

**THOMAS HARDY'S WOMEN:  
THE WILL IN CONFLICT WITH THE HEART**

**BY**

**BETSY MCGREGOR LITTLETON**

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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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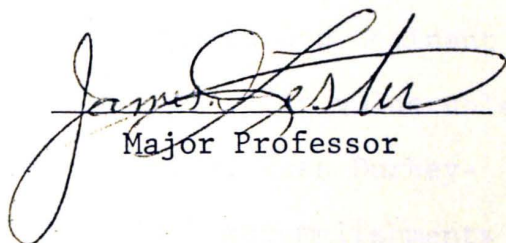
by  
Betsy McGregor Littleton

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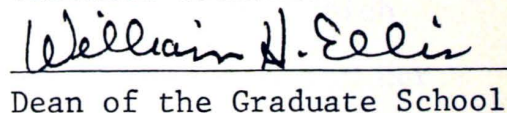


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Betsy McGregor Littleton entitled "Thomas Hardy's Women: The Will in Conflict with the Heart." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

  
Major Professor

Accepted for the  
Graduate Council:

  
Dean of the Graduate School

## THOMAS HARDY'S WOMEN:

### THE WILL IN CONFLICT WITH THE HEART

#### I

Thomas Hardy achieves success in his characterization of women who triumph through their energetic and dominant natures but who defeat themselves through their vulnerable and assailable hearts. Bathsheba Everdene, Tess Durbeyfield, and Sue Bridehead represent unique accomplishments in modern tragedy. Perhaps in his purposeful studies of real women, Hardy added to his knowledge of the female and her frustration with love. Pierre d'Exideuil writes of Hardy as a genius in characterization of the feminine heart.<sup>1</sup> d'Exideuil also expresses that "Woman's spontaneity is, in fact, the expression and the condition of that will to live which determines her destiny."<sup>2</sup> The woman's will is often the source of her strength which frequently overpowers her male counterpart and often her own better judgment, leading one critic, Desmond Hawkins, to note that "the portrayal of women is often praised as one of his (Hardy's) particular achievements."<sup>3</sup> Moreover,

<sup>1</sup>Pierre d'Exideuil, The Human Pair in the Work of Thomas Hardy (New York: Kennikat Press, 1930), p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>d'Exideuil, p. 106.

<sup>3</sup>Desmond Hawkins, Hardy: Novelist and Poet (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, Inc.), p. 137.



Hawkins considers Hardy's women as reconciliations of the Real and the Ideal with physical woman enshrouded within a complex mind and spirit.<sup>4</sup> Thus the will and emotionalism are struggling for compromise within Hardy's women. Dominance of either of these characteristics results in inner conflict.

More often than not, the feminine will is an overpowering influence on a Hardy novel. Arthur McDowell says about the dominance of Hardy's women: "It is more decisive even than the strength or endurance of his countrymen. . . ."<sup>5</sup> Another critic, Albert Guerard, believes that women in Hardy's novels are the active partners in plot and romantic development; they come to life while the men are passive dreamers.<sup>6</sup> In particular, the female protagonists suffer internal conflicts. They embody the coy, romantic, whimsical characteristics of the Jungian anima while at the same time exhibiting the defiance and independence of the archetypal animus. The aggressive nature of feminine animus stirs the desire for knowledge and autonomy, yet the women are ensnared by their own romantic emotionalism. Jung's approach to female aggressive behavior is manifested in Hardy's women:

<sup>4</sup>Hawkins, p. 137.

<sup>5</sup>Arthur McDowell, Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1931), p. 119.

<sup>6</sup>Albert J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy (New York: New Direction Books, 1949), p. 131.

The animus in woman is the counterpart of the anima in man. She seems derived from three roots; the collective image of man which a woman inherits; her own experiences of masculinity coming through the contacts she makes with men in her life; and the latent masculine principle in herself.<sup>7</sup>

The masculine animus projects itself in the bold Bathsheba searching for self-reliance, in Tess, the naive and compassionate peasant girl who adamantly refuses Alec's redemptive efforts, and in Sue Bridehead, who vacillates between traditional domestic and religious conventions and her own modern philosophies.

