess as a being inescapably bound to her femininity. Upon leaving her friends at Talbothays, "Tess femininely glanced back"(TD 282). As my added emphasis demonstrates, with his depiction of "Tess's feminine hope"(TD 314) and her "feminine loss of courage"(TD 378), Hardy relies upon patriarchal assumptions of sexual difference in forcing a distinction between the feminine and the masculine mode of being. Such representations position women as a single vast body so that "the differences which distinguished them as

individuals were abstracted..., and each was but portion of one organism called sex"(TD 204). This (re)positioning results from the (re)placement of the specific individual with the general organism called sex.

The juxtaposition of the title, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and the sub-title, *A Pure Woman*, immediately suggests a move from the specific to the general. What is interesting, however, is that Hardy himself appears aware of the dangers of such a broad leap. As narrator, he condemns Angel Clare's "habit of neglecting the particulars of an outward scene for the general impression"(TD 175). Angel's "mistake" in uttering cynical comments to himself about Tess arises from "his allowing himself to be influenced by general principles to the disregard of the particular instance"(TD 423). While Hardy does not entirely free himself from generalizations about women, he reverses his outlook, and moves from the general to the specific. He almost always singles Tess out from the group, as he does in his description of the May-Day dance. His general representation of the "banded ones all dressed in white," the "votive sisterhood of some sort"(TD 49), is comprised of individuals who "each had a private little sun for her soul to bask in"(TD 50). This move from the general to the specific, from all to each, culminates in his singling out Tess as "[a] young member of the band [who] turned her head..."(TD 51). Kaja Silverman suggests that Tess "assumes a distinct and expressive shape, while the other women become an undifferentiated background mass" because of the

male gaze which "constructs its object through a process of colonization, delimitation, configuration and inscription.<sup>1</sup> Maggie Humm, on the other hand, suggests that in this novel "women do not question social or moral values per se, but their own ability or inadequacy in matching them. The bourgeois novel has to invert social into individual inadequacy."<sup>2</sup> Humm's interpretation, in combination with Silverman's, clarifies Hardy's authorial strategy. Hardy's movement from generalizations about women, to individual and personal representations, signals a significant shift in his perception of women. While he does not give answers to the problems of systemic domination and prejudice, the fact that Hardy sets questions about female images represents a significant innovation in the Victorian novel.

Many feminists, including Kaja Silverman, have correctly identified one major problem with Hardy's female images. As I suggested in relation to *The Return of the Native*, Hardy's identification of the female body with sexuality, a favoured figure in literature, constructs women as objects of visual pleasure to the male's voyeuristic gaze. The lips, the primary site of sensuality in the female body, become the focus of the male narrator's voyeuristic gaze in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as well.

To a young man with the least fire in him that little upward lift in the middle of her red top lip was distracting, infatuating, maddening. He had never before seen a woman's lips and teeth which forced upon his mind with such persistent iteration the old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow....

Clare had studied the curves of those lips so many



times that he could reproduce them mentally with ease: and now, as they again confronted him, clothed with colour and life, they sent an aura over his flesh, a breeze through his nerves, which wellnigh produced a qualm. (TD 209)

Notice the negative power invested in Tess's lips; their shape is **distracting, infatuating, and maddening** to a young man. That her lips are **distracting** suggests Tess draws away or diverts Clare's attention, presumably from some highly significant masculine endeavor. **Distracting** also carries with it the negative meaning of providing amusement or a pleasant diversion, a description not significantly different than the Victorian patriarchal definition of woman herself. The adjective **infatuating** suggests that Tess has the power, through her **woman's lips**, to inspire a **young man** with a foolish or unreasoning passion. Tess's **infatuating** power implicates her as a witch or sorceress who uses her feminine power to beguile and bewitch the unsuspecting and innocent male. The final adjective, **maddening**, suggests that Tess's lips drive Clare to madness or frenzy. Tess's sensuality becomes the **cause** of Clare's insane infatuation. Tess's lips are also **maddening** in the sense that they infuriate and exasperate. That the narrator means to condemn Tess's negative female power is made clear when he suggests that she **forced and confronted** Angel, a suggestion which implicates Tess as the aggressor. Notice how Hardy counter-balances negative female power with positive masculine power. Just as the male author produces female images, Clare has the ability to reproduce a mental image of Tess **with ease**. The mental image Clare reproduces

is not grounded in reality, but rather in another instance of **persistent iteration**; the patriarchal definition of idealized femininity, the Elizabethan simile of "roses filled with snow." By idealizing her, Angel reduces Tess to something existing only in the male imagination. Once again the female image is de-personalized so that it becomes the mere object of masculine consciousness. That the **aura**, the subtly pervasive quality of the unrealistic image, **produced a qualm**, effectively demonstrates an inherent danger in the mythologization of women. When men view women as nothing more than an Elizabethan simile, an unrealistic and idealized object of male desire, feelings of apprehension and unease are inevitable. This suggests that men, like women, are uncomfortable with the partial and unrealistic image of their own creation or reproduction.

Had Hardy been content merely to sexualize the female body while virtually ignoring the male, as he did in *The Return of the Native*, he could legitimately be dismissed as an incurable chauvinist. This is not the case, however. What is so interesting in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is that Hardy, for the first time, exposes the male body, primarily the male lips, to similar scrutiny. Consider the narrator's initial description of Alec D'Urberville:

He had an almost swarthy complexion, with full lips, badly moulded, though red and smooth, above which was a well-groomed black moustache with curled points... Despite the touches of barbarism in his contours, there was a singular force in the gentleman's face, and in his bold rolling eye. (TD 79)

D'Urberville's full lips and bold eye identify his face as a

primary site of masculine sensuality. Hardy conveys the potential danger in this masculine sensuality through the narrator's representation of the touches of barbarism in Alec's contours. These same touches of barbarism will flourish in The Chase scene when D'Urberville uses his singular force against the innocent Tess. D'Urberville's masculine sensuality assumes almost demonic powers with the representation of the black moustaches with curled points. Not surprisingly, then, in light of his Satanic figuration, Alec's subsequent conversion represents "less a reform than a transfiguration"(TD 383). The narrator's use of the word **transfiguration**, a term usually associated with the supernatural and glorified change in the appearance of Jesus on the mountain(Matt. 17:1-9), is highly ironic. Clearly the narrator means **transfiguration** in the secular sense of change in outward form or appearance only. Consider how the narrator's gaze rests upon D'Urberville's lips as he describes the convert: "the former curves of sensuousness were now modulated to lines of devotional passion. The lip-shapes that had meant seductiveness were now made to express supplication"(TD 383). That the former sensuousness is now **modulated** suggests that D'Urberville deliberately softened or toned down his appearance to adapt to his changed circumstances. Notice that the former seductiveness is now **made to**, that is forced more or less artfully, to **express** supplication, the suggestion being that this expressed supplication is an outward manifestation only.

The thorough examination to which Hardy subjects Alec's lips effectively demonstrates the potential danger to women in masculine sexual power, and stands in sharp contrast to the two previous novels in which women alone were subjected to such scrutiny.

Hardy's scrutiny of Angel Clare's lips remains anchored in the male-centered frame of reference of sexual difference. Angel Clare has "a mobility of mouth somewhat too small and delicate for a man's, though with an unexpectedly firm close of the lower lip now and then; enough to do away with any inference of indecision"(TD 169). That Clare's mouth is too small and delicate for a man's suggests that these features would be appropriate in a member of the weaker sex, in women. Clare's mouth is saved from any inference of indecision, presumably feminine indecision, by virtue of an unexpectedly firm close of his lower lip. Clearly any firm act would be unexpected in women, and must therefore signify masculinity. This suppression of the feminine represents a negating gesture. By denying any similarity to women, masculinity defines itself as that which is not female. The effect of definitions founded on sexual difference is to pre-determine what constitutes normal femininity and masculinity, to fix subjectivity on the basis of gender. While Hardy clearly remains bound to patriarchal definitions of sexuality, his subjecting the male body to scrutiny represents a substantial move towards equal representation. As Kathleen

Blake points out, Hardy's continuing reliance upon sexual difference "dramatizes the author's susceptibility to an outlook shown to be dangerous in the hero....In his verbal habits Hardy only partly separates himself from Angel's mental ones, while the irony of the overlap draws attention and actually extends the novel's interest as a commentary on the heroine as pure woman."<sup>3</sup> Through his multiple and contradictory representations of a pure woman Hardy demonstrates an awareness of the power of language both to generate and to constrain apprehension.

