

The Return Of The Native

by
Thomas Hardy

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1878

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CHAPTER 3

The Return of the Native (1878)

The Return of the Native is the first of Hardy's novels to deal with marriage, not simply by employing marriage, more or less ironically, as a plot resolution, but by presenting the relationship itself as a continuing, lived process; and in this it foreshadows the later novels, from *The Woodlanders* to *Jude the Obscure*. It takes on a subject, sexual discord and marital breakdown, which has previously only hovered impendingly on the periphery of Hardy's fiction. It continues his explorative experimentation with genre and mode: the novel has been seen as an attempt to unite prose romance, dramatic form, and psychological or social theory; as an exercise in mock-heroic, replete with parodic allusions to the conventions of courtly love; as a direct descendant of the ballad tradition; and as a modified pastoral.¹ The breadth and variety of such critical allusions point up the major structural characteristics of this novel: the attempt to cast sexual material which leads towards realism on the rigidly formalised model of Greek tragedy; the conception of the three main female characters in terms of three different modes; and, a related problem, the disjunction between an overt and ambitious mythological scheme and the realism of the narrative.

It is important to notice that Hardy's first attempt to write a tragedy is a double tragedy, and that it turns upon marriage. A pattern emerges for the first time that will be repeated in the later novels: the man's tragedy is primarily intellectual, the woman's sexual. This distinction will be more subtly handled in the later novels. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Angel lives out the intellectual dimension of his own tragedy, while its sexual component is split off and acted out through Alec d'Urberville. In *Jude the Obscure*, both Jude's and Sue's tragedies will involve intellect and sexuality; indeed, the novel will focus upon their interaction and apparent mutual hostility. In *The Return of the Native*,

however, the polarisation is relatively crude, and the sexual ideology reinforcing the split is quite evident. Clym's dilemma is conceived as an intellectual and moral choice. It involves testing his personal wishes and ambitions against social forces; his problem is therefore in part one of his class and community, and is historically located by Hardy. His very appearance characterises him as 'a modern type' marking the transition from the 'zest for existence' of an earlier age to the sense of 'life as a thing to be put up with' which, according to the narrator, will come to predominate in later generations (p. 185). His ideas and his wish to 'raise the class at the expense of individuals rather than individuals at the expense of the class' (p. 190) are shown as topical and, indeed, advanced, connected with the French ethical systems of the time (which, in the 1840s when the novel is set, is likely to mean those of Saint Simon and Comte) and certainly implying a continuing 'dialogue' with Matthew Arnold.² Clym's tragedy, then, is given a certain historical typicality. Eustacia's sexual tragedy, however, is evoked as a consequence of her 'nature'; it is removed from history by a dual process, being at once naturalised and mythologised. From the first, she is 'the raw material of a divinity' (p. 89), while Clym's mythological assimilation to Oedipus becomes dominant only after the events of his tragedy. Hardy, in fact, is writing another version of the Ruskinian polarity of man as culture, woman as nature. This disparity makes the attempted fusion of the two tragedies in the marital breakdown particularly difficult. It represents the culmination of the disjunction between the sexual realism of the material and the self-consciously imitative writing. The scene of Eustacia and Clym's argument and subsequent separation is obviously theatrical in conception, the dialogue interrupted only by actions described in a way that, except for the tense, reads very like stage directions:

"Then I'll find it myself." His eye had fallen upon a small desk that stood near, on which she was accustomed to write her letters. He went to it. It was locked.

"Unlock this!"

"You have no right to say it. That's mine."

Without another word he seized the desk and dashed it to the floor. The hinge burst open, and a number of letters tumbled out.

"Stay!" said Eustacia, stepping before him with more excitement than she had hitherto shown.

"Come, come! Stand away! I must see them."

She looked at the letters as they lay, checked her feeling, and moved indifferently aside; when he gathered them up and examined them (p. 332).