## II

Through Bathsheba Everdene in Far from the Madding Crowd Hardy frequently mingles the superficial naivete with the inner ferocity of will. His rural, pastoral protagonist rivals any sophisticate underneath her innocent facade. Bathsheba is Hardy's ". . . subtle analysis of the nature of human reason and emotions."<sup>8</sup> Her early encounters with Gabriel Oak display her inner impetuous personality, one whose spirit is dynamically altered in the episodes to follow. Bathsheba, states J. Hillis Miller, has an unusual relationship with herself. She is a "spirit-

<sup>7</sup>Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 55.

<sup>8</sup>F. R. Southernington, Hardy's Vision of Man (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1971), p. 76.



ual rather than a physical mystery." When she blushes at her own reflection she, as well as Gabriel, is enamoured. She becomes the "lover and beloved, seer and seen."<sup>9</sup> As a daring young woman, she rides defiantly on the pony with no side saddle or disciplined gait. She exhibits the fertile, natural countenance of the dairymaid. The freshness of youth abounds, but her precarious energy and strong will initiate the tragedies which too soon fall upon her.

Bathsheba repeatedly reveals a vain and whimsical nature in the early chapters, and Guerard examines the change in Bathsheba from "vain and fickle" in the early chapters, to "resourceful and enduring."<sup>10</sup> It is through her early suffering that Bathsheba evolves into her potential greatness. Bathsheba in many ways demonstrates Hardy's struggles in his early years as a novelist in breaking from stereotypes and conventional female characters. Katherine Rogers' studies demonstrate that Hardy does attempt to free women from their traditional roles.<sup>11</sup> His sympathy with Bathsheba is evident in her struggling rebellion. She refuses to station herself in the woman's role; she also refuses to become the possession

<sup>9</sup>J. Hillis Miller, Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 123-124.

<sup>10</sup>Guerard, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup>Katherine Rogers, "The Women in Hardy," Centennial Review, 19 (Fall, 1975), p. 249.

of any man. Yet, her relationships with three men serve as a vehicle for her character development. At mid-novel Gabriel Oak's relationship with Bathsheba paradoxically resumes with the fury and redemption of fire as he meets again his cold-hearted Bathsheba. Yet, practicality re-establishes him in his place as bailiff. Bathsheba's fickle and devious nature is apparent in her exploitation of Boldwood. The valentine with its message "marry me" enamours Boldwood towards the youthful woman. As Hardy omnisciently states, "Of love as a spectacle Bathsheba had a fair knowledge; but of love subjectively she knew nothing" (p. 93).<sup>12</sup> The note itself mystifies the middle-aged farmer. Bathsheba's endeavors in defiance caused much comment from the townsfolk: " . . . a headstrong maid, that's what she is--and won't listen to no advice at all. Pride and vanity have ruined many a cobbler's dog" (p. 104).

Bathsheba's flirtation is ended when Troy dramatically enters her life. Troy proves to be the ultimate catalyst for inner conflict within Bathsheba. His spur catches her dress during a "Jungian night journey from the familiar world of everyday experience to a grotesque, irrational, Kafkaesque expression of subconscious motives and warning."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd (New York: Signet Books, 1960), p. 93. Subsequent documentation of quotations from the novel will be intext notes within parentheses

<sup>13</sup>Jean Brooks, The Poetic Structure (New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 169.



The spur hitching itself in Bathsheba's dress is symbolic. Even Troy's attire is red in contrast to Gabriel's earth colors. Troy is described as a Mephistophelian figure; his diabolical nature is symbolized by the darkness from which he comes. Fanny is his first victim. She is a faceless character: a "form," "shape," or "blurred spot." Yet, Fanny serves as a foil for Bathsheba. Her death evokes pity and envy from Bathsheba. She is another hurdle for Bathsheba in her affair with Troy. Bathsheba is described as Hardy's most spirited heroine; yet, it is Troy not Oak who seeks to bridle her strongwill and self-reliance.