In this novel, Hardy extends an invitation to the reader to explore the multiplicity of meanings in a word like purity. In the author's preface to the fifth and later editions, Hardy chastises his critics' "inability to associate the idea of the sub-title with any but the artificial and derivative meaning which has resulted to it from the ordinances of civilization."<sup>4</sup> Through his sub-title Hardy takes a gender-specific word, "pure," and makes it yield to the plurality of the multiple and internally contradictory female character. He suggests three definitions of purity ignored by his critics: "the meaning of the word in Nature, together with all aesthetic claims upon it, not to mention the spiritual interpretation afforded by the finest side of their own Christianity."<sup>5</sup> As Hardy suggests, Tess's purity can only be understood with reference to all definitions of the word.

Hardy's initial representation of Tess embodies "the

artificial and derivative meaning" of purity which "has resulted to it from the ordinances of civilization." He says of her, "Tess Durbeyfield at this time was a mere vessel of emotion untinged by experience"(TD,p.51). The word **vessel**, traditionally used in or after biblical expressions such as "vessel of purity" or "vessel of wrath," describes a person thought of as being the receiver or repository of some spirit, influence, or quality. Hardy's representation of Tess as a vessel of emotion immediately alerts the reader to her passivity as a receiver or repository of some outside influence, in this case **emotion**. Hardy thus positions Tess as the emotional female as distinguished from the the rational and volitional male. She becomes what St. Peter calls all women, "the weaker vessel"(I Peter 3:7). But, the word **vessel** is also used in sacramental liturgy to describe the containers used to carry wine, water, or the hosts. The **vessels** are the containers for the Eucharist, for the body and blood of Christ. Tess's figuration so early in the novel as a vessel prepares for Hardy's later suggestion that she inhabits the "fleshly tabernacle"(TD 388). Clearly Hardy means to figure Tess's female body as the repository of the body of Christ. The subsequent violation of Tess's body thus represents a violation of Christ himself. It is also worth noting that the **vessels** used in sacramental liturgy are usually made of silver or gold. Like Tess, the **vessels** are made from pure metals; they are **untinged**. That Tess is as yet

untinctured by experience suggests that she has not been stained or colored by sexual experience. This becomes extremely important to her representation as *The Maiden*.

The first phase of Tess's life, maidenhood, must be characterized by youth and innocence with the maidenhead intact. After her seduction by Alec, she is represented as *Maiden No More*. What is so interesting is that in this novel Hardy makes a clear distinction between maiden and girl. This represents a significant change from the two previous novels I have discussed in which maiden and girl were synonymous. In the phase entitled "Maiden No More" Tess continually appears as "the girl-mother"(TD 142,145), and her son appears as "a child's child"(TD 144). Hardy challenges the "artificial and derivative" meaning of purity by suggesting that a female character can remain a girl despite lost maidenhead. Hardy extends the distinction between girl and maiden to a distinction between girl and women. When he initially introduces the field women he begins, "The women - or rather girls..."(TD 138). Clearly Tess is not yet a woman. Only after her realization of her transitory existence does Tess become a woman. As Hardy says, "Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman"(TD 150). Tess's almost instantaneous transformation from girl to woman echoes Alec's transfiguration, but unlike his, her change is real and irreversible. At the end of "Phase The Second," at the end of girlhood, Tess is transformed from a simple girl to a

complex woman. This transformation in Tess signals a transformation for Hardy as well. No longer will his female characters resemble the unitary objects whose interests are subordinated to the interests of men as we saw in his earlier novels. Complex Tess symbolizes the complexity and multiplicity inherent in the female subject.

Through his interest in "the spiritual interpretation" of the word purity, Hardy makes a distinction between the religious and the ethical. Hardy, like Angel Clare, questions "the old appraisements of morality," and asks "who was the moral woman"(TD 421). Society's assessment of her as "not a - proper woman"(TD 438) becomes absorbed by Tess so that she "religiously determined" that she "could never conscientiously allow any man to marry her now"(TD 194). Tess's early religious education, "well grounded in the Holy Scriptures," leads her to suspect that she "should have to burn for what she had done"(TD 143). Through her association with Angel Clare, "the one man on earth who had loved her purely, and who had believed in her as pure"(TD 476), Tess comes to the realization that "theology and morals, which in the primitive days of mankind had been quite distinct"(TD 410), have become co-joined. The fact that Clare's belief in Tess's purity is founded on appearance rather than on actuality is less important than the fact that it finally enables Tess, like her creator Hardy, to distinguish between religion and ethics.

Hardy goes to the very roots of Judaeo-Christian



tradition, the story of Adam and Eve, in his spiritual interpretation of the word purity.<sup>6</sup> The sexual act itself, represented by Hardy as "ha[ving] eaten of the tree of knowledge"(TD 158), prepares for the association of Tess, Angel and Alec with their biblical counter-parts. Hardy represents Tess and Angel as "the first persons...of all the world" who are "impressed...with a feeling of isolation as if they were Adam and Eve"(TD 186). That Tess represents Eve after the fall is made clear by Hardy; "she regarded [Angel] as Eve at her second waking might have regarded Adam"(TD 232). Eve's **second waking**, her realization that she is naked, exemplifies all the guilt and self-loathing women have been expected to harbour. Eve might have regarded Adam, after her second waking, as a superior being who has fallen through her temptation. Clearly this is how Tess views Angel: "he was so godlike in her eyes"(TD 246). Angel moves from his position of Adam to that of God the Father. Tess "tried to pray to God, but it was her husband who really had her supplication"(TD 281). Her prayer to Angel, "Forgive me as you are forgiven!"(TD 298), closely resembles the line in The Lord's Prayer which says, "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." By making her husband into a god, Tess merely fulfills the curse God placed on Eve after her fall: "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee"(Genesis 3:6). Interestingly, Hardy himself refuses to accept the deification of Angel. Unlike God the Father,

Angel does not forgive Tess her trespasses. Hardy, as narrator, suggests that Tess's deification of her husband represents "a triumphant simplicity of faith in Angel Clare that the most perfect man could hardly have deserved, much less her husband"(TD 400). That much less is extremely significant here as it suggests how far from perfection, from god-head, Angel really is. That Tess, a **complex** woman, has a **simplicity** of faith in Angel merely reinforces her identity as an abject Eve after the fall. Hardy continues to challenge the "spiritual interpretation" of purity, however. Angel's difference from the **perfect man**, like Adam's before him, ensures that female deification of the male will not be allowed to stand unchallenged by Hardy.

Hardy also draws an analogy between the relationship between Tess and Alec and that of Adam and Eve. Alec describes his sinfulness before his conversion as "the old Adam of my former years"(TD 386). As Adam, he represents the innocent man seduced by the evil temptress. His condemnation of Tess: "'And why then have you tempted me? I was firm as a man could be till I saw those eyes and that mouth again - surely there never was such a maddening mouth since Eve's!'"(TD 402), closely resembles Adam's excuse to God: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"(Genesis 3:12). In both instances "The Woman Pays" for the man's sinfulness. Hardy is not content to let the issue rest here, however. Just as Angel's position shifts from that of Adam to that of God,

Alec's position moves from that of Adam to that of Satan. As he and Tess work the family garden plot Alec says, "A jester might say this is just like Paradise. You are Eve, and I am the old Other One come to tempt you in the disguise of an inferior animal"(TD 431). Interestingly, Tess rejects Alec's self-representation: "I never said you were Satan, or thought it. . . .My thoughts of you are quite cold, except when you affront me"(TD 432). Hardy's presentation of Tess's **cold thoughts** about Alec represents a fulfillment of God's curse to the serpent: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel(Genesis 3:15). Through his representation of Tess's seducer as Satan, Hardy (re)examines and (re)writes the "spiritual interpretation" of purity.

As well as the derivative meaning and the spiritual interpretation of the word purity, Hardy also examines "the aesthetic claims upon" the word. Tess is "A Pure Woman" in the sense that she represents the absolute, sheer and utter beauty of womanhood. Both Clare and D'Urberville view her as representative of her sex. Alec d'Urberville sees in Tess the essence of womanhood:

She had an attribute which amounted to a disadvantage just now; and it was this that caused Alec d'Urberville's eyes to rivet themselves upon her. It was a luxuriance of aspect, a fulness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was. She had inherited the feature from her mother without the quality it denoted.(TD 82)

Tess's **attribute**, her appearance of pure womanhood, has

caused Alec's fascination. The word caused implicates Tess in her own fall. While her very femaleness thus becomes a disadvantage, Hardy refuses to let the issue rest here. Alec's eyes rivet themselves upon Tess, emphasizing both Alec's aggression and Tess's passivity. Alec's eyes riveted upon Tess becomes an act of violence against her. Because it is Alec's eyes which are the implements of aggression, Hardy raises the issue of vision or faulty vision. Again and again in this novel the protagonists, including Tess herself, fail to see things as they really are. Although Tess's luxuriance and fulness give her the appearance of womanhood, looks in this instance are deceptive. She appears to be more of a woman than she really was. That the narrator recognizes that Tess's attribute amounted to a disadvantage signals a significant shift in Hardy's representations of women. For the first time, the narrator recognizes that faulty male perception of women represents a real disadvantage for women because of the inherent dangers of becoming the object of male desire. Unlike Hardy's earlier *Fallen Women*, Eustacia and Lucetta, Tess falls because of masculine sensuality. That "The Woman Pays" for her innocent fall effectively demonstrates entrenched inequities between the sexes which Hardy brings to light for the first time.