Hardy clearly feels that a 'high style' is necessary at a point of such intense feeling, and looks, as elsewhere in the novel, to tragic models. Here, however, the language and style seem to come not from Greek drama, but from Elizabethan or Jacobean tragedy. Clym, in particular, adopts an archaic and rhetorical mode of speech, addressing his wife as "'my lady'" and "'mistress'", and falling into Websterian turns of phrase such as "'what a finished and full-blown adept in a certain trade my lady is'" (p. 332). The text is disrupted by the imposition of a model, and by the attempt to force a spurious tragic grandeur on the reader's attention; but the model itself draws attention to the dominance of the sexual – which, I shall argue, has been displaced throughout the relationship – in this scene. Jacobean tragedy, and that of Webster in particular, is dominated by a concept of sexuality in which it functions as a corrupting disease or as an inexpiable crime. Similarly, in *The Return of the Native*, it is the very fact of her sexuality which from the first dooms Eustacia, as it will Hardy's later *femmes fatales*, such as Lucetta Templeman or Felice Charmond. Wildeve's signal to Eustacia after her marriage to Clym is a moth, which flies once or twice around the candle and then straight into the flame; it is a common enough image of a 'fatal attraction', but it is nevertheless appropriate.³ Eustacia's sexuality leads her to destruction with a certainty which in this novel seems almost as instinctual as the moth's flight.

The three women of the novel act as a kind of working-out of the various modes within which Hardy has been writing, or will write. Thomasin Yeobright is a pastoral survival; Eustacia Vye is both an expression and a critical placing of Hardy's anxious relationship to Romanticism; Mrs Yeobright belongs unequivocally to realism. The literary derivation of the first two is clear and explicit. Tamsin seems 'to belong rightly to a madrigal' (p. 64), and the end of the book is hers, with its maypole-dancing, the transformed, infatuated Venn, and its reassertion of the pastoral convention of 'The Inevitable Movement Onward' (p. 381) through the cycle of marriage and reproduction. After the narrative of disruptive sexuality and

illicit relationships, Tamsin is evoked to close the novel in a coda of cosy domesticity with husband and child.

The Return of the Native is much concerned with frustration, with ill-matched couples, incoherent aspiration, and a restless dissatisfaction with the material conditions of life as it presents itself on Egdon. Mrs Yeobright's sense of higher social possibilities – both retrospectively in her own life and marriage 'beneath' her, and prospectively, in her son's potential rise to wealth – permeates all her actions, and revisions for the 1895 Osgood, McIlvaine edition of the novel intensify Mrs Yeobright's insistence on wealth, rather than status, in her attempts to dissuade Clym from his course.⁴ Wildeve is a figure of wasted talents and missed opportunities, benefitting gratuitously from the labour of the two previous owners of his land, who have worn themselves out in the effort to wrest some fruitfulness from it. Clym's unanswered question, "'what is doing well?'" (p. 193), resounds throughout the book, preoccupying all the central characters. For Clym himself, the dilemma presents itself as an intellectual challenge, as a choice among work possibilities. His change of occupation, from diamond merchant (or, originally, jeweller's assistant) to worker on the land, finds a distinct echo in Shelley's notes on *Queen Mab*:

No greater evidence is afforded of the wide extended and radical mistakes of civilized man than this fact: those arts which are essential to his very being are held in the greatest contempt; employments are lucrative in an inverse ratio to their usefulness: the jeweller, the toyman, the actor gains fame and wealth by the exercise of his useless and ridiculous art; whilst the cultivator of the earth, he without whom society must cease to subsist, struggles through contempt and penury, and perishes by that famine which but for his unceasing exertions would annihilate the rest of mankind.⁵

For Eustacia, however, the problem takes only the form of choosing – or rather finding, in an environment where 'coldest and meanest kisses were at famine prices' (p. 92) – a lover adequate to her longing.

For Tamsin, who, rather like Elizabeth-Jane Newson, early learns that adaptation to the expectations and possibilities of her society which characterises the pastoral, 'doing well' is entirely a question of marrying well; she is truly one for whom 'doing means marrying, and the commonwealth is one of hearts and

hands' (pp. 93-4). She early graduates from romantic fantasy, as Eustacia never does:

"Here am I asking you to marry me; when by rights you ought to be on your knees imploring me, your cruel mistress, not to refuse you, and saying it would break your heart if I did. I used to think it would be pretty and sweet like that; but how different!" (pp. 69-70).