Hardy stated that "character is fate." If so, Bathsheba is her own tragedy. Although circumstances open many doors for Bathsheba, she is the active character who makes the final choice. Hardy is more generous with Bathsheba in this early novel than with the later protagonists. Bathsheba lives in an inconsistent pattern before her final self-realization. When scandalous gossip circulates concerning Troy, she vacillates between reason and emotion. "'He's not a wild scamp . . . What is it to me what he is . . . I don't mean to defend his good name, not I. Mind this, if any of you say a word against him you'll be dismissed instantly'" (p. 187). Later, she defends Troy as being "a sort of steady man in a wild way" (p. 189).

Likewise, Bathsheba's control over Boldwood is an impossible nightmare. He admits that he is not stoic, and that her whimsical act of sending the valentine has frustrated and impassioned him. This pathetic man is embittered with the fact that Troy has duped him as well. Bathsheba's growth in character begins with Boldwood's decline.

Later, the incident of the attempt to cover the ricks of corn before the storm gives Bathsheba insight into the nature of both Troy and Oak. Troy sleeps in a drunken stupor while Bathsheba and Gabriel battle to preserve the grain.

Bathsheba's ultimate abandonment of pride and vanity occurs when Troy views the body of Fanny and her child. She is torn between pity and indignation; yet she bows to Troy for his favor. It is renunciation of will that incenses Troy. He wants perfect control but cannot tolerate her humiliation: "It was such an unexpected revelation of all women being alike at heart . . . that Troy could hardly believe her to be his proud wife Bathsheba" (p. 281). Bathsheba's revelation of her defenseless heart occurred only momentarily, for "this was the mood of a few instants only . . . all feeling she had been betrayed into showing she drew back to herself again by a strenuous effort of self-command" (p. 281).

It is Bathsheba's illogical behavior which demonstrates her reversion to passive impulses. Her uncontrollable out-



burst of emotion indebt her pride and dignity. As Guerard questions: "Are irrational women the only reasonable beings in an irrational universe that reckes not of man's longings for order?"<sup>14</sup> Hardy, however, bestows his most elemental compliment to his character by stating that she is "of the stuff of which great men's mothers are made."<sup>15</sup> Bathsheba's amorous hopelessness with Troy does not destroy her. The return of Bathsheba to Oak is not for sanctuary; it is as Southerington noted, "a triumph of reason over passion."<sup>16</sup> She dynamically fulfills herself in her experience of tragic anguish. Her fury is transposed into quiet peace as Hardy describes her wedding day with Oak.

Repose had again incarnadined her cheeks;  
and having at Gabriel's request arranged  
her hair this morning as she had worn it  
years ago on Norcombe Hill, she seemed  
remarkably like the girl of that fascinating  
dream . . . (p. 327)

Bathsheba changes, and her endurance in tragedy tames her spirit without embitterment. Hardy makes a point of mentioning that Oak is able to laugh while Bathsheba now only smiles. She resolves her internal conflict of will against emotionalism; Bathsheba retains her youthful vigor but with tragic reticence and restraint.

<sup>14</sup>Guerard, p. 130.

<sup>15</sup>d'Exideuil, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup>Southerington, p. 79.

### III

In Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Hardy examines the duality of a pure woman caught up in a sensuousness she cannot withstand nor cope with. As a fallen woman, Tess is victim of society and her own impulsiveness, factors which cause her to suffer conflicts with her conscience. Initially, she sees herself as a fatalist who finds her world a "blighted star," and certainly at times we see Tess as victim of missing counterparts and imperfect timings. Accordingly, several studies examine Tess as a tragic character with W. Eugene Davis offering this conclusion: "We choose to remember Tess as being an active being, capable and willing and doing. We therefore reject Hardy's view, which suggests weakness, passivity. . . . Is it not, then, the strong, passionate, impure Tess we understand and love? The novel lives because the heroine lives--not as some sort of ethereally pure creature but as an intensely human woman. . . ."<sup>17</sup> Davis raises the issue to the surface; the fact that she is self-willed but assailable in the affairs of the heart raises her to tragic dimensions.

<sup>17</sup>W. Eugene Davis, "Tess of the d'Urbervilles," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 22 (March, 1968), p. 400.