When Angel Clare wishes to "contemplate contiguous womankind"(TD 176), he thinks of Tess. To Clare, Tess represents "a visionary essence of woman - a whole sex condensed into one typical form"(TD 187). Clare's

preference for the **visionary** over the "visible" or "virtual," suggests that he desires to (re)create Tess according to his own image. For Clare, the **one typical form of a whole sex**, of women, is that of "Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names"(TD 187). He disregards the flesh and blood woman in favor of the goddesses of chastity and fertility, expressions of the only two acceptable roles for his women. Because Clare has (re)created Tess in his own vision, he cannot accept her as anything less than "fresh and virginal"(TD 176). When confronted with the actuality of Tess's past, Angel responds by suggesting that she is no longer the same person: "you were one person; now you are another"(TD 298). Hardy, as narrator, also suggests that Tess has been transformed in some way: "nothing had changed since the moments when he had been kissing her; or rather, nothing in the substance of things. But the essence of things had changed"(TD 297). Hardy, with his use of the word **essence**, presumes to be an authority on an essential female nature. His declaration that "the essence of things had changed" suggests that he views himself as the arbiter of an essential purity. And yet, by stating that the **substance** remains the same, Hardy once again challenges perceptions and (re)creations of the female. As narrator he questions appearance and reality by raising the issue of a substantive change in Tess. In Phase the Second, "Maiden No More," he suggests that Tess is "the same, but not the same; at the present stage of her existence living as a stranger

and an alien here, though it was no strange land that she was in"(TD 139). If Tess is still the same, why then is she living as a stranger and an alien? Clearly her marginalization results from the way she is perceived by others. When Tess works in the field with her female companions, they, while "sympathetic and glad at her reappearance...could not refrain from" singing about "the maid who went to the merry green wood and came back a changed state"(TD 142). Notice that the maid comes back a changed state, not a changed woman, which suggests that only the perception of her by others is altered. Clearly Hardy wishes to demonstrate that the aesthetic claims of purity are as varied and changing as women themselves.

Hardy, for the first time, allows his female protagonist to challenge and to reject other people's representations of her. When Alec d'Urberville attempts to generalize Tess's emotions into "what every woman says," Tess insists on specificity. The usually passive Tess, driven out of her passivity by Alec's attempted generalization, firmly declares, "My God! I could knock you out of the gig! Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says some may feel?"(TD 125). Tess rejects her relegation to the general every, and demands her own personhood. Similarly, when Angel Clare attempts to position Tess as goddess, calling her "Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names," she becomes uncomfortable. "'Call me Tess,' she would say askance"(TD 187). Fanciful seems to be

a word attributed to Tess by the narrator. Because Greek mythology, like Elizabethan love poetry, has a serious socio-imaginative status and function, especially in its characterization of women, Tess's relegation to the status of goddess is profoundly condescending, patriarchal, and imprisoning. While men are allowed to have history, women are only allowed mythology. Tess instinctively rejects these fanciful names; she wants to be recognized as more than mere myth. By speaking askance Tess demonstrates not only suspicion, mistrust, and disapproval of Angel's attempt to mythologize her, but also her own weakness. She is unable to confront Angel directly; her only weapon is to speak askance. Still, the fact that she is allowed to register her disapproval at all signals a major shift in Hardy's representations of women, who until now were allowed no voice in their own representations. Hardy examines the type of purity expected by men such as Angel and Alec, and counters the male expectations with woman-centered images. Throughout the novel Hardy allows Tess to question for herself male-centered images of women. When Clare suggests that his and Tess's tremulous lives are so different from dairy-maids', Tess replies, "There are very few women's lives that are not - tremulous. . . .There's more in those three than you think"(TD 247). Tess, aware of Angel's habit of generalization, realizes that there is much more to these women than the simple country maids he perceives. By suggesting that **there's more in the women than what Angel**

sees, Tess rejects Angel's simplistic and unrealistic classification of the dairy-maids. In the same way, while Tess is praying alone in her bedroom before her marriage, "she whispered there alone; 'for she you love is not my real self, but one in my image; the one I might have been!'" (TD 281). This time Hardy allows Tess to question the difference between appearance and reality, and in this instance Tess sees the **real self**, while Angel sees only the **image**. Tess, realizing that Angel's male-centered image of her is not her **real self**, laments the loss of the woman she **might have been**. This loss, resulting from masculine aggression, remains hidden from Angel's male-centered and unrealistic sense of the perfect woman. By allowing Tess to counter male-centered images with a female-centered one, Hardy demonstrates just how far his female characters have progressed. His questioning and multiple Tess bears faint resemblance to his earlier female protagonists such as Eustacia, Thomasin, and Lucetta.

Hardy urges his critics to examine one other definition of the word pure, "the meaning of the word in nature". Purity represents that which is of unmixed descent or ancestry, an apt description of Tess who is "true d'Urberville to the bone" (TD 183). Tess's lineage is purer than Alec's, who is "no. . . d'Urberville of the true tree" (TD 78). In this sense Tess is indeed "A Pure Woman." Hardy is not content to let the matter rest so easily, however. Just as he challenges the stability of a phrase such as "a pure



woman," he also challenges the notion of "pure lineage." In Hardy's view no such thing as unmixed or pure ancestry exists. As Tess herself points out, "I have as much of mother as father in me!"(TD 156). Hardy mocks the pretensions of "spurious" people whose lineage is "compounded of money and ambition like those at Trantridge"(TD 183). The narrator's explanation of the expulsion of the Durbeyfields from Marlott, "By some means the village had to be kept pure"(TD 436), represents irony at its best. While there are "several families among the cottagers of this county of almost equal lustre"(TD 45), clearly the Durbeyfields, as the lineal representatives of Sir Pagan d'Urberville, are the most pure. By demonstrating the instability of "pure lineage" Hardy demonstrates the instability of language itself. Whether speaking about women or lineage, Hardy takes a singular word such as purity and makes it yield to the plurality of the multiple human character.

As I have mentioned earlier, the social roles of women in *The Return of the Native* represent little more than a repetition of stereotypical sentiments and forms. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* the multiple social positions women occupy represent merely a multiplication of the stereotypes themselves. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* Hardy scrutinizes the sexual stereotyping which plays havoc with women's lives. He combines a multiplication of female roles with a questioning of and a reaction against the stereotypes

themselves. Tess, like many contemporary working women, fulfills multiple social roles: wife, mother, daughter, sister, working woman, mistress, and woman of and in nature. Hardy examines the social and economic pressures which result in a double standard and often predetermine which roles women will occupy at any given time. Such an examination demonstrates a major shift in Hardy's perceptions, and consequently in his representations, of women.

In the two earlier novels I have looked at, motherhood came to stand for sacrifice and suppression of self. In this novel, the social position of mother becomes as multiple and internally contradictory as the women themselves. Critical response to Tess's maternal role seems divided along two lines. Critics such as Elizabeth Campbell view Tess as completely maternal: "Tess rises to tragic proportions as a heroine because she continues to represent sorrowful motherhood. Throughout the novel, Tess's image remains that of secular *mater dolorosa*."<sup>7</sup> Such sentiments tend to ignore textual evidence to the contrary. Penny Boumelha identifies two elements of plot which would contradict the position of a completely maternal Tess: "the ambivalence of Tess's feelings for her child, and the failure of motherhood itself to determine the subsequent course of her experience."<sup>8</sup> The ambivalence Tess feels for her child, Sorrow, becomes evident in the text itself.

When the infant had taken its fill the young mother sat it upright in her lap, and looking into the far distance dandled it with a gloomy indifference that was

almost dislike; then all of a sudden she fell to violently kissing it some dozens of times, as if she could never leave off, the child crying at the vehemence of an onset which strangely combined passionateness with contempt.(TD 140)

Notice that Tess is described as the young mother, a variation of the girl-mother previously discussed in this chapter. Tess's youth and inexperience make her ill-equipped to handle motherhood. Her feelings for her child become violent in intensity. Words such as **vehemence** and **violently** are reminiscent of the events surrounding the conception of the child. The **onset**, suggesting an assault or an attack, becomes a repetition of Tess's fate in *The Chase*. Hardy appears completely aware of the mixed feelings such a child as Tess would experience with the birth of her own child. Her **passionateness** combined with **contempt** accurately reflects her immaturity and inability to cope with her conflicting emotions. Boumelha's second point regarding the failure of motherhood to determine the subsequent course of Tess's experience is also textually supported. After the death and burial of her child in *Phase The Second*, "Maiden No More," Tess's positioning as mother re-surfaces only when she tells Angel about her past, and then only to say, "The baby died"(TD 308). The absence of emotion with which these words are spoken clearly demonstrates the unimportance of motherhood to Tess in the present circumstance. Both she and Angel become more concerned with the life of Alec d'Urberville than the death of Sorrow. Her position as mother represents little more

than a consequence of one of her "queer unions"(TD 436) for which she as woman must pay.