Even dignity must if necessary be sacrificed to propriety. She is compromised by her trip to Anglebury with Wildeve. Indeed, according to Paterson, she was originally to have been more deeply compromised; she and Wildeve were to have returned only after a week in Anglebury, to find later that the ceremony had not been legal (possibly by Wildeve's prior arrangement, foreshadowing the similar situation in the serial version of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*).⁶ So she pursues her self-ordained course firmly, eventually marrying Wildeve whatever the state of her feelings towards him, braiding her hair in sevens on her wedding day because 'Years ago she had said that when she married she would braid it in sevens' (p. 175). Tamsin's behaviour is at once governed and sustained by an awareness of the judgement of others. After the first, unsuccessful attempt at a wedding, she is terrified of skimmity-riding (p. 71); she is spurred on to the second, successful attempt by Clym's comments in a letter; and after Wildeve's death and her period of mourning, she is still restrained from following her inclination to marry Venn by the invocation of Mrs Yeobright's posthumous disapproval. Her life is public, lived in the eye of the community; even the relationship of her inner consciousness to her outward appearance is without concealment: 'An ingenuous, transparent life was disclosed; as if the flow of her existence could be seen passing within her' (p. 64). Adrian Poole has drawn attention to the way in which marriage, in the (pre-1880) Victorian novel, functions as the socially ratified culmination of just this progressive adaptation of the experience of the individual to the 'reality' of restrictive social forms:

The centrality of the notion of marriage to any analysis of the assumptions underlying the Victorian novel cannot be over-estimated. Marriage is the point of intersection of the infinite desire with the temporal reality, the confirming sanction of the reciprocity between experience in its most secret and private aspect, and the public, visible, declared social forms.⁷

In Tamsin this reciprocity is unproblematic; her experience, precisely at its most 'private', is visibly shaped by the declared social forms of marriage.

For Eustacia, however, the 'infinite desire' and the social forms remain irreconcilable. In contrast to Tamsin, she is, throughout the novel, physically and socially, marginal to the Egdon community. She is literally foreign to it, being the daughter of a Corfiote (or, in an earlier version, Belgian) father. Her physical isolation from the community is reinforced by a mutual awareness of her difference. She regards the local girls with something like contempt. Her alienness, in turn, is perceived by the Egdon inhabitants as a threat, which Susan Nunsuch attempts to exorcise by the long-standing methods of protection against witches. The witch is traditionally supposed to have supernatural powers which allow her to alter the material circumstances of her world to fit her own desires, and this indeed corresponds to Eustacia's image of herself and of fulfilment; she sees herself, for instance, as having somehow materialised Wildeve into existence, rather than having simply summoned him by a pre-arranged signal. Eustacia, furthermore, poses a particular threat to the women of the community, being disruptive by virtue of her unfocused sexuality. She is not the innocent, pre-sexual maiden, nor is she bound by legal, or even emotional, ties to an one sexual partner. In an interesting passage deleted in revision for the first edition, Hardy draws attention to this state of, so to speak, sexual suspension:

Eustacia was weary of too many things, unless she could have been weary of more; she knew too much, unless she could have known all. It was a dangerous rock to be tossed on at her age. She had done with the dreams and interests of young maidhood; the dreams and interests of wifedom she had never begun, and we see her in a strange interspace of isolation.⁸

Her individualism leaves her on the feared and misunderstood margins of society. It is interesting to notice that her marriage to Clym does not assimilate her into the community, but rather marginalises him. Their isolation in their home removes Clym from the society of his family; his ambition to teach is replaced by his entirely solitary furze-cutting; and by the last Book of the novel, he is quite clearly placed outside the social forms of marriage. He has become an onlooker, as the scene of Tamsin's

wedding makes clear. He has removed himself from his society without even leaving a perceptible gap:

“Do any of them seem to care about my not being there?” Clym asked.
 “No, not a bit in the world. Now they are all holding up their glasses and drinking somebody’s health.”
 “I wonder if it is mine?”
 “No, ’tis Mr and Mrs Venn’s, because he is making a hearty sort of speech. There – now Mrs Venn has got up, and is going away to put on her things, I think.”
 “Well, they haven’t concerned themselves about me, and it is quite right they should not” (p. 403).