Indeed, Hardy does not conceal Tess's sensuality. He frequently makes reference to her lovely and tantalizing mouth. "She was yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's" (Tess, pp. 142-43).<sup>18</sup> Tess stimulates a physical fascination because Hardy wishes to display her as a product of the dual struggle between Ethos and Eros.

Tess is pure in spirit but far from perfect in her affair with Alec and in her love for this child begotten in sin. Hardy states that Tess looks upon this child with "passionateness and contempt." She grieves over the affair with despondency but cannot accept sorrow with compassion. Her ritualistic baptism of the child indicates her early bondage with religion and its claims on the soul. Also, Tess is not free of hate. She feels Alec is incorrigible even after his brief "salvation." The sign painter is satirically representative of society's influence upon Tess. Tess cannot evade the shadow of moral, Hebraic law.

Another view of Tess is as a scapegoat. Jean Brooks argues that "The sexual guilt of causing life subconsciously demands a scapegoat whose purity will carry off the sins of the world. Tess's role as victim is stressed in those scenes where the symbolic overtones of red and white set up rich

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1965), pp. 142-143. Subsequent documentation of quotations from the novel will be intext notes within parentheses.

dissonances of pain and purity, guilt and innocence, life and death, the paradox of living."<sup>19</sup>

Tess obviously is a victim, yet this writer contends that Hardy sees Tess with contradictory qualities. She is both weakness and strength. She submits to Alec d'Urberville but adamantly refuses to seek his help during or after her pregnancy. She falls hopelessly in love with Angel but willfully abstains from marriage due to her past. Angel's protestations are more than Tess can withstand. Tess is symbolic of both Ethos and Eros. Her work as a dairymaid compliments her spontaneous and natural spirit. There is much irony in the fact that Tess is impure and her fellow dairymaids are innocent sexually. It is they who are more deviously seeking Angel through coy and suggestive behavior. Angel, himself, is the "impotence of Christian idealism and progressive moral enlightenment" who sees Tess as "a visionary essence of woman."<sup>20</sup> Tess tries to reconcile the worlds of the flesh and the spirit although she cannot escape her own sexuality. She attracts Alec and Angel with her sexual presence without "animalism or grossness," according to critic Desmond Hawkins.<sup>21</sup> Yet, Angel cannot forgive her past. This is the ultimate expression of his hypocrisy.

<sup>19</sup>Brooks, p. 239.

<sup>20</sup>Hawkins, p. 127.

<sup>21</sup>Hawkins, p. 132.



He flees from the chains of religion but cannot practice the philosophy of his thinking. Tess is juxtaposed to her more practical and less idealistic mother. She cannot betray Angel in her marriage by concealing the truth, although Mrs. Durbeyfield warns Tess not to "trumpet" her past.

Tess endures, but her suffering and love for Angel drive her to madness rather than the repose that we see in Bathsheba. Tess is more sensitive and therefore carries the full burden for her sin. Her tragic view of life only weighs more on her mind and spirit. She feels responsibility for her initial affair and this, as well as Angel's unwillingness to forgive, stimulates her into her final act of killing Alec. She sees his death as an atonement for her indiscretion. When Angel finally returns, fate and time sweep over Tess. "Her beautiful eyes again reflect their unnatural shine and it is the voice of insanity which utters: 'Too late, too late.'"<sup>22</sup>

Tess has human flaws but we cannot overlook her energetic spirituality. She is magnanimous in her devotion to family and responsibility. She denies herself for the love of her mother, brothers, and sisters. "Of all his

<sup>22</sup>Rosemary Benzing, "In Defense of Tess," Contemporary Review, 218 (March, 1971), pp. 202-204.

women characters, Tess is undoubtedly the most sympathetic and most complete expression of woman as conceived by Hardy,"<sup>23</sup> believes d'Exideuil. Yet, it is often difficult for the modern reader to feel complete identification with this woman who surrounds herself with so much guilt. However, the reader cannot escape an emotional response from Tess's heartache. Katherine Rogers concludes that "women in this book are closer to nature than men--almost, indeed, identified with it . . . Tess's sensitivity is the result of feeling, not thinking."<sup>24</sup> The feminine Eros may bring her to ruin but it provides her with a special aura that neither Bathsheba nor Sue Bridehead possess.