The other mothers in this novel no more represent the stereotypical mother than does Tess herself. Mrs. Durbeyfield accepts the drudgery of her life "whilst her instinctive plan for relieving herself of her labours lay in postponing them"(TD 58). Notice how her instinctive plan for relieving herself of labour contradicts Mrs. Clare's ideas about a feminine instinct to "use...her hands and her head and her heart for the good of others"(TD 336). That Mrs. Clare's views are grounded in Holy Scripture suggests that hers is the proper view, but none the less, Hardy does present in Mrs. Durbeyfield a motherhood which contrasts and contradicts an instinctive maternity. This in itself, it seems to me, represents a major step forward. Not only does Mrs. Durbeyfield postpone her labours for her family, but she actively acquiesces in the probable seduction of her own daughter.

Well, as one of the genuine stock, she ought to make her way with 'en, if she plays her trump card aright. And if he don't marry her afore he will after. For that he's all afire wi' love for her as any eye can see.(TD 93)

Once again Hardy raises the question of faulty vision. Mrs. Durbeyfield says that any eye can see that Alec is afire with love for Tess, but in actuality it is lust which drives Alec, not love. Her primary concern, that the fulfillment of Alec's lust result in marriage, either afore or after intercourse occurs, lies in sharp contrast to a mother-figure like Mrs. Yeobright, whose primary concern is

Thomasin's good name. By objectifying Tess's beauty as her **trump card**, Mrs. Durbeyfield views Tess as a sex object. The use of the words **trump card**, so strongly associated with the manly pastime of gambling, suggests that Mrs. Durbeyfield is willing to gamble her daughter's virtue against possible monetary rewards. If Tess's own mother views her as an object to be gambled with or bartered away, it is hardly surprising when the men in the novel behave in a similar fashion. Through this passage, perhaps more so than through others in the text, Hardy effectively demonstrates how patriarchy perpetuates itself by soliciting the assent of almost everyone, including Tess's parents.

Even Mrs. d'Urberville, who badly spoils her child, fails to behave as the stereotypical mother. Her treatment of Alec leads Tess to assume "that no great affection flowed between the blind woman and her son"(TD 101). In a novel replete with issues of vision and faulty vision, how appropriate it is that Mrs. d'Urberville should be a blind woman. Her very blindness should suggest that she is blind to the faults in her son, but as the narrator states, she is not the first "mother compelled to love her offspring resentfully, and to be bitterly fond"(TD 102). The paradoxes here point to the internal contradiction of a mother constructed as a multiple subject. That Mrs. d'Urberville **loves Alec resentfully and bitterly** suggests that, while she recognizes and resents many of his faults, she loves on. In this respect she resembles Mrs. Clare whom the narrator describes in the following:

What woman, indeed, among the most faithful adherents of the truth, believes the promises and threats of the Word in the sense in which she believes in her own children, or would not throw her theology to the wind if weighed against their happiness?(TD 454)

The narrator's question here represents an inclusive gesture which presumes the reader's agreement. Clearly both women would give up much for their sons, but while Mrs. Clare would do so willingly, Mrs. d'Urberville is **compelled** to love **resentfully** and **bitterly**. In response to the narrator's question as to which woman would not sacrifice her own happiness for that of her child, the reader might well answer, "Mrs. Durbeyfield," who stands in sharp contrast to these other two mothers. By presenting varied and multiple representations of motherhood, Hardy demonstrates that maternal roles can be as varied and contradicting as the mothers themselves.

Tess, in her social position of Fallen Woman, stands in sharp contrast to the Fallen Women of Hardy's earlier novels. Nina Auerbach, in "The Rise of the Fallen Woman," comments that "Tess...seems vindicated by her narrator from having fallen at all....suggesting that according to Victorian sexual ethics, the true sin lies less in the act than in willing one's own fall."<sup>9</sup> Auerbach's assertion can be readily verified within the text itself. The narrator firmly asserts that "beauty or ugliness of character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay, not among things done, but among things willed"(TD 421). This stands in sharp contrast to *The Mayor*

of Casterbridge in which Lucetta's history would not "have been productive of further happiness"(MC 231). Of even more interest is the fact that Tess herself becomes Hardy's first female character allowed to question her positioning as "Fallen Woman." She demands, "Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently?"(TD 440). Well might she ask! By suggesting that her sins were sins of inadvertence, Tess is allowed by Hardy to resist her representation as a stereotypical Fallen Woman. In fact, as Auerbach suggests, the question could legitimately be asked whether or not Tess has actually fallen at all.

In her social position as Wife, Tess fails to fulfill the requirements of a stereotypical marriage. Neither she nor Angel represents a typical nineteenth-century married person.[See Chronology] Their failure to consummate their marriage until immediately prior to her death, their living apart for most of their marriage, and her in-laws' ignorance of her situation and whereabouts, all suggest that this is not a typical marriage. While Angel Clare can be held largely responsible for their unconventional marriage, Hardy insists that a measure of responsibility must be assigned to Tess herself. Tess's views on marriage differ considerably from those of the previous women I have looked at. She refuses to marry d'Urberville; "Hate him she did not quite: but he was dust and ashes to her, and even for her name's sake she

scarcely wished to marry him"(TD 130). How different this is from Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright who both feel that "[Thomasin] ought to be Wildeve's wife, if she means to appear before the world without a slur upon her name"(RN 151). Tess refuses to marry simply for her name's sake a man she considers dust and ashes. Interestingly, the narrator presents d'Urberville as dust and ashes under the feet of a deified Tess. Even when Alec proposes to her during her subjection at Flintcomb-Ashe "she did not for one moment picture what might have been the result if she had been free to accept the offer just made her of being the monied Alec's wife....'But no, no!' she said breathlessly; 'I could not have married him now! He is so unpleasant to me'(TD 398). Tess could not marry a man she finds unpleasant, regardless of his monied state. And yet, she finally succumbs to Alec's economic and social pressure because "a consciousness that in a physical sense this man alone was her husband seemed to weigh on her more and more"(TD 442). This consciousness originates not from within Tess herself, but from outside. Angel tells Tess that they cannot live as man and wife because Alec is her "husband in Nature, and not I"(TD 313). Similarly Alec declares, "If you are any man's wife you are mine!"(TD 412). Her intrinsic belief in her position as Angel's wife becomes suppressed under the weigh[t] of male consciousness. Once again Hardy effectively demonstrates the power of patriarchal values to elicit the assent of almost everyone, even the victim. Tess, with her pathetic and accurate



assertion, "Once victim, always victim - that's the law!"(TD 411), effectively articulates the unenviable position of women in the nineteenth century's patriarchal society.

Tess's social position of sister, most notably represented in her relationship with 'Liza-Lu, establishes an unbreakable bond between women. Helena Michie suggests that "Hardy's abrupt ending, which can easily be read as a parody of public requirements for closure and a gesture of contempt towards his critics, makes clear the connection between the requirements of literary closure and the teleological imperative of history. Both are embodied in the relation of - that is, the difference between - the two sisters whose endings are so similar and so different."<sup>10</sup> Tess urges the probable union between Angel and 'Liza-Lu as a means of undoing her own sexual fall. Hardy's final description of 'Liza-Lu as "a spiritual image of Tess"(TD 488), works not as a replacement or a substitution of Tess, as some critics have suggested, but rather as a recognition of the woman Tess might have been. 'Liza-Lu, as a spiritual image of Tess, embodies the same aesthetic, natural, and spiritual purity Tess enjoyed before her violation. By calling 'Liza-Lu a spiritual image of Tess, Hardy suggests that Tess's spirit, as opposed to her bodily or worldly existence, remains pure. When 'Liza-Lu appears at Flintcomb-Ash, her physical appearance "revealed her youth and inexperience"(TD 425). Such a description closely

resembles Hardy's representation of Tess before her fall as "a vessel of emotion untinged by experience"(TD 51). In both instances **inexperience** is emphasized. Tess's representation of 'Liza-Lu to Angel, "she is so good and simple and pure"(TD 485), echoes Hardy's identification of Tess as "a fieldwoman pure and simple"(TD 355). Hardy continues to view Tess as **pure and simple** even after her fall, an important fact many critics choose to ignore. Even Tess denies her own purity. In telling Angel that Liza-Lu "has all the best of me without the bad of me"(TD 485), Tess identifies her sister as her pre-fallen self. While some may find this principle of substitution offensive, the fact remains that Tess herself instigates the proposed exchange. Tess views her replacement by 'Liza-Lu in Angel's life as a vindication of herself. Tess, aware of her imminent death for the murder of Alec, sees the union between her sister and her husband as a means of cheating death. Her words to Angel, "if she were to become yours it would almost seem as if death had not divided us"(TD 485), reminiscent of the epigraph to *The Mill on the Floss*, signify Tess's willingness to share Angel with 'Liza-Lu "when [they] are spirits". This represents a victory beyond the grave for Tess. Largely powerless in the hands of fate throughout her life, Tess utilizes what little power remains to her to ensure that her sister, so much like her former self, will not meet the same fate. Tess's empowerment by Hardy enables her to change 'Liza-Lu's fate so that **the law** of "once

victim, always victim"(TD 411) no longer applies to either woman. Clearly this represents a major step forward in the empowerment of and equality in representation of women.