It is almost a critical commonplace to say that Eustacia Vye is a divided figure.⁹ The contradictions are partly the result of the hesitation between mythologising and irony: Eustacia as Queen of Night is trivialised by her desire to see the Paris boulevards (and still more by her desire, in earlier texts, to see the Budmouth esplanades), while Eustacia as a restless, intelligent woman trapped in a limiting environment is made ridiculous by the Bourbon roses, Lotus-eaters and other paraphernalia of Romantic mythology which which she is sporadically encumbered.¹⁰ The irony and the mythology remain, on the whole, separate – there is seldom the irruption of the one into the other that could justify a description of mock-heroic. A further inner division results from the ambivalence, expressed through the figure of Eustacia, of Hardy’s evocation of Romanticism. In part, she represents a kind of Romantic ideal; as Deen says, ‘She is a romantic (she is a whole history of romanticism) seen romantically.’¹¹ Some of her characteristics are those of the Romantic hero – a solitary status in opposition to the group, a sense of the validity of individual experience and of self-generated ethical values. As always in Hardy, there are quotations from, and reminiscences of, Romantic poets, particularly from Wordsworth and Shelley.¹² Yet, equally, her own Romantic reading (her ‘chief priest’ is Byron, in an ms. insertion)¹³ is partly responsible for the extravagance of her concepts of love and value, and her Romantic qualities prove, ultimately, self-destructive. The novel increasingly takes its distance from her in this respect, moving away from the self-indulgently Romantic writing of the ‘Queen of Night’ chapter. Both she and Clym are sometimes assimilated to the

supreme Romantic hero, Prometheus.¹⁴ Eustacia is, however, an interestingly ‘feminised’ version of Prometheus: her boundless desire is to be boundlessly desired. Her sense of her own identity constantly seeks reaffirmation, not through action, but through that confirmation of value which is the desire of another. Preoccupied as she is with love, she still displaces her active feelings in a way which I have argued is distinctively female in a male-dominated society. Her aspiration sets up a circle of desire: ‘To be loved to madness – such was her great desire’ (p. 92). The extreme egotism of her individualism is also the mark of her extreme dependence on the man whose sexual recognition alone confirms her sense of herself as ‘“a splendid woman”’ (p. 357). When she is doubly disguised in her mumming costume, she experiences the interdependence of her sexuality and her identity: ‘The power of her face all lost, the charm of her emotions all disguised, the fascinations of her coquetry denied existence, nothing but a voice left to her: she had a sense of the doom of Echo’ (p. 161). The reference to Echo is apt; although in its immediate context it implies merely the reduction of her identity to a voice, it also evokes her dependence on the utterance of a male other, and relates her quite differently to the narcissism which might on occasion appear to be her mode of relation to her lovers.¹⁵ Deen argues that this mumming episode shows Eustacia’s rejection of her femaleness:

As Hardy is careful to emphasize, in becoming a mummer Eustacia ‘changes sex’, and the whole episode is an adventure on the outer limits of respectability. What is suggested elsewhere in the novel is clearly revealed here. Eustacia in the mumming assumes the heroic masculine role to which she is always aspiring. She wants to alter her essential human condition, to change her sex. A dissatisfaction so thoroughgoing amounts to a denial of life itself.¹⁶

But it constitutes rather an exploration of the limits of her gender, a confrontation of the immanence of sexuality in her experience of her identity.

The fragility and vicariousness of her self-esteem make Eustacia vulnerable in a way that relates her to the literary lineage of the destructive and self-destructive *femme fatale*, which takes much of its impetus from Flaubert’s *Emma Bovary*, and culminates in Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler*. Eustacia’s

lack of occupation is commented upon more than once, and she herself recognises – though not without some self-aggrandisement – that “‘want of an object to live for – that’s all is the matter with me’” (p. 145). Her emotions develop in a vacuum, cultivated for their own sake – she is ‘an epicure’ in emotions (p. 116) – because they are the only kind of experience that she has. In the same way, Emma Bovary finds no occupation for her time or her energies outside sexual relationships. Both women look for a man great enough to be worthy of the strength of their emotion, and both are disillusioned. Emma’s suicide when she finds herself trapped by her material circumstances and without emotional sustenance parallels Hedda Gabler’s suicide and Eustacia’s death, although Hardy veils this in an ambiguity similar to that which surrounds the rape or seduction of Tess, and presumably for the same reason – to evade those questions of free choice, and individual moral responsibility that a tradition of moralistic criticism might otherwise press upon the text. Hardy’s Notebooks reveal that he was reading about suicide during the composition of *The Return*, at the same time as he was reading a translation of Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Chained*,¹⁷ and it may be a sign that, for him, Promethean boundless aspiration was connected with self-destruction.¹⁸

Like Hedda Gabler, Eustacia finds her potential for effective activity cripplingly limited, and for both women, emotional power over other individuals is the only kind of influence they can exercise. Eustacia’s attraction towards Wildeve is partly determined by the eroticism of the power which his relative passivity allows her to imagine that she holds over him:

“[I] thought I would get a little excitement by calling you up and triumphing over you as the Witch of Endor called up Samuel. I determined you should come; and you have come! I have shown my power. A mile and a half hither, and a mile and a half back again to your home – three miles in the dark for me. Have I not shown my power?” (p. 87).