Tess's love entangles her while her lasting will maintains her survival. She is in constant conflict with her love for Angel and her own reason. Her convictions doom her mortal life while fate taunts her: " . . . the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, has ended its sport with Tess" (Tess, p. 330). Hardy ends her anguish and madness with "Justice."

#### IV

Sue Bridehead is probably Hardy's most complex woman. Her intelligence far outweighs that of Tess or Bathsheba,

<sup>23</sup>d'Exideuil, p. 108.

<sup>24</sup>Rogers, p. 250.



while her lack of sensuality gives her an ethereal quality, at least in the mind of Jude. While Tess is flesh and blood, "Sue is immaterial."<sup>25</sup> Sue has been described as the opposite of Bathsheba and Tess not merely through intellect but "subtle delineation of a not uncommon type of woman in the modern world."<sup>26</sup> That is, while Bathsheba and Tess are wonderfully human in their conflicts, Sue is stoic, cold, and calculating so that her love for Jude is something of a self love. Her will to live her own life carries her above emotion to an emotional complexity in which intellect and will control her life, yet because Ethos cannot overpower Eros she does not react consistently. "Sue's pervasive inconsistency suggests that her independence, rationality, and rejection of conventional sex roles are false.. Though she insists on platonic comradeship, she cannot resist flirting."<sup>27</sup> Her will is supported by her logic, but she fauns over Jude and flatters him with pleadings of defenselessness. Therefore, although her spirit lacks the compassion and mercy seen in Tess and Bathsheba, Sue is as powerful a characterization of human duality.

<sup>25</sup>d'Exideuil, p. 110.

<sup>26</sup>Walter Allen, The English Novel (New York: E.P. Ditton and Co., Inc., 1955), p. 302.

<sup>27</sup>Rogers, p. 255.

Sue's role in Jude the Obscure personifies the struggle of the Hebraic and Hellenic codes. Her purchasing of the Greek idols symbolizes her defiance of Christminster and its religion. She views Christminster in a way that Jude never could. Sue realizes that intellectualism and religion are in contention. When Jude suggests that they sit in the Cathedral for a talk, Sue replies casually that the Cathedral has had its day. The sound thinking of the religious world must make way for progressive thinking. When Jude notes her Hellenic leanings, she purports that she feels that society is returning to "Greek joyousness" and is forgetting the sorrow of religious teachings.

D. H. Lawrence sees Sue's tragedy as, "the result of over-development of one principle of human life at the expense of the other; an over-balancing; a laying of all the stress on the Male, the Love, the Spirit, the Mind, the Consciousness; a denying, a blaspheming against the Female, the Law, the Soul, the Senses, the Feelings."<sup>28</sup> Sue, unlike Tess and Bathsheba, is fighting the code of womanhood. However, she, like these other women, has within her the struggle of Jung's anima and animus. On

<sup>28</sup>Reginald James White, Thomas Hardy and History (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1974), p. 139.



the one hand, she has a masculine dominion over Jude. Yet to Jude she is the incarnation of spiritual fulfillment. Sue's control of Jude is somewhat of a fascination for her.

Her message to Jude concerning their impending love affair demonstrates society's attitude on guilt and the woman: "No woman has ever wished more than I that Eve had not fallen, so that (as the primitive Christians believed) some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled Paradise" (Jude, p. 231).<sup>29</sup> Here again, the woman's aggressive nature is reprimanded. Sue's realization is possibly part of her extenuation of the animus. She cannot attempt to reciprocate love as an ordinary woman: "According to the rule of women's whims I suppose I ought to suddenly love him (Phillotson), because he has let me go so generously and unexpectedly . . . But I am so cold and devoid of gratitude, or so something, that even his generosity has not made me love him. . . . (Jude, p. 244) Sue's marriage to Phillotson was initially a mistake. But she could not resist flirtation. Her marriage was merely what she could do to repair the wrong. Sue, Tess, and Bathsheba all boldly elect their tragedies by their own actions. Yet Jude can even accept her reluctance to engage in sexual