Of all the social positions Tess occupies none is more persistently represented than her position as woman of and in nature. Hardy represents Tess as "part and parcel of outdoor nature"

not merely an object set down therein as at ordinary times. A field-man is a personality afield; a field-woman is a position of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it.(TD 138)

Notice that the field-woman, by which Hardy means Tess, "a fieldwoman pure and simple"(TD 355), becomes a position of the field and not a position within it. Tess lost her own margin and becomes assimilated with the land. Tess's loss of margin represents a diffusion of her uniqueness in favor of a more generic status as a field-woman, an understandable preference given the events Tess has been subjected to.

That Tess herself is the instigator of this transformation is inescapable; she assimilated herself with the land.

Interestingly, Hardy suggests that such a transformation is possible only for women; "a field-man is a personality afield." The feminine ability to imbibe the essence, the intrinsic nature, of her surroundings, especially when contrasted to the masculine inability to do the same, empowers the female. Tess, becoming one with the inescapably female outdoor nature, assumes a modicum of power in a novel replete with issues of asymmetries of

power. Tess's assimilation with the land can be (re)read as an act of personal empowerment.

Hardy's association of nature with the feminine results in two conflicting representations of nature. On the one hand, nature represents that which is right, natural, and good. Consider the following narrative description of Tess:

And there was revived in [Tess] 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. (TD 388)

Notice that the female body has been **endowed** by nature, suggesting that Tess has been furnished with a special gift or quality. The fact that **nature** has endowed women with the fleshly tabernacle should ensure its rightness. That the female body becomes the **tabernacle**, the repository of the body of Christ, confers a kind of divinity upon the body itself. When Alec defiles Tess's body then, he defiles Christ's sanctuary. The association of **tabernacle** with sanctuary goes right back to the Old Testament. In Exodus 25-27, the portable sanctuary used by the Jews from the time of their post-Exodus wandering in the wilderness to the building of Solomon's Temple, is called the **tabernacle**. Tabernacle also suggests a temporary dwelling, such as a hut or a tent, so that clearly Tess's fleshly **tabernacle** is meant to be seen as something transitory and fleeting. Hardy makes a clear distinction between body and spirit. A sanctuary such as Tess's fleshly **tabernacle** should be a holy place, providing refuge, asylum, or immunity. Instead, Tess experiences a **wretched sentiment** that she is somehow

doing wrong merely by inhabiting, even temporarily, that place given to her by nature. Why this should be so can perhaps best be explained with reference to Hardy's second representation of nature. Hardy's association of nature with the feminine becomes apparent through phrases such as "Dame Nature"(TD 314), and "Nature, in her fantastic trickery"(TD 307). As my added emphasis demonstrates, the femaleness of nature is unequivocal. What is so interesting is that Hardy offsets his earlier representations of a proper, good and correct Nature with representations which incorporate negatively stereotypical feminine images. He now speaks of "cruel nature"(TD 204), "shameless nature"(TD 146), and the "vulpine slyness of Dame nature"(TD 314). The adjectives "cruel," "shameless," and "sly" immediately alert the feminist reader to Hardy's implicit misogyny. Because nature is so inescapably feminine, this negativity adheres to femininity itself. This inscribed negativity rebounds directly back upon the unsuspecting Tess and revives "in her the wretched sentiment which had often come to her before"(TD 388). She feels she is somehow doing wrong merely in inhabiting the body with which nature (a now negative female nature) has endowed her.

Angel Clare's understanding of Nature incorporates Hardy's first representation. From his earliest perception of the "fresh and virginal daughter of Nature"(TD 176), Angel associates Tess with the pure, correct, and fitting Nature of Hardy's initial representation. While Hardy as

narrator allows Tess to be the author of her own assimilation with the land, Angel forces the amalgamation. By viewing her as "a daughter of the soil"(TD 183), Angel insists upon her birth directly from the land itself. His continual perception of her as **child** and **daughter** of nature allows Angel to position Tess as a subordinate. This becomes extremely important to his ability to exercise power and control over her. Once again Angel sees only the image, and when confronted by the actuality, he proceeds to blame Tess: "Here was I thinking you a new-sprung child of nature; there were you, the belated seedling of an effete aristocracy!"(TD 302). Angel wants Tess to be untouched and unsullied. He wants her to be **new-sprung**, to be born fresh and innocent into his world as a baby is born into the world of its parents. Realizing that his paternalistic image of Tess as a new-sprung **child of nature** can never be fulfilled, Angel indicts her as a **belated seedling**. He recognizes that her appearance in his life comes too late to be of any use to him. Seeing in her a child of an **effete aristocracy**, Angel condemns her inability to produce; Tess becomes sterile in his mind. Clearly this is not what Angel had in mind when he thought that by marrying Tess he would "secure rustic innocence"(TD 308) in the future mother of his children. Like his mother before him, Angel believes that "there are few things purer in nature than an unsullied country maid"(TD 337). Once the country maid becomes **sullied**, she becomes "Maiden No More;" she changes from a

child of nature into a belated seedling of an effete aristocracy. Hardy is not content to let the issue rest so easily, however. As narrator he suggests that Angel's changed perception of Tess is "approximately true, though not wholly so"(TD 304-05), and that Angel "argued erroneously when he said to himself that her heart was not indexed in the honest freshness of her face"(TD 305). With his next assertion that "Tess had no advocate to set him right"(TD 305), Hardy belies his own words and proves himself Tess's strongest advocate.

The transformation Angel observes occurs solely in his mind and results from his idealized definitions of the natural and the social. Immediately prior to telling Tess, "However, I am no man to reproach you," Angel does reproach: "I thought...that by giving up all ambition to win a wife with social standing, with fortune, with knowledge of the world, I should secure rustic innocence as surely as I should secure pink cheeks"(TD 308). Angel regrets his sacrifice in giving up the social in favor of the rustic. His desire to secure both rustic innocence and pink cheeks demonstrates his desire to capture and own Tess's body, mind, and soul. He has already secured her mind; "his influence over her had been so marked that she caught his manner and habits, his speech and phrases, his likings and his aversions"(TD 270). He has likewise secured her soul; "he was so godlike in her eyes"(TD 246). The only part of Tess he cannot secure exclusively is her body, because another man has already used it. Angel's

resulting loss of exclusive property rights over Tess can thus be seen as his real concern. In Angel's mind her acquisition of knowledge of the world precludes rustic innocence. Once again Angel sees only the "old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow"(TD 209) in Tess's pink cheeks. His reproach to Tess results from her failure to conform to his idealized vision of nature. Once again "The Woman Pays" the price of masculine ideology.

Hardy's representation of the dichotomy between the natural and the social results in a condemnation of attitudes such as Clare's. He presents the birth of Tess's child, "that bastard gift of shameless Nature who respects not the social law"(TD 146), as an "offence against society"(TD 142). That Hardy means to be ironic is demonstrated by his representation of Tess's "soul's desire...to continue that offence by preserving the life of the child"(TD 142). By suggesting that Tess's desire to save her child is her soul's desire, Hardy makes a distinction between the moral, which he associates with the natural, and the social. After the confirmation of Sorrow, Tess reasons "that if Providence would not ratify such an act of approximation she, for one, did not value the kind of heaven lost by the irregularity"(TD 146). That for one here suggests that Tess is not alone in feeling the way she does. Hardy, as narrator, demonstrates that he feels likewise when he asserts, "But now that her moral sorrows were passing away a fresh one arose on the natural side of her which knew



no social law"(TD 142). Hardy emphasizes the dichotomy between the **natural side** and **social law**. This represents a moral victory for Tess who, unjustly subjected to society's double standard, can only offer her child an act of **approximation** of baptism. As a secular unmarried mother, the **irregularities** of her actions are inescapable, and must be **ratified**, with or without the acquiescence of Providence. Hardy's condemnation of **social law** exonerates Tess and represents a significant shift in his perception of **Fallen Women**.