But this fantasy of power is only a thin concealment for powerless dependence, as Wildeve at once reminds her: “‘I think I drew out you before you drew out me’” (p. 88). And indeed, she has been waiting for some hours on the heath for this moment of triumph.

Again, Eustacia’s conviction that she can persuade Clym, once they are married, to return to Paris, despite his open reluctance to do so, is an attempt to exercise the only power available to her, the power of her own sexuality; it is paralleled by Hedda Gabler’s action in tempting Loevberg to break his vow not to drink alcohol. Gabler’s temptation seems rather perverse, however, in that it offers no possibility of fulfilment or pleasure for herself, while Eustacia’s Paris – like Jude’s Christminster, at once an aspiration and a fantasy, although, unlike Jude, she is given no chance to test the one by the other – at least seems to offer some personal satisfaction.

Mrs Yeobright has a less obviously literary derivation, but her literary descendants – principally Lawrence’s Mrs Morel – can be more easily traced. In terms of the modes of Hardy’s writing, she looks forward to the later novels, rather than back. She is a character belonging to the tradition of realism, a mode which fairly successfully obscures its literariness, and which is dependent upon references to the ‘text’ of common sense and of received codes of interpreting our experience. She is characterised in part by the use of statements of the category ‘one of those . . . who/which’, a basic strategy of the realist text,¹⁹ which assign their subject to a class, and hence appeal to a shared code of narrator and reader. Mrs Yeobright is described, for example, as having ‘well-formed features of the type usually found where perspicacity is the chief quality enthroned within’ (p. 58); her manner shows ‘that reticence which results from the conscience of superior communicative power’ (p. 59); and her power of understanding is discussed in these somewhat obscure terms: ‘She had a singular insight into life, considering that she had never mixed with it. There are instances of persons who, without clear ideas of the things they criticise, have yet had clear ideas of the relations of those things’ (p. 205). In every case, the effect is to make the reader ‘recognise’ Mrs Yeobright as if she were already known to him. It is no coincidence that she is the only main character unencumbered by a mythological prototype, although one is projected back upon her through her association with Clym’s increasingly overt assimilation to his prototype, Oedipus. In this respect, she is the focus of the troubling disjunction in the novel between realistic and mythological modes of narrative.

Further, her relationship with Clym crystallises one of the novel's structural problems. The mother-son relationship is at the centre of the novel, particularly in its difficulty interaction with Clym's alternative emotional allegiance, his marriage with Eustacia. Yet both relationships present themselves in the text as a curious vacancy. The novel is unique in Hardy in the intensity and detail with which it confronts the relationships of parents and children; many of his characters, as I have already remarked, are orphaned. When parents appear, they usually bring with them a complex of emotions – possessiveness, guilt, resentment – more commonly evoked in love-relationships. Fathers – at least, present fathers – play only a limited role in Hardy's fiction. Mothers appear rather more often, usually in a relation to their children of mutual dependence and mutual guilt. Joan Durbeyfield, for instance, is the person to whom Tess turns for advice, and also for whom she feels the greatest responsibility. Mrs Yeobright's relationship with Clym, however, is unparalleled in the fiction in the inextricable intertwining of their lives and emotions. She lives vicariously through her son, and this gives her behaviour towards him a curious blend of dependence and dominance. Clym has a life and will of his own beyond this one relationship, yet remains strongly bound to his mother for emotional approval and support. However, there is a uncertainty in the writing about the relationship, possibly because of the implicit sexuality with which it is invested. Its nature is discussed as that which cannot be discussed, shown as that which cannot be shown; their love has 'a profundity in which all exhibition of itself is painful' (p. 205), and their communication takes place through 'a magnetism which was as superior to words as words are to yells' (p. 205). The allusions to the Oedipus legend – the precise Freudian significance of which was, of course, unavailable to Hardy at this time²⁰ – convey something of the significance of the relationship, but serve no structuring purpose. They simply take their place in a whole cluster of references which continually enforce the model of classical drama upon the novel. The subject-matter, the analysis of intricate psychological and emotional complexities in their relation to social forces, seems to demand a realism which is as yet only sporadic in Hardy's writing. The pressure is relieved with Mrs Yeobright's death, when the clash of realism and mythology is resolved in favour of the latter. Dead, she can play Jocasta without danger.

bright's death, when the clash of realism and mythology is resolved in favour of the latter. Dead, she can play Jocasta without danger.