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1959), p. 231. Subsequent documentation of quotations from the novel will be in-text notes within parentheses.

activities. In Jude's thinking, her reticence is evidence of her divinity, not of sexual fastidiousness. Ultimately, it is her aversion to sex which draws her into competition as a foil to Arabella. Arabella's first meeting with Jude is a scandalous episode for the Victorian times. Lawrence envisions Arabella as the "embodiment of the female principle" while Sue subordinates her female characteristics.<sup>30</sup> Sue and Arabella represent Jude's struggle between the flesh and the spirit. Yet, he never understands Sue's frigidity. He idealistically rationalizes her passivity to sex: "You (Sue) were a distinct type--a refined creature, intendedly to be left intact. But I couldn't leave you alone" (Jude, p. 349). Later he repudiates his own desire in contrast to Sue's: "Sue--my one too suffering dear!--there's no evil woman in you. Your natural instincts are perfectly healthy; not quite so impassioned, perhaps, as I have often said, you are absolutely the most ethereal, least sexual woman I ever knew to exist without inhuman sexlessness" (Jude, p. 351). Jude cannot condemn her. He prefers to think of her as divinity. Arabella appears as the earthly entrapment. Sue relents to Jude sexually because of her jealousy of Arabella; she realizes their platonic relationship cannot fulfill his needs.

<sup>30</sup>Michael Steig, "Sue Bridehead," Novel I (Spring, 1968), p. 261.



Ultimately, Sue provides Jude with his only family, while Arabella's attraction as a mother earth archetype is only superficial. Her bosomy, fertile introduction proves to be inconsistent with her nature as a mother. She seduces Jude with her entrapment of the goose egg hidden between her breasts. However, in essence she abandons her only child with Jude, and Sue provides the mother figure for Little Father Time.

Mrs. Hardy comments on Sue and her sexual nature:

There is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue's nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion, not in inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy as far as it goes. Her sensibilities remain painfully absent notwithstanding, as they do in the nature with such women. One point illustrating this I could not dwell upon: that, though she has children, her intimacies with Jude have never been more than occasional, even when they were living together . . . and one of her reasons for fearing the marriage ceremony is that she fears it would be breaking faith with Jude to withhold herself at pleasure, or altogether after it . . . .<sup>31</sup>

Despite the fact that Sue has no or little sexual desire, Guerard categorizes her as a Hedonist.<sup>32</sup> He argues that she seeks pleasure in life but lacks the optimistic outlook of Arabella to fulfill her desires. Sue is fulfilled somewhat through her studies, but she feels no compassion for her students or fellow workers. In many ways, conse-

<sup>31</sup>W. J. Hyde, "Thomas Hardy: The Poor Man and the Deterioration of His Ladies," The Victorian Newsletter, 36 (Fall, 1969), pp. 14-18.

<sup>32</sup>Guerard, p. 141.

quently, society can identify with Arabella more than Sue, for Arabella conforms to society's objectives toward the establishment of a home. Sue embraces Jude only in her moments of mental anguish; Arabella delights in her physical entrapment of him, seeking companionship for physical and domestic security. In contrast, Sue seeks only intellectual camaraderie. And ultimately it is her intellectual will which is broken; she is not a victim of mere romantic love. Her liberalism carried her out of convention, failed to support her, so that she could only fall back into religious masochism. The turn of events occurs with Little Father Time's killings and suicide. Her duality has kept her in stasis, midway between sexual and intellectual fulfillment but frustrated by both. Now she is overpowered by guilt, and she loses the struggle with Hebraic law. Sue cannot reconcile herself to conformity with the church nor with actual belief in Christianity.