Hardy's representation of the relationship between Tess and Clare likewise results in a condemnation of social laws. He suggests that the infatuation of a dairy-maid with a gentleman represents a "lack of everything to justify its existence in the eye of civilization (while lacking nothing in the eye of Nature)"(TD 205). Notice that **civilization**, that is to say society, demands **justification**, while Nature demands **nothing**. Hardy again raises the issue of vision and faulty vision. By speaking about the **eyes** of civilization and Nature, Hardy suggests that the gazer actually constructs the person or thing viewed. Hardy effectively demonstrates how Tess absorbs society's laws. He suggests that her "gloom of the night [is] based on nothing more tangible than a sense of condemnation under an arbitrary law of society which had no foundation in Nature"(TD 353). His representation of society's **arbitrary law** suggests a law which is both capricious and unreasonable. Tess's **sense of**

condemnation results from an [in]tangible social law which is both imaginary and visionary. That society's law has no foundation in Nature strongly suggests that it is at variance with what is normal or to be expected; it is unnatural. Clearly Hardy means to condemn arbitrary societal laws which result in female self-condemnation. By exonerating Tess, Hardy reverses his former habit of blaming the victim and places the blame squarely on the shoulders of society. Tess, as a woman of and in nature, emerges with "the soul of a woman whom the turbulent experiences...had quite failed to demoralize"(TD 150). The oppression of women so popular in an unjust society fails to demoralize Tess in both senses of the word: her spirit, courage, and discipline remain intact, and her morals retain their innocence and purity.

Mary Childers, in her insightful essay about Thomas Hardy, suggests: "Many feminist insights about the oppression of women are implicit in Hardy's fiction, but such insights are not the primary focus of his fiction, so he cannot fulfill feminist expectations consistently."<sup>11</sup> As I have already demonstrated, Hardy's continuing use of over-generalized statements and the sexualization of the female body validate Childers' assertion. While it is undoubtedly true that some of his statements and representations cause just offence among feminists, it is also true that, as Childers says, "the fact remains that he was indeed appalled at the economic and social injustices

suffered by women historically....In some instances Hardy claims that women suffer more from prevailing sexual arrangements than men." Nowhere in the novels of Thomas Hardy is this more apparent than in his representations of the asymmetries of power in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Through the relationships between Tess and Alec and Tess and Angel, Hardy demonstrates the relation between economic and emotional dependence and the sexual expectations deriving from that support.

Asymmetries of power impact fundamentally on Tess's relationship with Alec d'Urberville. While Alec's age alone ensures his ability to exercise power over Tess, his socio-economic position carries added weight. Alec's financial control over Tess's family implicates him in a coercive role. Immediately prior to the rape he informs Tess of all he has done for her family: "By the bye Tess, your father has a new cob today....And the children have some toys"(TD 117). Tess realizes and instinctively dislikes the kind of power this allows Alec: "'O how very good of you that is!' she exclaimed with a painful sense of the awkwardness of having to thank him just then"(TD 117). Tess painfully recognizes that Alec's apparent generosity places her in an awkward position. That she should have to thank him just then, when she needs all her resources to fend off his unwanted advances, is indeed awkward. Alec uses his economic power again later in the novel to win Tess away from the absent Angel. Again Alec's ability to meet

the material needs of her family forces Tess into an untenable position.

The power inherent in Alec's position as Tess's employer also bears directly upon this relationship. Tess, feeling a sense of responsibility for the loss of Prince, even though the initial cause of the mishap was her father's drunkenness, determines to repay her father for the loss. She agrees to accept d'Urberville's job offer: "I killed the old horse, and I suppose I ought to do something to get ye a new one. But - but - I don't quite like Mr. d'Urberville being there!"(TD 87). Tess, unable fully to express her concern, knows only that she does not "quite like Mr. d'Urberville being there." Tess, unable to articulate her dislike at the thought of working for Alec, instinctively recognizes the mastery it will allow him. Hardy describes d'Urberville's kiss as "the kiss of mastery"(TD 96), and Tess herself, upon leaving Trantridge, tells Alec, "See how you've mastered me!"(TD 126). Clearly Alec's role as Tess's employer, her master, makes it difficult and finally impossible for her to reject him in a meaningful way. Hardy's knowledgeable and respectful treatment of Tess's vulnerability represents a significant shift in his representation of the economic dependency of women in nineteenth-century England. Tess stands in sharp contrast to Lucetta Templeman who "was terribly careless of appearances"(MC 61), and thus responsible for her own fall.

Angel Clare's relationship with Tess also represents a

power relationship in which he exerts economic, social, intellectual and spiritual power over her. Angel, only the youngest son of a poor parson, still enjoys a socio-economic status superior to Tess's. His indifference to social position is more apparent than real:

Society is hopelessly snobbish, and this fact of your extraction may make an appreciable difference to its acceptance of you as my wife, after I have made you the well-read woman I mean to make you. (TD 253-54)

The word **extraction**, clearly meant here as descent or lineage, also suggests something drawn out by force, an apt description of Angel's plan to make Tess a well-read woman. His criticism of **snobbish** society could be equally well applied to Angel himself. The insulting suggestion that once he has made Tess a well-read woman her acceptance as his wife will be assured represents the height of male arrogance. He perpetuates the patriarchal male myth that his socio-economic and intellectual power enable him to create, to **make**, an acceptable wife.

Tess willingly cedes intellectual power to Angel because, "being, though untrained, instinctively refined, her nature cried for his tutelary guidance" (TD 246). Notice that the narrator calls Tess **instinctively refined**, thereby demonstrating that Tess is well-bred by instinct. He also suggests, by the use of **refined**, that she is free of coarseness or vulgarity, an interesting suggestion given Tess's status as a fallen woman. The word **refined** itself means free of impurities, thereby reinforcing Tess's representation as "A Pure Woman." **Refined** also suggests an

improved form of something and the fact that Tess is instinctively refined suggests that she actually requires little improvement. Notice that it is Tess's nature which cries out for tutelary guidance. Clearly the narrator wishes to suggest that Tess's femaleness, "her inhabiting the fleshly tabernacle with which nature had endowed her"(TD 388), causes her to cry out for Angel's tutelary guidance. Hardy demonstrates the sexual polemic whereby Tess remains unaware of her value as an instinctively refined woman, and sees only her own unworthiness. Once again Hardy represents the power of patriarchal values to elicit the assent of almost everyone. Tess's physical and economic dependence force her to internalize inadequacy as feelings of worthlessness and guilt, a proven technique in which she is aided by Angel. He reinforces her sense of unworthiness by continually calling her his child and his property: "You are a child to me, Tess"(TD 255), and "I should carry you off then as my property"(TD 268). Not surprisingly then, Tess absorbs Angel's paternal ideology and "there was revived in her the wretched sentiment. . . that she was somehow doing wrong"(TD 388). Hardy thus effectively demonstrates that masculine power relies heavily upon interpellation.

In his *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, Michel Foucault argues that sexuality is constructed in culture according to the aims of that society's dominant class.<sup>12</sup> He suggests that a set of

techniques have been developed and deployed by the dominant class since the end of the eighteenth century. Those techniques include the sexualization of children and the female body, the control of procreation, and the psychiatrization of deviant sexual behavior as perversion. Discourses on these techniques were disseminated through institutions of the state. Foucault calls these discourses "technologies of sex," and he suggests that these technologies made sex a secular concern of the state.

Teresa De Lauretis, in her *Technologies of Gender* extends Foucault's analysis and suggests that he fails to take into account "the differential solicitation of male and female subjects."<sup>13</sup> She concludes that Foucault fails to recognize the conflicting investments of men and women in practices of sexuality and the oppression inherent in male-dominated power. What I wish to suggest is that in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* Hardy demonstrates an awareness of the differential solicitation of male and female subjects. In this novel Hardy examines socialization as a determiner of behavior and demonstrates how important it was in determining the development of women's character and personality. Immediately after her rape in *The Chase* the narrator suggests: "An immeasurable social chasm was to divide our heroine's personality thereafter from that previous self of hers who stepped from her mother's door to try her fortune"(TD 119). Notice that the social chasm divides only Tess's personality; Alec's is not mentioned at

all. Clearly the narrator recognizes the differential solicitation of the male and female in issues of sexuality. That the social chasm results from socialization becomes obvious when the narrator questions, "If she could have been just created, to discover herself as a spouseless mother, with no experience of life except as the parent of a nameless child, would the position have caused her to despair? No, she would have taken it calmly, and found pleasures therein"(TD 141). Hardy recognizes that Tess's sense of **despair** and guilt result entirely from society's condemnation. His suggestion that "the misery had been generated by her conventional aspect, and not by her innate sensations"(TD 141) again demonstrates the dichotomy between the moral and the social. Tess's **misery** results from her **conventional** aspect, from the conventions of socialization. Her **innate sensations**, her inner moral values, tell her that "she had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly"(TD 135). The narrator's awareness that Tess has **been made to break a social law** exonerates Tess.