This formal disjunction at the crucial point of the mother-son relationship is matched by the absence in the text of the breakdown of Clym and Eustacia's marriage. The history of the pre-marital relationship is given in a manner characteristic of Hardy, through the evocation of Eustacia's pre-disposition to love (conveyed in part by her 'knight in shining armour' dream) and by the imagery of 'irradiation' – a favourite word of Hardy's – which suggests the illusory or self-deceiving nature of the relationship. There is a reference to 'the first blinding halo kindled about him by love and beauty' (p. 216); and the early marriage encloses them in 'a sort of luminous mist, which hid from them surroundings of any inharmonious colour and gave to all things the character of light' (p. 251).²¹ Their first significant meeting comes when Eustacia is disguised; in a reversal of her dream, it is now she who is the romantic knight-figure, and Clym who is engaged in dancing. The growth of the relationship seems almost pre-determined. It is at the point where it becomes a marriage that it begins to present difficulties which are unresolved in the text. Just as in Eustacia's dream, the moment of consummation gives way to emptiness: "It must be here," said the voice by her side, and blushing up she saw him removing his casque to kiss her. At that moment, there was a cracking noise, and his figure fell into fragments like a pack of cards' (p. 137).

The sexuality of the relationship is entirely displaced into allusion and implication. In the scenes of frustration and argument which represent the breakdown of the marriage, there is a stress on Eustacia's sense of social impoverishment which is scarcely justified by her former style of life and which is clearly concealing or obstructing the expression of more intense emotional and sexual disappointments. It is surely not simply a case of censorship, since the sexuality of Eustacia's relationship with Wildeve is apparent even in the serial version of the novel, surviving the careful stress there on the plantonic nature of Wildeve's final offer of assistance. It is also noticeably that the marriage is not followed rapidly by pregnancy, as Tasmin's is, and indeed as Emma Bovary's is. Pregnancy and

motherhood are a major element in the representation of female characters in nineteenth-century fiction, and in the 'Woman Question' novels of the 1880s and 1890s will be the index of recuperation into the prescribed female role – a kind of salvation through motherhood – or of irrecoverability. In *The Return of the Native*, it is quite simply no part of Eustacia's experience. After Clym takes to furze-cutting, the bitterness of Eustacia's response is again far in excess of the expression of failed social aspiration. She comes upon him singing, as he works, a song focusing on sexual love and its intensity:

"Le point du jour
Cause parfois, cause douleur extrême;
Que l'espace des nuits est court
Pour le berger brûlant d'amour,
Forcé de quitter ce qu'il aime
Au point du jour!" (p. 263)

Her reaction – 'It was bitterly plain to Eustacia that he did not care much about social failure' (p. 263) – is obviously inadequate to the point of irrelevance. In the argument that ensues, the sexual disappointment is for once made explicit:

"And how madly we loved two months ago! You were never tired of contemplating me, nor I of contemplating you. Who would have thought then that by this time my eyes would not seem so very bright to yours, nor your lips so very sweet to mine? Two months – is it possible?" (p. 264).

This is obviously not the language of social ambition thwarted. Clym admits to jealousy when she wishes to go along to a dance in a neighbouring village; and indeed, in Hardy, dancing is often at the same time an expression and a focus of unrestrained sexuality. Eustacia's dance with Wildeve is described in language that exactly echoes the language of her earlier dream, and is contrasted, in its 'tropical sensations' with the 'arctic frigidity' of her life otherwise (p. 271). This last phrase is surely not idle; the implication is that her sexuality is unaroused, or unsatisfied, by her marriage to Clym. The dance attacks their 'sense of social order' (p. 272), and is obviously leading towards an adulterous relationship; whether the failure of the relationship to take this form is the result of Eustacia's scruples or of Hardy's pre-censorship is unclear. The way in which all this sexual material is marginalised and left unstated leaves a

complex of disproportionate emotions focused on the issue of the return to Paris.