Ultimately her renunciation of her personal philosophies is almost as devastating to Jude as his failure in Christminster. Sue's philosophy has affected Jude's own ideas of morality. He mistakenly concludes that her return to Phillotson is mere immorality as he reckons with his own beliefs:

You make me hate Christianity, or  
mysticism, or Sacerdotalism, or what-  
ever it may be called if it's that  
which has caused this deterioration



in you. That and woman poet, a woman-seer, a woman whose soul shone like a diamond--whom all the wise of the world would have been proud of, if they could have known you--should degrade herself like this! I am glad I had nothing to do with Divinity--damn glad--if it's going to ruin you in this way . . . After converting me to your views on so many things, to find you suddenly turn to the right about like this . . . (Jude, pp. 357-77)

Earlier in the novel, Arabella had mockingly attributed the suffering of the world to women: "Then shall the man be guiltless; but the woman shall bear her iniquity. 'Damn rough on us women; but we must grin and put up wi' it.'" (Jude, p. 325) Sue, however, condemns herself to punishment. Jude acknowledges this after her reunion with Phillotson: "I did suffer, God knows, about you at that time; and now I suffer again. But perhaps not as much as you. The woman mostly gets the worst of it in the long run." (Jude, p. 360) Jude reluctantly realizes that Sue incarcerates herself for religious dogma which he considers to be obsolete. In this final speech concerning Sue, Jude bemoans her digression into warped philosophy:

. . . she was once a woman whose intellect was to mine like a star to a benzoline lamp: who saw all my superstitions as cobwebs that she could brush away with a word. Then bitter affliction came to us, and her intellect broke, and she veered round to darkness. Strange difference of sex and time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably. And now the ultimate horror has come--her giving herself like

this to what she loathes, in her enslavement to forms . . . Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her and recklessness and ruin on me! (Jude, pp. 407-08)

Thus, Hardy presents his characters as out of time and space with Victorian ethics. However, Sue represents the future, and she is the scapegoat of struggle who must suffer in the conflicts of change. She is alienated from her compassion for Jude and her inner will. She ultimately is drawn into society and rejects all independence and feeling. Sue exists as a character broken by the duality of will

## V

Lionel Johnson acclaimed Hardy's works for their presentations of men and women in realistic roles. Hardy envisioned more in his women than "flashy prigs" of Victorian society. Hardy's women were "nearer to the stronger and finer men in depths of their souls."<sup>33</sup> Critics also applauded Hardy's women as more than "insipid and sexually unaware heroines traditionally favored by the Victorian reader."<sup>34</sup> While his women struggle within themselves to exert the animus, the external pressures of society weigh

<sup>33</sup>Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), p. 174.

<sup>34</sup>A. R. Cunningham, "The New Woman in Fiction of the 1890's," Victorian Studies, 17 (December 1973), p. 177.



heavily on the suppression of the female will. When Sue subjects herself to society's gossip and slander while living with Jude, she is exercising the assertive animus. When Bathsheba experiences anguish from defiant adventures, society stands to judge her. As Tess chooses her final fate through vengeance, society delivers its justice. The conflicts of these women are within their own control; society merely offers further contention in their struggles.

Hardy's women are not puppets of circumstance but actors initiating their own indictments for suffering. Hardy is sympathetic; his "pictures of womanhood glow with love and admiration."<sup>35</sup> Yet he sees his women realistically; they make mistakes which he willingly allows them. Hardy probably grieves over their inabilities to reach their potentials, suffering in his "sense of the gulf between woman's possible best and her actual achievement towards it."<sup>36</sup> However, Sue, Tess, and Bathsheba exert the independence of the animus principle; they triumph in many circumstances over their emotionalism. They rebel against the lesser women who enslave their wills and intellects. D. H. Lawrence asks, " . . . what was there in their position

<sup>35</sup>H. C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and the Dynasts (Manchester, England: The University Press, 1916), p. 235.

<sup>36</sup>Duffin, p. 238.

that was necessarily tragic? Necessarily painful it was, but they were not at war with God, only with society . . . ."<sup>37</sup> However, the battle was fought not only with society but within themselves.

Hardy studied his women and men for what they were and what they felt. He saw women as willful yet fragile, compassionate and affectionate, yet possessing great inner will and strength. The women in Hardy's novels ultimately rise from their conflicts toward noble, profound proportions so that their conflicts of the will and heart are struggles of all humanity. In such creations Hardy disseminates a powerful portrait of women.

<sup>37</sup> Suman Prabha Prasad, Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1976), p. 43.



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