Nowhere in the novel is Hardy's awareness of the importance of socialization more evident than when he suggests: "Many besides Angel have learnt that the magnitude of lives is not as to their external displacements, but as to their subjective experience"(TD 214). In a novel replete with issues of physical displacement, with "annual migrations from farm to farm...from Egypt...to the Land of



Promise"(TD 435), Hardy suggests that external displacement is less important than subjective experience, or subjective placement. Hardy's representation of the physical displacement parallels the (dis)placement of women resulting from socialization. Through his multiple and contradictory representations of women Hardy demonstrates that the margins of femininity themselves are in motion. The socialization Tess is subjected to, her perceived fall, and her subsequent death represent vertical rather than horizontal movement. Hardy's representations of Tess show a women escaping the prescribed margins of patriarchal definitions. Her "almost glad" acceptance of death, "I am ready"(TD 487), suggests that by the novel's end she is author, one might even say master, of her own fate.

In Hardy's earlier novels it was difficult to distinguish the difference of women from 'Woman'. Both *The Return of the Native* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* emphasized the difference of women from men and constrained feminist thought within the framework of a virtually universal sex opposition. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* Hardy's changing conception of the female subject, and his awareness of the relations of subjectivity to society begin to emerge. His early women, represented as unitary objects bound to patriarchal power relations, give way to Tess, a woman who emerges as a complicated desiring subject in her own right.

## Conclusion

To read critically, in whatever context, necessarily and inescapably requires a framework. The particular feminist framework used in this thesis addresses subjectivity, power, and discourse in an attempt to demonstrate the way Hardy's texts, like all texts, construct meaning and subject positions for the reader. A close textual analysis of an early, a middle and a late Hardy novel allows us to discover how power is exercised through discourse, including fictive discourse. Once this discovery is made it becomes possible to understand how oppression works, and to develop strategies which make resistance to that power possible.

Of central importance to feminism is the cultural construction of subjectivity. Because subjectivity is linguistically and discursively constructed, literary texts have a fundamental function. Literature has an important influence on the way people perceive themselves and their subject positions. Viewing texts as constructions makes it possible, indeed necessary, to deconstruct the texts with an aim to discovering contradictions. The inherent textual contradictions demonstrate that texts cannot be restricted to a single, authoritative reading. Texts thus become plural and open to re-reading. Texts which appear to be coherent and internally consistent can be seen to be full of contradictions which reveal the social construction of

gender in discourse. Viewing texts as constructions rather than reflections of meaning demonstrates the social construction of gender in discourse.

In Hardy's early novel, *The Return of the Native*, the necessarily hierarchal opposition of man/woman reflects a unitary intentional subjectivity. One side of the opposition, man, becomes the key concept in negatively defining the other, woman. By deconstructing the text it becomes possible to discover how the discourse achieves its effects and to reverse this opposition. This can best be done with reference to issues of social context, particular interests and power. The wider historically specific discursive context and the power relations which structure the literary field should be taken into account. In Hardy's middle novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a gradual shift in the empowerment of the female begins to emerge. The patriarchal silencing of women begins to give way to female articulation in writing. In his late novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy's female protagonist speaks out for herself and occupies resistant subject positions. Tess emerges not as a unity, but as a multiple, decentered and internally contradictory subject. Tess's multiple subjectivity represents deliberate change on Hardy's part, and emphasizes the dialectical relationship between women and the language in which their subjectivity is constructed. Because subjectivity is always in process, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* can have an important influence on the way women perceive themselves and the world around them.

While many feminists maintain an active hostility to theory, viewing it as a way of denying the centrality of women's experience, it can be a useful tool in demonstrating how particular social structures and processes create the experiences which are at once both lived and discursive. Theory can make available new modes of subjectivity, offering women the possibility of political change. The theories which have helped inform this thesis include Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of structural linguistics; Marxism, especially Louis Althusser's theory of ideology; and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theory. They also include Werner Sollor's theory of ethnicity; Jacques Derrida's theories of *différance* and deconstruction; and Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and power. The theories of contemporary feminists also impact greatly on this thesis. Included in these are Teresa De Lauretis's theory of differential solicitation; the theory of vested interest as expressed by Mary Childers; and the poststructuralist theory of Chris Weedon. The absence of French feminists such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous, and the American radical feminists, is deliberate. Theories which posit that female subjectivity is derived from biological sexual differences as they affect sexual experience and the unconscious simply reinscribe these differences in a different, but equally dangerous, milieu, and can add little to the articulation of the difference of women from 'Woman'.

Literature, as a primary site of female representation and self-representation, can best be examined with reference to the presuppositions and the implicit hierarchies of value at work within it. The female appropriation of the male-centered frames of reference makes language the site of struggle over meaning. Only a thorough examination at the level of textual analysis then, enables us to understand, and thus contest, fictive representations of gender which propose norms of femininity and masculinity and relations between the sexes. Because a close analysis of an early, a middle and a late Hardy novel reveals a gradual but obvious shift in the conception of the female subject, Hardy's novels are an excellent vehicle whereby this process can be identified and articulated. The progressions of his representations of women, from women as unitary subjects to women as multiple, decentered and internally contradicting subjects, effectively demonstrates the possibility for change that feminists have long desired.

## NOTES

### Chapter One: The Return of the Native

<sup>1</sup>Mary Childers, "Thomas Hardy, The Man Who 'Liked' Women," Criticism 23.4 (1981): 326.

<sup>2</sup>Teresa de Lauretis, Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 2.

<sup>3</sup>Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: Volume I An Introduction, Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978) 104.

<sup>4</sup>Werner Sollors, ed. The Invention of Ethnicity (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) xi.

<sup>5</sup>Childers, 323.

<sup>6</sup>Nina Auerbach, Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1982) 4.

<sup>7</sup>William Ames Coates, "Thomasin and the Reddleman," University of Ceylon Review 19 (1961): 63.

<sup>8</sup>Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection Trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977).

<sup>9</sup>Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays Trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left, 1971) 161.

<sup>10</sup>Althusser, 162-63.

### Chapter Two: The Mayor of Casterbridge

<sup>1</sup>Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice & Poststructuralist Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1987) 128.

<sup>2</sup>Foucault, 92-93

<sup>3</sup>Foucault, 61-62.

<sup>4</sup>Elaine Showalter, "The Unmanning of the Mayor of Casterbridge," Critical Approaches To The Fiction of Thomas Hardy Ed. Dale Kramer (London: Macmillan, 1979) 112.

### Chapter Three: Tess of the D'Urbervilles

<sup>1</sup>Kaja Silverman, "History, Figuration and Female Subjectivity in Tess of the D'Urbervilles," Novel 18.1 (1984): 7.

<sup>2</sup>Maggie Humm, "Gender and Narrative in Thomas Hardy," THY 11 (1984): 47.

<sup>3</sup>Kathleen Blake, "Pure Tess: Hardy on Knowing a Woman," SEL 22.4 (1982): 701.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Hardy, "Author's Preface to the Fifth and Later Editions," Tess of the D'Urbervilles Ed. David Skilton (London: Penguin, 1978) 37-38.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Not surprisingly, Hardy accepts the conventional patriarchal interpretation of the Genesis account, but there is a different feminist interpretation of this myth. See Phyllis Tribble, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality, 1978, Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

<sup>7</sup>Elizabeth Campbell, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Misfortune is a Woman," VN 76 (1989): 4.

<sup>8</sup>Penny Boumelha, Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form (Sussex: Harvester, 1982) 119.

<sup>9</sup>Nina Auerbach, "The Rise of the Fallen Woman," NCF 35 (1980): 40.

<sup>10</sup>Helena Michie, "'There is No Friend like a Sister': Sisterhood as Sexual Difference," ELH 56.2 (1989): 420.

<sup>11</sup>Childers, 320.

<sup>12</sup>Foucault, 115-131.

<sup>13</sup>De Lauretis, 3.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

Hardy, Thomas. Letters. Ed. Carl J. Weber. Waterville, Me.: Colby College P., 1954.