It is significant that Hardy's first attempt at a tragedy should revolve upon sexual disharmony and marital breakdown, subjects which will come to occupy a central place in his fiction. But the marital breakdown is not permitted to be the instrument of Eustacia's sexual tragedy; both are displaced by the increasingly rigid imposition on the text of the would-be unifying model of classical tragedy. As the sexual sub-text becomes more pressingly significant, it erupts back into the novel through allusion and implication. Literary and philosophical allusions are to remain part of Hardy's writing – he is always conscious of the interdependence of texts – but here, together with the mythologising, they become increasingly prominent as they become a kind of refuge from the disruptions of the text. The attempted conjunction of literary modes, of tragedy and realism, takes the form of a collision; but it is in the attempt that *The Return of the Native* most valuably prefigures the last novels.

NOTES

- 1 See, respectively, Louis Crompton, 'The Sunburnt God: Ritual and Tragic Myth in *The Return of the Native*,' *Boston University Studies in English*, 4 (1960), 229–40; David Eggenschwiler, 'Eustacia Vye, Queen of Night and Courtly Pretender,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 21 (1971), 444–54; Douglas Brown, *Thomas Hardy, Men and Books Series* (London, 1954), pp. 55–63; and Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), pp. 130–54.
- 2 See David J. de Laura, "'The Ache of Modernism'" in Hardy's Later Novels,' *ELH*, 34 (1967), 380–99.
- 3 In *The Woodlanders*, on p. 224, a similar image accompanies the adulterous liaison of Fitzpiers and Felice Charmond in the form of a quotation from *Epipsychidion*.
- 4 John Paterson, *The Making of 'The Return of the Native'*, University of California English Studies, No. 19 (Berkeley, 1960), pp. 105–6.
- 5 *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, I, 1802–1813, ed. Neville Rogers (Oxford, 1972), p. 299.
- 6 *The Making of 'The Return'*, pp. 10–17.
- 7 Adrian Poole, *Gissing in Context* (London, 1975), p. 8.
- 8 *Belgravia*, 34 (1877–8), 507.
- 9 Robert Evans, for instance, divides her into 'Eustacia Regina' and 'The

- Other Eustacia', in 'The Other Eustacia,' *Novel*, 1 (1968), 251-9; see also Eggenschwiler, 'Queen of Night and Courtly Pretender.'
- 10 The passage is even more extravagantly romantic in the serial version of the 'Queen of Night' chapter, where 'Her presence brought memories of Bourbon roses, jacinths and rubies, a tropical midnight, an eclipse of the sun, a portent; her moods recalled lotus-eaters, the march in *Athalie*, the Communion Service; her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea; her voice, the viola': *Belgravia*, 34 (1877-8), 503.
- 11 Leonard W. Deen, 'Heroism and Pathos in Hardy's *The Return of the Native*,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 15 (1960), 211.
- 12 See Peter J. Casagrande, 'Hardy's Wordsworth: A Record and a Commentary,' *English Literature in Transition*, 20 (1977), 210-37, for an account of borrowings and reminiscences of Wordsworth.
- 13 *The Making of 'The Return'*, p. 82.
- 14 Her bonfire, like those of the other inhabitants, is a sign of 'spontaneous, Promethean rebelliousness' (p. 45), and Clym talks of rebelling 'in high Promethean fashion' as she does (p. 265).
- 15 For a comment on the place of Echo in the Freudian understanding of Narcissism, see Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 30-41.
- 16 'Heroism and Pathos,' p. 211.
- 17 *The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Lennart A. Björk (Goteborg, 1974), I. *Text*, pp. 48-50, entries 463-76, and I. *Notes*, pp. 268-71.
- 18 C. Heywood, in 'The Return of the Native and Miss Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife*: A Probable Source,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 18 (1963), 91-4, has suggested that Braddon's novel was an interposing source for Hardy's novel, but the parallels are not such as to suggest influence, and, in any case, Flaubert's novel was already widely known in England.
- 19 Roland Barthes, *s/z* (Paris, 1970), pp. 24-5 and 210-12.
- 20 Though Irving Howe has a relevant comment: 'Hardy is trying to say through the workings of chance what later writers will try to say through the vocabulary of the unconscious': *Thomas Hardy*, p. 66.
- 21 Taken in conjunction with the later reference to the abrupt departure from Wildevve of 'the glory and the dream' (p. 121), these images suggest a further reminiscence of Wordsworth, and particularly of his concern with the 'light that never was' of the imagination in its interplay with the objects of perception.