---. Life and Art: Essays, Notes, and Letters Collected for the First Time. Intro. Ernest Brennecke, Jr. New York: Haskell House, 1966.

---. Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Ed. David Skilton. London: Penguin, 1978.

---. The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy. Vols. 1-7. Ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate. Oxford; New York: Clarendon, 1978-.

---. The Collected Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy. Ed. Samuel Hynes. New York: Oxford UP, 1982.

---. The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy. Ed. Michael Millgate. London: Macmillan, 1984.

---. The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy. Vols. 1 & 2. Ed. Lennart A. Bjork. London: Macmillan, 1985.

---. The Mayor of Casterbridge. Ed. Martin Seymour-Smith. London: Penguin, 1978.

---. The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy. Ed. Richard H. Taylor. New York: Columbia UP, 1979.

---. The Return of the Native. Ed. George Woodcock. London: Penguin, 1978.

---. Thomas Hardy: an Autobiography in Verse. Ed. Elaine Wilson and Howard Shaw. London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1984.

---. Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings. Ed. Harold Orel.  
New York: St. Martin's, 1990.

---. [Works]. Vols. 1-17. London: Harper, 1905.

Purdy, Richard Little. Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study. London: Oxford UP, 1954.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### I Feminist and Related Theory

Althusser, Louis. Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays.  
London: New Left, 1971.

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

Barker, Francis. The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection. London: Methuen, 1984.

Cixous, Hélène. "Coming to Writing" and Other Essays.  
Intro. Susan Rubin Suleiman. Ed. Deborah Jenson.  
Trans. Sarah Cornell [et al]. Cambridge: Harvard UP,  
1991.

De Lauretis, Teresa. Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.

---. Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

Derrida, Jacques. Of Grammatology. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1976.

---. Speech and Phenomena. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973.

- Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality: Volume One An Introduction. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 1978.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn G. and Margaret Higonnet, Eds. The Representation of Women in Fiction. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1983.
- Hill, Nancy Klenck. "Women as Savior." DQ 18.4 (1984): 94-107.
- Irigaray, Luce. Speculum of the Other Woman. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1985.
- . This Sex Which is Not One. Trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke. Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1985.
- Kristeva, Julia. Revolution in Poetic Language. New York: Columbia UP, 1984.
- . The Kristeva Reader. Ed. Toril Moi. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
- Laçan, Jacques. Ecrits: A Selection. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1977.
- Lyotard, Jean Francois. "One of the Things at Stake in Woman's Struggles." Trans. D.J. Clark, W.Woodhull, and J. Mowill. Sub-stance. 20 (1978): 9-16.
- Newton, Judith and Deborah Rosenfelt, Eds. Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. A Course in General Linguistics. Eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye in collaboration with Albert Reidlinger. Trans. Ray Harris. London: Duckworth, 1983.

Sollors, Werner, Ed. The Invention of Ethnicity. Oxford:  
Oxford UP, 1989.

Still, Judith. "Reacting to 'Lyotard'." Paragraph 12.3  
(1989): 239-48.

Vicinus, Martha, Ed. A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of  
Victorian Women. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1977.

---. Suffer and be Still: Women in the Victorian Age.  
Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1972.

Weedon Chris. Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist  
Theory. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Williams, Merryn. Women in the English Novel 1800-1900.  
New York: St. Martin's, 1984.

## II General Hardy Studies

Beckingham, Cushla R. "The Importance of Family in Hardy's  
Fictional World." THY 5.2 (1989): 62-8.

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

Childers, Mary. "Thomas Hardy, the Man Who 'Liked' Women."  
Criticism 23.4 (1981): 317-34.

Garson, Marjorie. Hardy's Fables of Integrity: Women, Body,  
Text. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991.

Gregor, Ian. The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major  
Fiction. Totowa, N.J.: Rowan and Littlefield, 1974.

Humm, Maggie. "Gender and Narrative in Thomas Hardy." THY  
11 (1984): 41-8.

Huss, Roy. "Social Change and Moral Decay in the Novels of

Thomas Hardy." DR (1967): 28-44.

McGhee, Richard D. "'Swinburne Planteth, Hardy Watereth':  
Victorian Views of Pain and Pleasure in Human  
Sexuality." TSL 27 (1984): 83-107.

Miller, J. Hillis. Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire.  
Cambridge: Belknap, 1970.

Morgan, Rosemarie. Women and Sexuality in the Novels of  
Thomas Hardy. London: Routledge, 1988.

Poole, Adrian. "'Men's Words' and Hardy's Women." EiC 31.4  
(1981): 328-45.

Starzyk, Lawrence. "The Coming Universal Wish Not to Live  
in Hardy's Modern Novels." NCF 26 (1972): 419-35.

Stout, Janis P. "The Fallen Women and the Conflicted  
Author: Hawthorne and Hardy." ATQ 1.3 (1987): 233-46.

### III The Return of the Native

Benvenuto, Richard. "The Return of the Native as Tragedy in  
Six Books." NCF 26 (1971): 83-93.

Coates, William Ames. "Thomasin and the Reddleman." U of  
Ceylon Review 19 (1961): 61-67.

Eggenschwiler, David. "Eustacia Vye, Queen of Night and  
Courtly Pretender." NCF 25 (1973): 444-54.

Evans, Robert. "The Other Eustacia." Novel 1 (1968):  
251-59.

Giordano, Frank R. Jr. "Eustacia Vye's Suicide." TSL 22  
(1980): 504-21.

Hogan, John. "A Note on the Significance of Diggory Venn."

NCF 16 (1961): 147-55.

Jordan, Mary Ellen. "Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native*: Clym Yoebright and Melancholia." AI 39.2 (1982): 101-18.

Wheeler, Otis B. "Four Versions of *The Return of the Native*." NCF 14 (1959): 27-44.

Wyatt, Bryant N. "Poetic Justice in *The Return of the Native*." MTJ 21.4 (1983): 56-7.

#### IV *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

Blair, Judith. "The Mayor of Casterbridge: 'Some Grand Feat of Strategy'." SAB 42.3 (1977): 11-22.

Dike, D.A. "A Modern Oedipus, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*." EiC 2 (1952): 169-80.

Epstein, Leonora. "Sale and Sacrament: The Wife Auction in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*." ELN 24.4 (1987): 50-6.

Karl, Frederik R. "The Mayor of Casterbridge: A New Fiction Defined." MFS 21 (1960): 405-23.

Kiely, Robert. "Vision and Viewpoint in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*." NCF 23 (1968): 189-200.

Maxwell, J.C. "The 'Sociological' Approach to *The Mayor of Casterbridge*." In Imagined Worlds. Ed. Maynard Mack and Ian Gregor. London: Methuen, 1968.

Moore, Kevin Z. "Death Against Life: Hardy's Mortified and Mortifying 'Man of Character' in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*." BSFU 24.3 (1983): 13-25.

Schweik, Robert C. "Character as Fate in Hardy's *The Mayor*

of Casterbridge." NCF 21 (1966): 249-62.

Showalter, Elaine. "The Unmanning of the Mayor of Casterbridge." In Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy. Ed. Dale Kramer. London: Macmillan, 1979. 99-115.

## V Tess of the D'Urbervilles

Blake, Kathleen. "Pure Tess: Hardy on Knowing a Woman." SEL 22.4 (1982): 689-705.

Boll, T.E.M. "Tess as an Animal in Nature." ELT 9 (1966): 210-11.

Campbell, Elizabeth. "Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Misfortune is a Woman." VN 76 (1989): 1-5.

Claridge, Laure. "Tess: A Less Than Pure Woman Ambivalently Presented." TSL 28 (1986): 324-38.

Hall, William F. "Hawthorne, Shakespeare, and Tess: Hardy's Use of Allusion." ES 52 (1971): 533-42.

Hazen, James. "The Tragedy of Tess Durbeyfield." TSL 11 (1969): 779-94.

Jacobus, Mary. "Tess's purity." EiC 26 (1976): 318-38.

Marken, Ronald. "'Sick for Home': The Theme of Tess of the d'Urbervilles." ESC 4 (1978): 317-29.

Michie, Helena. "'There is No Friend Like a Sister': Sisterhood as Sexual Difference." ELH 56.2 (1989): 401-21.

Morgan, Rosemarie. "Passive Victim? Tess of the d'Urbervilles." THJ 5 (1989): 31-54.

- Silverman, Kaja. "History, Figuration and Female Subjectivity in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." Novel 18.1 (1984): 5-28.
- Waldoff, Leon. "Psychological Determinism in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." In Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas Hardy. Ed. Dale Kramer. London: Macmillan, 1979. 135-54.
- Wickens, G. Glen. "Victorian Theories of Language and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." Mosaic 19 (1986): 99-115.
- . "'Sermons in Stones': The Return to Nature in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." ESC 14 (1988): 184-203.